

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
Authorised Vice-Chancellor
Netaji Subhas Open University

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Four Year Undergraduate Degree Programme
Under National Higher Education Qualifications Framework (NHEQF) &
Curriculum and Credit Framework for Undergraduate Programmes
Bachelor of Arts (Honours in English) [NEG]
Course Type : Discipline Specific Core (DSC)
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Module No.	Unit No.	Course Writer	Course Editor
1	1	Dr. Shinjini Basu	Dr. Himadri Lahiri Professor of English Netaji Subhas Open University
	2	Assistant Professor of English Bhasha Bhavana (Institute of Languages, Literature & Culture) Visva-Bharati, Santiniketan	
	3	Dr. Ashok Sengupta	
	4	Formerly Professor of English Netaji Subhas Open University	
	5	Dr. Subhadeep Ray	
	6	Associate Professor of English, Bidhan Chandra College, Asansol	
2	7	Dr. Subham Dutta Assistant Professor of English Gohale Memorial Girls' College, Kolkata	Debottama Ghosh Assistant Professor Department of English School of Humanities, NSOU
	8	Dr. Anushila Bhattacharya Associate Professor of English Bethune College, Kolkata & Dr. Indrani Chaudhuri (Dutta) Assistant Professor of English Vidyasagar University	
	9	Dr. Amzed Hossain Professor of English Language Teaching Netaji Shubhas Open University &	

		Soumi Bandopadhyay Research Intern (JRF) IIT Kharagpur	Debottama Ghosh Assistant Professor Department of English School of Humanities, NSOU
	10	Kushal A. Biswas Associate Professor of English Women's Christian College, Kolkata	
4	11	Iman Ghosh Assistant Professor of English Muralidhar Girls' College, Kolkata	
	12	Dr. Anupama Maitra Associate Professor of English GMSM Mahavidyalaya, Bireswarpur, South 24 Parganas	
	13	Dr. Madhurima Mukhopadhyay Assistant Professor of English Amity Institute of English Studies & Research Amity University, Kolkata	
	14	Dr. Srideep Mukherjee Associate Professor of English School of Humanities Netaji Subhas Open University	
5	15	Dr. Ashok Sengupta	
	16	Adharshila Chatterjee Assistant Professor of English Women's Christian College, Kolkata	
	17	Dr. Goutam Sengupta Formerly Associate Professor Rabindra Bharati University, Kolkata	
	18	Dr. Srideep Mukherjee	
	Format Editing, Design and Layout		Debottama Ghosh Assistant Professor Department of English School of Humanities Netaji Subhas Open University

Undergraduate Board of Studies for English

Smt Sandhya Sen, Formerly Reader in English, Sarojini Naidu College, Kolkata

Dr Jaydeep Sarangi, Principal, New Alipore College, Kolkata

Dr. Tajuddin Ahmed, Associate Professor & Head, Department of English,
Aliah University

Professor Himadri Lahiri, Dept. of English, Netaji Subhas Open University

Dr. Md. Intaj Ali, Assistant Professor of English, NSOU

Soumabha Chakraborty, Assistant Professor of English, NSOU

Debottama Ghosh, Assistant Professor of English, NSOU

Dr Srideep Mukherjee, Officer in Charge, School of Humanities, Head, Dept. of
English, NSOU & Chairperson, Board of Studies

Notification

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**Netaji Subhas
Open University**

**UG – (NEG)
6CC-EG-06**

Course Title : British Literature of the Modern Period

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Social Contexts**

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Module - 1

**Modern British Literature : Historical and
Social Contexts**

Unit 1 □ Britain at the Turn of the Century : A Historical and Social Survey

Structure

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1.1.1. Objectives

This Unit has been written with the following objectives in mind:

- To understand the socio-political and cultural cross-currents in Britain in the early years of the twentieth century- roughly the years preceding the First World War till the Second World War and to locate them in a broader European context
- To analyse the social, political and economic condition of Britain during the Edwardian period
- To analyse the politics and aesthetics of the Georgian period

- To closely read three areas of major political turmoil in Britain during the Edwardian and Georgian Age- the growth of the labour movement, women's movement and conflict in Ireland.

1.1.2. Introduction

In Poem No. 64 of *Naibedyo*, written in 1899, Rabindranath Tagore has a dystopic vision of the century to come. He writes “The sun of the century is setting today in clouds of blood. At the festival of hate today, in clashing weapons sounds the maddening, dreadful chant of death.” Historian C.A. Bayly says that this poem was Tagore’s response to the surfeit of violence by the British against the Chinese in order to suppress the Boxer Rebellion and the slaughter of civilians in the Anglo-Boer War (Bayly, 454). Be as it may, these lines remain apt commentary on a Europe on the verge of major changes and a world about to witness and withstand unprecedented violence. Two World Wars were about to take place within a span of forty years. While the First World War exposed the ugly face of European imperialism, the Second World War showed the absolute abyss of the Nazi and nuclear Holocaust. If one looks at the society and politics of Britain of the early years of the twentieth century, one might see a movement from a general sense of stability and security to one of complete disarray and disillusionment.

1.1.3. Social and Political Milieu of Edwardian Britain : Questionable Stability

It would be rather redundant to say that the death of Queen Victoria on 22nd January, 1901 marked the end of an era. More so because the era that followed, the short reign of Edward VII (1901-1910) often portrayed itself as one of unchanging political stability and economic prosperity. That self-perception continued in later cultural and historical renditions. The sense of security associated with the Edwardian Age needs to be seen against the background of the preceding decades. The Victorian Age left behind a mixed legacy. By the mid-nineteenth century England had become a global power - its expansive industrialisation turned it into world’s leading manufacturing and commercial superpower. The commercial clout of England was coupled with its political influence and imperial glory. However, by the end of Victoria’s reign, the political and industrial supremacy of England was no longer unrivalled. New industrial powers such as Germany and the United States of America were challenging it on both economic and political fronts.

The British politics of the 1880s and the 1890s was plagued by the perceived sense of decline of the British military, economic and imperial power. In Africa the British were engaged in territorial conflict with other European imperial powers as well as with local forces. This ultimately resulted in the Anglo-Boer War between the British and the two Boer republics (formed by the Dutch inhabitants of Cape Colony which was a British colony in present day South Africa) - namely the South African Republic and the Orange Free State. Closer home, the Irish nationalist movement peaked and the question of Irish Home Rule resonated across the political landscape. On the economic front in 1886 a Royal Commission was constituted to look into the depression in trade and industry. It was an initial sign of growing concern about British economy. In the face of increasing competition from other European powers the policy of free trade started being questioned. The Second Boer War ended (1899-1902) at the beginning of Edward's reign. There was much propaganda and eulogy around the modernisation of the British Home Fleet after the war as well as the Halden Reforms which reorganised the British Army with the specific goal of preparing it for major wars. Edward on the one hand tried to foster friendly relation with major European powers, including the archrival France; his efforts earned him the popular title 'Edward the Peacemaker'. On the other hand, he indulged in traditional and ceremonial royal displays and public events, royal visits and association with other European dynasties creating a sense of imperial pomp and grandeur. One should not forget that Edward VII was the first ever British monarch to travel to India and to hold a great coronation *Durbar* in Delhi.

However, times, they were a-changing. The 1901 census revealed that the population of the United Kingdom had doubled in the last fifty years, swelling to 38 million. The increased population created pressure on the already stressed economic and social framework. One way to deal with it was a surge in the 'nationalist' agenda based on claims of shared culture. Frans Coetzee in his extensive research into the British Conservative politics of the early twentieth century identifies several successive phases in the development of 'nationalist agitation' from the 1890s (Coetzee, 7). The first lasted till the conclusion of the Second Boer War (1899-1902) in South Africa and was dominated by perceived threats from other European powers such as France and Russia. In 1905 British journalist J. L. Garvin posed a question to his readers - "Will the empire which is celebrating one centenary of Trafalgar survive for the next?" (Coetzee, 38) The perceived vulnerability of the empire made people cling to it even more dearly.

1.1.4. The Empire and Its Maladies

In Europe these early years of the twentieth century were marked by political realignment of its great powers, a revolution and setting stage for a World War. The smokescreen of nationalist propaganda often hid horrible imperial crimes, such as the deaths of thousands of women and children in concentration camps used by the British Army for the displaced Boer families in 1901. The same year Australia passed an Immigration Policy to protect the White Australia policy of Britain. In a few years, in 1906, one Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, confronted by racial discrimination in British South Africa launched his first programme of *satyagraha* or passive resistance. Another interesting factoid is that in 1908 the British-controlled Burmah Oil Company discovered oil in Iran. The dotted lines between the imperial economic networks and some of our present world crises are for anyone to see. Many would see this as a connection between older and newer forms of the Empire.

The Edwardian era registered a deep concern for the decline of English naval and commercial might. German firms started giving tough competition to the British in various markets. The German navy, along with the French, Russian and Italian navy, posed challenge to the British power in the sea. After the Panama Canal was opened, the United States too started making its presence felt in South-East Asia. The Russo-Japanese war of 1904-5 ended in the unexpected Japanese victory and the Russian Revolution of 1905. Though the war ended with the Treaty of Portsmouth and the Revolution was quelled for the time being, these events resonated across Europe. Particularly the Russian Revolution of 1905 showed the disturbing possibility of a mass upheaval attempting to overthrow the existing order- a possibility largely feared across the European ruling elite. England was not an exception. In order to maintain the status quo of the European political and imperial order older and newer imperial forces entered into various alliances with each other to maintain the balance of power not just in Europe but in the colonies spread across Asia and Africa. The Entente Cordiale concluded between France and England, though strictly a colonial negotiation helped the two countries shake off their traditional rivalry to adjust the balance of power against a resurgent Germany. Through this treaty France gave up its opposition to the British rule in Egypt and the British did the same for the French rule in Morocco. All these developments created a sense of imperial consolidation in Africa and a general sense of comeback in European politics. The result was a façade of order concealing insecurity and struggle for power.

1.1.5. Working Class Unrest and Labour Movement :

The shrill nationalist voice in the English conservative and even in liberal quarters should also be seen against the rising discontent and assertive class politics among the British working classes. Charles Booth's multi-volume *The Life and Labour of the People of London* came out between 1889 and 1903. In a meticulous survey among the people of London's East End Booth revealed that around 30% of people were living in extreme penury. The mass unemployment caused by industrial depression gave rise to vocal demands for a more egalitarian distribution of wealth. The Fabians, socialists and others forced serious reconsideration of individualist economics and the gains of industrialisation. Since the 1900s there was a growing consensus for the state to take a more proactive role in managing economy, working conditions and wages instead of giving free reign to capitalist profiteering in the name of free market. There were riots of the unemployed in London in 1886 and 1887. Since the 1890s the miners were on repeated strikes. There was dock strike in London in 1889.

An organised labour movement had been growing in England since the mid-nineteenth century. But now more pronounced socialist ideas defined by clear class consciousness started to dominate the English labour movement. The cautious moderation of the earlier years was replaced by more aggressive, even revolutionary approach. Keir Hardie and other socialists founded an Independent Labour Party in 1893. The expanding trade union movement of the late nineteenth century culminated in the establishment of the British Labour Representation Committee (LRC) in 1900. The LRC created a common platform for different socialist groupings in England. In 1906 around nineteen candidates with LRC support won parliamentary seats, giving rise to the English Labour Party. With the backing of the Labour certain liberal reforms were undertaken by the British parliament. In 1906 Workmen's Compensation Act, in 1908 Mines Eight Hours Act was passed. Both were due to the impact of a sustained labour movement, particularly regarding demands for eight working hours. Old Age Pension was another long standing labour demand fulfilled in the Pension Act of 1908. The provision for the imposition of higher land taxes to raise money to pay for pensions and armaments was put in the 1909 budget, often termed as the 'People's Budget.' The House of Lords rejected this budget, propelling the country into a constitutional crisis. Subsequently this crisis was resolved only after the thumping victory of the Liberals in the 1910 election and the introduction of the Parliamentary Act in 1912. It made the Upper House of the Parliament practically ineffective, taking away the veto power of the House of Lords and gave full control of the government policies to the Lower House, constituted of the elected representatives of the people.

1.1.6. Late Nineteenth Century : fin-de-siècle in Europe

Politically speaking, the late Nineteenth Century was an age of significant shifts in the political baseline. France while engaged in a war with Prussia saw a working class uprising at the end of which the Paris Commune seized power in 1871, establishing, for a brief period, a revolutionary government and the Third French Republic. Karl Marx in *The Civil War in France* called the Commune “The direct antithesis to the empire” (<https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1871/civil-war-france/ch05.htm>). It exponentially increased the power of the Communists. Communism was expanding simultaneously with various other socialist parties and trade union movements all over Europe including England. On the other hand, in the late nineteenth century there was a spurt of nationalism all over Europe. The unification of Italy and Germany, movement for independence in various Balkan states under the Ottoman Empire including the Greek movement for independence, Irish and Scottish nationalism are cases in point. One can see it as a global phenomenon in the anti-colonial struggles from Egypt to India. However, if national movements in various colonies were challenging the colonial powers, a supremacist, nationalist rhetoric and policy was used by several European and some non-European states to build and expand their empires.

Another political event that had widespread cultural resonance is the so-called Dreyfus Affair in France. In 1894 Alfred Dreyfus (1859-1935) an officer in the French military, was court martialed and found guilty of espionage in what was clearly a sham trial. Almost immediately after his conviction, doubts surfaced about Dreyfus' culpability. By 1898 Major Esterhazy emerged as the main culprit. He was then court martialed for the same crime that Dreyfus was earlier convicted of. It was clear that Dreyfus was trapped in order to hide larger corruption inside the French military establishment. But despite of compelling evidence Esterhazy was swiftly acquitted as the army and the government chose to keep an innocent man in prison rather than expose institutional malaise. The unfair conviction and imprisonment of Dreyfus came amid a vile anti-Semitic campaign. Since Dreyfus was a Jew, large number of newspapers and popular magazines vilified and implicated all Jews by extension. The affair impacted and divided the European intelligentsia. The French novelist Emile Zola (1840-1902) published a fierce letter calling out the government cover-up of systemic corruption and the anti-Semitism entrenched in the government as well as in society. This letter, titled *J'accuse!* appeared in the front page of the pro-Dreyfus newspaper *L'auror*. Zola himself was convicted of anti-state activities and fled to England in order to escape prison.

The literary and the cultural milieu of the time already started to reflect both the euphoria and the apprehension of the turn of the century, captured in the French term fin-de-siècle,

literally meaning 'end of the century'. It was applied to a certain bohemian, 'decadent', hedonistic aesthetics espoused by many artists of this era. The doubts and disillusionment about industrialisation, public expressions of religious doubt, post-Darwinian 'crisis of faith' had a lasting impact on the writers of the late nineteenth century. The Victorian moral codes had started to crumble. Already by the end of the nineteenth century those codes were being questioned by writers as varied as Oscar Wilde, G. B. Shaw, Henry James and Thomas Hardy. At least some of them remained equally productive in the first decades of the twentieth century.

Various literary and art movements in continental Europe influenced English writers. The phrase 'Art for Art's Sake,' taken from the French term "l'art pour l'art" was used to denote a break from some of the defining assumptions of post-Renaissance art. It was not a consolidated artistic movement; rather an attitude rejecting not just the Victorian moral codes but the overall mimetic ends of literature- it questioned the automatic assumption that literature has to 'reflect' a world outside, it has to have a presumably 'real' world as its point of reference and that it must 'mean' something to be counted as art. The English slogan is usually associated with Walter Pater and his followers in the Aesthetic Movement. In a review of William Morris' poetry, published in 1868, Pater writes how the simplicity of Morris' poetry is of a distinctly different variety than that of William Wordsworth because in Morris' poetry the desire "is towards the body of nature for its own sake, not because a soul is divined through it". He advocates a 'quickened sense of life' created by "the desire of beauty, the love of art for art's sake" (http://www.lyriktheorie.uni-wuppertal.de/texte/1868_pater1.html). A modified form of the review appeared in Pater's 1873 book *Studies in the History of Renaissance* and had immediate impact on various writers and artists of the late Victorian era such as the American artist James McNeill Whistler, English writers Oscar Wilde and Algernon Swinburne.

In 1899 Arthur Symonds published *The Symbolist Movement in Literature* bringing French symbolist poetry and poets such as Arthur Rimbaud, Paul Verlaine, Stéphane Mallarmé, and Jules Laforgue to the attention of the English literary world. The last two decades of the nineteenth century also saw the rise of Naturalism as a literary movement. Emile Zola published his influential essay "The Experimental Novel" in 1880 where he talked about a form of novel based on what he calls 'the experimental method' of science. According to him, modern science has extended itself beyond empiricism; it does not concern itself anymore with what can be seen, heard or measured. It explores underlying organic and physico-chemical conditions which are fixed and determined. Zola prescribes the same scientific determinism in novels. For the naturalist novelist 'nature' stands for those physical, psycho-sexual conditions which, for Zola, are unchanging and the determinant factor behind all social behavior (<https://>

www.marxists.org/archive/zola/1893/experimental-novel.htm). Zola was a self-proclaimed naturalist who remained an important influence on novelists across the continent.

At the same time questions of class and economic disparity remained significant concerns. At the turn of the century the everyday experience of ordinary men and women came back to be the focus of literary activities before the entire structure of understanding and representing human experience was completely revamped by the modernists.

1.1.7. Edwardianism: Conformism and Dissonance

Along with fin-de-siècle another French term gained currency to define the mood in the early twentieth century Europe- *la belle époque*, loosely translated as “the good old days.” The contradictory implications of the two terms- one implying a morbid awareness of the anxieties of changing times, the other glorifying a mythic past- signify the opposing pulls at the turn of the century, reflected in the Edwardian Age. This age is usually characterised by the desperate attempts of a social and economic elite to hold on to its social etiquettes and cultural mores at a time when its political hold was slipping away. An obvious example of such characterisation is Jimmy Porter’s bitter but somewhat idealised invocation of the bygone Edwardian era in John Osborne’s 1955 play *Look Back in Anger*.

If Edwardian Britain is sometimes imagined in terms of the swansong of an aristocratic society basking in what historian David Powell calls the ‘Victorian afterglow’ (Powell, vii), there are others who imagine it as a period lived under the looming shadow of the approaching First World War (1914-1918) coupled with several domestic crises. The Edwardian society and economy combined contradictory traits. On the one hand there was conspicuous consumption and growing national wealth. On the other there was rising mass poverty.

The election held in 1906 was largely fought on the questions of social reforms. The Liberal Party won and remained in power in whole of the Edwardian Era and even after that. In 1906 Henry Campbell-Bannerman became the Prime Minister. The general sense of stability and conformity of the age has much to do with this liberal victory signifying a cautious, middle-of-the-road political atmosphere, combining welfarism and conservatism. However, as we have already seen this was far from truth. There were polarising currents in British society and the Liberal Party was seen as increasingly ineffective in bringing any material change to the lives of the masses. They were also seen as making compromises based on political expediency. The reformist David Lloyd George and imperialist Winston Churchill both being members of the Liberal Party and the same cabinet is example of such expedient political cohabitation.

Even then some major liberal reforms took place. Many claim that these reforms laid down foundations of the modern welfare state (Powell, 21). School Meals Act came in 1906, empowering local governments to feed children in schools. The reforms gained traction when H. H. Ashquith became Prime Minister in 1908. National Insurance Act was passed in 1911. In 1912 the government introduced a Minimum Wage Act for coal mines.

The changes, both economic and social, even though limited in nature, exposed the social discordance. The aristocrats saw a threat to their privileges. The working classes saw the changes as cosmetic and insufficient. Beneath the crust of conformism and stability, dissonances brewed. During the First World War these dissonances were brushed under the carpet. But the stress on economy increased the hardships of the working classes, not to mention millions of lives lost in the war. The working-class disaffection and disillusionment with the government kept growing in the years following the war and had lasting impact in shaping the post-war society and politics of England.

1.1.8. The Irish Question

The integration of different parts of the British Islands- Wales, Scotland and Ireland into the United Kingdom has been a slow process going back to the sixteenth century. However, this was not a smooth process; it often faced resistance, the steepest of them all came from Ireland. It was the last to be integrated to the British crown in 1800, following an unsuccessful rebellion in 1798 and the union remained a fragile one. England was a colonial power, ruling an alien land with an iron fist. The Catholic majority of Ireland being ruled by a Protestant England created religious tension. In the 1840s Daniel O'Connell led a mass campaign to repeal the Act of Union. Simultaneously a more radical, romantic, nationalist movement emerged, with conscious allusions to earlier heroes such as Wolf Tone and Robert Emmet. The potato famine of 1845 took severe toll on the Irish population. The Young Ireland Group in the 1840s, the Irish Republican Brotherhood in the 1850s and 60s staged many insurrections. The Irish Home Government Association was founded in 1870. In the subsequent elections the Association had considerable success, particularly under the leadership of Charles Stewart Parnell. The Irish National League was formed in 1882. Due to the growing demand for Irish independence, the support for the Irish nationalist parties swelled. A similar Home Rule Association was also founded in Scotland, while in Wales a nationalist movement was initiated by the alliance of the Welsh Nonconformists and the Liberal Party.

The British government responded to the rising tide of nationalism across the British Isles through a combination of coercion and concession. In Ireland the government tried to redress

some grievances through measures taken in the fields of religion, education and land reform. To assuage the majority Catholics of Ireland, its Anglican Church was disestablished. Government assistance in higher education was increased. Two Irish Land Acts were introduced in 1870 and 1881. At the same time Coercion Acts were implemented to brutally suppress all forms of political dissent. Responding to the growing demand for Irish Home Rule, a bill was brought in the British Parliament in 1886, recognising a separate Irish political identity including the establishment of a second parliament in Dublin. This bill was defeated and created a vertical split within the English Liberal Party between the supporters of Irish Home Rule and the more conservative Unionists who opposed this step. A second Home Rule Bill was brought in 1893 but it too was defeated. In the years leading up to 1906 consecutive Conservative governments undid many of the concessions given and reverted to a policy of political suppression.

Consequently, 1890s onward in Ireland there was widespread disillusionment with the parliamentary parties, making space for more radical political outfits. Instead of home rule, i.e., limited political autonomy, a demand for complete Irish independence grew. Pro-independence Sinn Féin was established in 1905 by Arthur Griffith. In the field of culture there was Gaelic Revival - an assertion of exclusively Irish cultural identity taking recourse to indigenous language, mythology and folk elements.

With the Liberals coming back to power in England in 1906 the question of Irish Home Rule resurfaced. The Parliament Act of 1911 did away with the veto power of the House of the Lords which was staunchly opposed to home rule. The decisive power was now with the elected representatives of the legislature. In 1912 a new Irish Home Rule Bill was introduced providing for a two chamber Irish Parliament, comprising an elected House of Commons and a Senate nominated by the government. The parliament would have authority over most internal matters of Ireland barring fiscal policy and for some years, policing. Foreign Affairs, overseas trade and taxation would remain under the control of the United Kingdom parliament. While the bill treated Ireland as a single entity there was deep and often violent friction between the Protestant groups of Northern Ireland, many located at Ulster and the Catholic groups from Belfast. The Protestants were overwhelmingly unionist as they feared if the Home Rule Bill passed they would have to live under the jurisdiction of a Catholic dominated Irish Parliament in Dublin. Irish Unionists, with active support from the English Unionists, organised several demonstrations in Ulster including Ulster Day in September, 1912 culminating in the ceremonial signing of the 'Ulster Covenant,' the signatories pledging themselves to use 'all means which may be found necessary' to defeat Home Rule and to refuse to recognise the authority of a Home Rule parliament. The Home Rule Bill was again blocked in the House of Lords which,

though no longer enjoyed the power to veto bills, still had the power to delay them. The Unionist agitations increased with open calls to arms. The Union Defence League, an armed militia, was founded in 1907. It provoked a corresponding reaction from the Irish Nationalists. Irish Volunteers were founded as a paramilitary force. A civil war fomented in Ireland. There were other popular unrests such as the transporters' strike of 1913 that took a nationalist overtone. In 1914 British troops opened fire on nationalist protesters in Dublin.

To allay the fears of the Ulster Unionists the government brought an amendment to the original Home Rule Bill allowing the four Ulster counties to remain outside Irish Home Rule, first for a period of six years and then permanently. This compromise could not satisfy either side. It practically meant a partition of the country, and leaving the considerable Catholic population of Northern Ireland outside Home Rule- both possibilities were strongly resisted by the Irish republicans. For the Unionists it meant leaving the Protestant population of Southern Ireland under Catholic domination. The stalemate continued when the First World War broke out, putting the issue on backburner for the time being, but it kept sizzling.

In 1916 the Irish Republicans staged an uprising on the morning of Easter Sunday, known as the Easter Rising. The uprising was brutally suppressed by the British. Many protesters were killed, many leaders hanged. This fueled nationalist sentiments even more. In the election of 1918 the nationalist Sinn Féin won landslide victory. In 1919 they formed a breakaway government and declared Irish independence. The Anglo-Irish War between the Irish Republican Army (IRA) and the British Army took place from 1919 to 1921. A truce was achieved in 1921 through the Anglo-Irish Treaty. An Irish Free State was recognised by the British government. However, Northern Ireland was given the right to opt out of it, which they did in 1922 thus effectively ratifying the partition of Ireland. This treaty caused major split among republicans as many saw the treaty as a betrayal to the republican cause. The more militant faction of the IRA refused the authority of the Free State and decided to keep fighting for a united Irish republic. Violence raged in Northern Ireland as well. Ireland plunged into a civil war that would continue till the 1980s.

1.1.9. Post-Edwardian England in a Changing Europe

The First World War set in irreversible forces of change in motion, not just in England but in Europe. Alongside the War, came the Spanish Flu. It was the first pandemic of the twentieth century that spread on a global scale, largely due to the War, the movement of soldiers and goods. In two years roughly 500 million people, were infected. Estimated number of death

due to the Spanish Flu was much higher than that of the First World War. Together, these two events had catastrophic effect on the global population.

King Edward VII passed away in 1910, four years before the war and King George assumed the throne as George V (1910-1936). By the end of the First World War around one million British soldiers, sailors and airmen had been killed, nearly two million were permanently disabled. Along with the loss of human capital Britain also incurred substantial economic losses - it lost much of its domestic and overseas assets, its GDP plummeted. During the War raw material and industrial resources were diverted due to the escalating demands of the war industry. This had negative impact on other industries and after the War there was a steady decline of industrial output, causing mass unemployment. While the First World War helped create a cult of the Glorious Dead, through public memorialisation, cenotaphs, literature and mass media; there was also widespread discontent among the living. In London in 1921 the Armistice Day ceremonies were interrupted by a demonstration of the unemployed who held placards that read "The dead are remembered but we are forgotten". The stock market crash in America in 1928-29 leading to the Great Depression had its ripple effect across the world, including Britain.

In the decades following the First World War the political landscape of Europe underwent major changes. Many of the monarchical rules had ended. The Tsarist rule of Russia was toppled by the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917. The empires of Germany and Austro-Hungary disintegrated. American economic and political power was on the rise.

Ultrnationalist, supremacist, and authoritarian politics too were on the rise across Europe. Initially it grew out of the high pitched nationalist propaganda undertaken during the First World War by all countries involved. As the war progressed, death toll increased, the economic distress intensified, nationalism became a tool to suppress all forms of dissent. Everyone who spoke out against the war could be labelled as working against the interests of the nation. Benito Mussolini was a socialist in his earlier years. He proclaimed himself to be nationalist and changed sides when the socialists opposed the war. After the war, the same rhetoric of bringing glory to the nation was used by the Fascists in Italy to stage a coup, brutally suppress and kill all political opposition, paving way for Mussolini to become a dictator. In Germany too, the broken economy and political instability of the post-war years saw the rise of National Socialism appealing to the wounded pride of the German nation.

In England the Representation of the People Act was enacted in 1918, bringing in the notion of universal adult franchise. It enabled all men over the age of 21 and women over 30

to vote, regardless of whether they own any property or not (earlier people without ownership of property could not vote). This act increased the number of voters substantially. In 1918 the first general election was held under this act and a coalition government of Liberals and Conservatives came to power. This unlikely coalition itself was the result of the growing strength of the Labour Party that would ultimately bring complete electoral success in 1923 and the first Labour government would be established. In Ireland, Sinn Fein won landslide victory in 1918, cementing the popular support for Irish Republicanism. In the subsequent years there would be considerable political instability in England and time and again the rhetoric of nationalism would be invoked in the face of working class demands and the perceived threats of Bolshevism and Republicanism.

1.1.10. Constructing ‘Georgian Poetry’

‘Georgian Poetry’ is a construction in so far as it was conceived as a self-styled and calibrated break from the Victorian past and as a representative of its time. An anthology series of poetry titled *Georgian Poetry* was published between 1912 and 1922. Five volumes were published. Around forty poets contributed to these volumes. This would include Rupert Brooke, Robert Graves, Siegfried Sassoon, A. E. Houseman, D. H. Lawrence, John Drinkwater, H. E. Monroe, John Masefield and many others. This anthology series seems to define what is known as ‘Georgian Poetry’ and the poets are referred to as Georgian poets. Though the series editor was Edward Marsh he worked in close consultation with Brooke, Monroe and Arundel de Re, the latter two were editor and assistant editor of the journal *Poetry Review*.

Georgian Poetry was not an organised movement; the poets hardly shared anything in common apart from the anthology. While Marsh himself was once the private secretary of Winston Churchill, the anthology published poets like Wilfred Gibson - a working class poet who wrote poems about farmers, industrial workers and soldiers. Even the name ‘Georgian Poets’ slightly predates the anthology, though used for the first time by Monroe, a poet who was an integral part of the anthology. Monroe coined the term in 1911, the year of the coronation of George V, thus making it coterminous with the reign. The Imagists and the Dadaists were writing around the same time, but they are not clubbed as Georgians. D. H. Lawrence, usually categorised as a modernist, was a regular contributor; he also reviewed the first volume *Georgian Poetry 1911-12*. Timothy Rogers in his *Georgian Poetry, 1911-1922 : the Critical Heritage* published in 1977 quotes Lawrence - “we are awake again, our lungs are full of new air, our eyes of morning.” Infact, Georgian Poetry can be included within the broad parameters of literary modernism in its rejection of Victorian sentimentality and morality. Susan Millar Williams calls Georgianism a movement in *Dictionary of Literary Biography* : “The

unifying thrust of the movement was toward realism and ‘sincerity,’ and against humanism, academicism, the romantic-Victorian tradition, and the decadence of the fin de siècle.”

Georgian poetry gets associated with what Rupert Brooke names ‘the New Poetry’ in 1913. By this time the search for a new poetic idiom was already on. In 1908 T. E. Hulme in his groundbreaking ‘Lecture on Modern Poetry’ had boldly declared, “I want to speak of verse in a plain way as I would of pigs: that is the only honest way” (http://www.lyriktheorie.uni-wuppertal.de/texte/1908_hulme.html). Georgian Poets too were trying to break new grounds in terms of the themes and vocabulary of poetry. Yet the claims to ‘sincerity’, ‘realism’ and accessibility that separated Georgian Poets from Victorianism also marked their stark difference from the modernists who were looking for a more radical break from the established aesthetic norms. It’s a telling coincidence that the last volume of *Georgian Poetry* came out in 1922, a year often considered to be the Annus Mirabilis - the miraculous year of European modernism. James Joyce’s *Ulysses*, T. S. Eliot’s *The Wasteland*, Jean Cocteau’s *Antigone*, Herman Hess’s *Siddhartha* were all published in that year.

1.1.11. The Modernist Turn

At the turn of the century the combination of new technological advances penetrating the world of art, the discovery of a mass market and art forms more suitable to appeal to that market - from photography to early cinema - started to redefine aesthetic experience. An interesting development was the mass access to the works of so-called high art. Historian Eric Hobsbawm reminds us that in 1908 the new Medici Society started producing cheap productions of the paintings of great masters on a mass scale. Inexpensive series of Elizabethan and Jacobean plays came in the market (Hobsbawm, 1987, 221). Walter Benjamin, the famous German philosopher in his essay “Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” discusses how technology, by reproducing a work of art radically redefines the notions of both meaning and value of art which, till now, were associated with ‘originality’. In the post-First World War years cinema develops into the new and perhaps the most significant art form of its time, travelling the distance between popular and high culture.

The need for an entirely new outlook about art and literature - culture - in general was felt, particularly in view of the sense of a civilisational crisis that Europe was going through. In order to achieve that breakthrough not only the older moral and social codes but the older aesthetic codes needed to be broken. The experimental avant-garde art of pre-First World War Europe was already making those attempts in the form of art movements such as post-impressionism and cubism. While the Decadents of the last decades of the nineteenth century

were obsessed with the sense of an ending, the Italian Futurists in the first decade of the twentieth century were ecstatic about the birth of a new machine age. In the *Futurist Manifesto* of 1909 Filippo Marinetti writes - "We declare that the splendor of the world has been enriched by a new beauty: the beauty of speed. A racing automobile with its bonnet adorned with great tubes like serpents with explosive breath ... a roaring motor car which seems to run on machine-gun fire, is more beautiful than the Victory of Samothrace" (https://www.societyforasianart.org/sites/default/files/manifesto_futurista.pdf). On one end of the rejection of basic tenets of western humanism could be a gradual movement towards accepting and celebrating political authoritarianism. The same Marinetti was the co-author of the *Fascist Manifesto* written in 1919. But it also led to critical and dispassionate dissection of the times.

While the aesthetic ideals and expressions of the modernists may vary substantially and their political conviction can travel an entire spectrum - from extreme Left to extreme Right - the one common factor is their formal experimentation. In the same lecture of 1908 (mentioned earlier) Hulme declares, "We are a number of modern people and verse must be justified as a means of expression for us". It was true not only for poetry but for art and philosophy as well. In the subsequent years the 'modern' would take myriad forms - from the new experiments with the novel form by the likes of Joyce and Virginia Woolf to the publication of Sigmund Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* in 1922, exploring the 'death-drive' within our constant hunt for pleasure to the *Surrealist Manifesto* by André Breton in 1924, giving a new language to art by fusing the precision of reality with the symbolism of dreams derived from Freudian psychoanalyses.

1.1.12. The Emerging Politics of Gender

The role of women was largely restricted to the domestic sphere in the Victorian Age. By the late nineteenth century certain professional opportunities were opening up, particularly for educated middle class women. While in the early nineteenth century the governess was the stereotypical figure of a working woman, later women started to move into professions such as nursing and teaching. For working class women working was not a matter of choice but necessity. They worked in factories, clothing trade and as domestic help. The expanding textile industry was a source of employment for a large section of working class women. But even in that sector the growth started to slow down in the 1870s and 80s. Further, irrespective of their class location women found that they were offered only low paid, unskilled jobs, were paid less than their male counterparts, were forced to work in terrible working conditions. From the 1860s several movements and demonstrations took place demanding women's right to education, property, their legal rights in marriage and divorce. As a result of the sustained

campaign the Education Act of 1870 made elementary education in England compulsory for both boys and girls. Even if for women's education the emphasis was still on their domestic responsibilities at least they were entitled to rudimentary education. A series of Married Women's Property Acts gave married women certain rights to possess and administer property. Back then in England equality of legal rights, including the right to vote, were closely linked to the ownership of property. This progress in terms of property rights made it easier for women to claim political rights for themselves.

The campaign for female suffrage that is, voting rights for women can be dated back to the 1860s. In 1867 Lydia Becker formed the Manchester Women's Suffrage Committee; similar other committees were formed in other cities. Activists organised campaigns, carried out sustained propaganda to keep up the political pressure throughout the late Victorian period. But real changes started only in the Edwardian Age. The Women's Social and Political Union, led by Mrs Emmeline Pankhurst was formed in 1903. This organisation is usually associated with the suffragette movement. The earlier suffragist movement followed a path of moderation, negotiation and compromise. However, there was general disillusionment regarding the efficacy of these techniques. The suffragette movement, on the other hand, was a much more radical and consciously political movement. They campaigned extensively, mobilised women, and courted jail. Between 1906 and 1914 the suffragette movement became widespread and increasingly militant. Across class lines it impacted a wide crosssection of British women. One could also see increasing collaboration among the growing labour movement, the Irish Republican movement and women's movement.

During the First World War, as a large section of the male population in England as well as in other European countries were conscripted and joined the war effort, in order to keep the home economy going increased participation of women in the labour force was encouraged. For example, 1915 onward women were employed in ammunition factories in Britain for the first time. By the end of the war at least one million women were added to the British work force. This proved to be a seismic change as women's role in the reconstruction of the post-war economy became critical. As a result of the sustained political efforts of the feminists in the Representation of People's Act of 1918 voting rights were extended to women over the age of 30.

While The First World War opened up the labour market for women, it also left many of them without a family, caused economic distress. More women coming out of their homes caused moral anxiety in a deeply patriarchal British society. Yet throughout the 1920s women participated in public life, fought elections, were being elected to the parliament. New

movements were being formed to open up more professions for women, for the equal rights for women workers. In this regard the reforms initiated by the newly formed Soviet government in Russia encouraged British activists. Several new women's journals and magazines were launched in the 1920s dealing with political questions concerning women. Writers and activists such as Virginia Woolf and Rebecca West started writing about various matters related to women's social, economic and creative lives as well as the relation of women's rights with other political questions of the time. West, for example, wrote about the Nazi war criminals in the late 1930s. As a result of their concerted efforts a consolidated and self-conscious domain of gender politics emerged.

1.1.13. Summing Up

This Unit has tried to give you a broad understanding of the social, political and cultural changes taking place in Britain in the early years of the twentieth century, covering the First World War and leading up to the Second. In order to put things in perspective we moved back to the late Victorian Age and also contextualised the events in British society and culture against those taking place in Europe at large. It will help you to realise how class politics, nationalist politics and gender politics shaped those years and how they impacted culture, literature being a part of it. It will help you to critically engage with the historical context of many of the texts, particularly those belonging to Irish literature, literary modernism and Feminism.

1.1.14. Comprehension Exercises

Long Answer Type Questions :

1. Do you think the Edwardian Age in England was one of stability or of conflict? Discuss with reference to the major socio-political events of the time.
2. Write a historical overview of Britain's 'Irish Problem'.
3. Critically analyse the emergence of working class politics in Britain.
4. How did the opposite feelings of the end of an era and a new beginning shape European culture in the early twentieth century? Elucidate.
5. How would you characterize Georgian Poetry? Critically comment on its relationship with literary modernism.

Mid-length Questions

1. Write a note on the socio-political milieu of England between the two World Wars

2. Write a short note on the Aesthetic Movement of the late nineteenth century.
3. Write a short note on the liberal reforms during the Edwardian Age.
4. Critically comment on the constitutional crisis in Edwardian England.
5. Write a short note on the women's movement in the early twentieth century England.
6. Write a short note on different forms of nationalism in Europe in the early twentieth century.

Short Answer Type Questions :

1. What is the meaning of fin-de-siècle? Which time period is it applied to?
2. What does the phrase la belle époque mean?
3. What is the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921?
4. What is the difference between Suffragists and Suffragettes?
5. Who was Emmeline Pankhurst?
6. What is *Georgian Poetry*?
7. Give the names of four important Georgian Poets.
8. What is Irish Home Rule?
9. What was called 'People's Budget' in England?
10. Write three important features of the Representation of People Act of 1918.

1.1.15. Suggested Reading

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Unit 2 □ The First World War: An Overview

Structure

- 1.2.1. Objectives**
- 1.2.2. Introduction**
- 1.2.3. Conceptualising the ‘World War’: The World as a Battleground**
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 - 1.2.4.1. Setting the Stage : Emerging Economic Realities**
 - 1.2.4.2. ‘Balance of Power’ in Post-Napoleonic Europe**
 - 1.2.4.3. Unification of Germany**
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 - 1.2.4.7. New Political Alliances**
 - 1.2.4.8. The Eruption: Rehearsal**
- 1.2.5. World War I: Beginning and Main Events**
- 1.2.6. World War I: After-Effects**
 - 1.2.6.1. Social and Economic Impact**
 - 1.2.6.2. Political Impact**
 - 1.2.6.3. Literary and Cultural Impact**
- 1.2.7. World War I: An Unfinished War**
- 1.2.8. Summing Up**
- 1.2.9. Comprehension Exercises**
- 1.2.10. Suggested Reading**

1.2.1. Objectives

This Unit has been written with the following objectives in mind:

- to understand the historical context of the First World War

- to analyse its underlying socio-political and economic causes
- to analyse the immediate political and diplomatic milieu
- to provide a brief account of the war- how it unfolded, main military events and the treaties ending the war
- to assess the political, economic, literary and cultural effects of the First World War

1.2.2. Introduction

The First World War took place between 1914 and 1918. It started primarily as a conflict among various European states but soon engulfed much of the non-European world. The countries directly involved in the war were divided into two opposing sides - the Allied Powers consisting of Britain, France, Russia, Italy, Japan and later the United States of America and the Central Powers consisting of Germany, Austria-Hungary, the Ottoman Empire and Bulgaria. It had far reaching military, political, socio-economic and cultural consequences.

1.2.3. Conceptualising the ‘World War’ : The World as a Battleground

The First World War had wide-spread effects- it was indeed fought across a vast and geographically diverse area so much so that the world itself had to be conceived as a battlefield, even though only a few European powers directly fought with one another. The term 'World War' indicates the Eurocentric bias of our historical understanding wherefore the 'world' is imagined in terms of Europe. But it also shows how imperialism expanded the influence of Europe beyond its geographical boundary; many parts of Asia and Africa were colonies of different European states. These areas were drawn into the war, supplied armies and resources, and were turned into battlefields, making it truly a war fought world-wide.

1.2.4. Background of the First World War

1.2.4.1. Setting the Stage: Emerging Economic Realities

At the turn of the nineteenth century almost the entire world was already ‘discovered,’ much travelled and elaborately mapped by Europeans; there were hardly any ‘dark continents’ to explore. It was a densely populated world. But it was a world that was more close-knit than ever, “bound by the bonds of moving goods and people, of capital and communications, of

material products and ideas...” (Hobsbawm, 14). In the later part of the nineteenth century the technological revolution started changing the very nature of industries. The earlier years of industrialisation were associated with the idea that progress can be achieved only through competition of different players in a free market. But these later years saw remarkable concentration of capital. Hobsbawm observes, “...the crux of the global economic system was that a number of developed economies simultaneously felt the same need for new markets” (66), leading to unprecedented rivalry among imperial powers. How did this rivalry play out in political terms?

1.2.4.2. ‘Balance of Power’ in Post-Napoleonic Europe

After the imperial expansions of Napoleon in the early nineteenth century Europe saw a period of relative political stability. 'Stability' should be taken with a pinch of salt though. In 1848 a series of revolutions swept over Europe. In France, it ended the constitutional monarchy and established what is called the Second Republic with Louis Napoleon as president. This Republic too did not survive for long and gave way to the Second Empire. Louis Napoleon staged a coup, took the name Napoleon III and became the emperor. Then there was the Crimean War (1853-1856) fought between the Russian Empire and the Ottoman Empire, the latter being assisted by other European states such as Britain and France. Russia was defeated in the Crimean War. Italy was unified. Prussia and Austria fought with each other and Austria was defeated. But none of this led to pan-European conflicts.

Thus ‘stability’ was fragile. It depended on maintaining mutually agreed upon national boundaries. Those boundaries followed the Westphalian notion of territorial sovereignty. One need not be too worked up by that term. In the early seventeenth century two wars took place simultaneously engaging almost all the major European powers; there was the Eighty Years War between the Spanish and the Dutch and there was the Thirty Years’ War fought between the Catholic and the Protestant states of Europe. Many people died in these wars and none emerged as the clear victor. In Westphalia a peace congress initiated a diplomatic process and in 1648 Peace of Westphalia, achieved through a series of treaties, ended these wars. In Westphalia certain principles of international relations were established wherefore it was accepted that irrespective of relative size and economic or political clout, each state should have full control over its own territory. No state can interfere in another state's domestic affairs (The good people negotiating with each other were all Europeans and they were talking about the sovereignty of the European nation-states. Later, they freely occupied territories in other parts of the world; their colonies did not enjoy the same courtesy).

This principle was further strengthened in the Congress of Vienna in 1815 that tried to bring lasting peace in Europe after the Napoleonic wars. The leaders who participated in that congress led by the Austrian statesman Metternich were all conservatives. They thought it was the spirit of the French Revolution and resulting waves of republicanism that upset the stability of Europe. The only way to restore that stability and peace was to maintain a 'Balance of Power' which was a delicate and complex network of treaties among different European powers to put checks on each other's territorial ambitions.

1.2.4.3. Unification of Germany

Times changed. Many of the states that negotiated the Treaty of Westphalia were no longer powerful enough to call the shots. Post-Napoleon Britain, France and Russia dominated European diplomacy. They were happy slicing through lands and joining hands or fighting with one another as it suited them.

Things changed in 1870 when the French Empire was unexpectedly defeated by a Prussia-led coalition of German states. France had to concede the Alsace-Lorraine region to the Germans. Otto Von Bismarck (1815-1898), the Minister President of Prussia was the main architect of this coalition. He first became the Chancellor of North German Confederation. This Confederation can be considered as the first attempt at a unified German nation-state. After the victory of this Confederation in the Franco-Prussian war it was dissolved to pave way for the German Empire which included all the German states barring Austria (Prussia and Austria were old rivals. Their rivalry would have serious consequences for Europe). Bismarck then became the Chancellor of the German Empire and would have singular influence on European diplomacy during his tenure between 1870 and 1890.

1.2.4.4. The Snowballing: the 'Age of Empire'

Eric Hobsbawm calls the time period between 1875 and 1914 the 'Age of Empire'. It was not the first time that the world had seen empires. But Hobsbawm says that this was the time for a new type of empire, namely the colonial empire. The economic and military dominance of the western capitalist countries had been established right after the industrial revolution. It was mainly maintained by colonial economic exploitation of the non-capitalist world. Attempts to translate this dominance into actual territorial conquests and administration in the form of empires started only in the late nineteenth century. As a result, between 1880 and 1914 most of the world outside Europe and North America was sliced up under the formal or informal rule of a few states such as Great Britain, France, Germany, the Netherlands and America. The one Asian country that features prominently in this list is Japan. Hobsbawm points out that

in this period a quarter of the global landmass was distributed among these powers. The biggest losers in this new world were the earlier, pre-industrial empires, such as Spain and Portugal.

A new development in international relations was clearly discernible, both political and economic, the two being increasingly difficult to separate. The word ‘imperialism’ started to gain currency in the 1890s. Later Vladimir Ilich Lenin, in his 1916 book, would identify imperialism as the highest stage of capitalism. According to Lenin, as a result of the extensive industrialisation of many western countries international trade grew many-fold, leading to increased competition. But due to the concentration of production competition is ultimately transformed into a tendency towards monopoly. We would see a little later how several European and a few Asian countries entered alliances with each other. We would also read about the rise and fall of empires. While reading about political factors behind the First World War we should not lose sight of their connections with economic realities. For example, the alliance system of international relations was paralleled by alliances of international capital - big corporations of Europe and America too entered into double or triple alliances with each other. Along with western political powers western bankers began to intervene in the political affairs of the Ottoman Empire, playing an active role in its imminent downfall. Imperialism was thus a mechanism to effectively redistribute wealth and resources within Europe as well as in European colonies.

1.2.4.5. Rise of New Empires

These were seismic changes. The emergence of Germany as a new ‘Empire’ affected the balance of power in Europe, more so because Germany by now had the strongest military in the continent along with large and expanding industrial resources. In order to counter a resurgent Prussia and later the German Empire, Austria adopted a new constitution in 1867 making way for the Austro-Hungarian Empire. There were too many empires, giving credence to Hobsbawm’s characterisation of the age. On the other hand, after the defeat of 1870 in the hands of Germany, the French Empire collapsed making way for the Third French Republic.

1.2.4.6. Fall of an Old Empire: The Balkan Crisis

The Ottoman Empire - one of the oldest Asian empires, spread across Europe and Asia, was on decline. Because of its reduced power, parts of West Asia and South East Europe were up for grabs. The European territories of the Ottoman Empire mainly consisted of the small states in the Balkan Peninsula. Movements for self-determination erupted in these states in the late nineteenth-century. Some of them, such as Serbia became nominally autonomous. The Balkan

states spoke Slavic languages, shared Slavic culture, something they had in common with Russia. That is why Russia became a stakeholder in the so-called Balkan Crisis culminating in the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78 between Russia and Ottoman Empire in which Russia joined forces with four Balkan states- Greece, Serbia, Romania and Montenegro- and defeated the Ottoman Empire. Serbia, Romania and Montenegro became independent states. However, there was a nationalist aspiration for the independence of all the Balkan states and their unification based on common Slavic identity. The problems continued through the Balkan Wars in 1912-13. In these wars the remains of the Ottoman control were wiped out. Afterwards the Balkan states fought among themselves for the spoils of the wars. As the Balkan states came out of Ottoman control, everyone wanted to control this strategically important region. The so-called 'great powers' fanned the rising nationalistic fervour in the Balkan states for their own benefit.

1.2.4.7. New Political Alliances

These 'great powers' kept each other on check by entering into understandings and alliances with each other. Bismarck emerged as a master of this 'alliance system' which, in reality, depended on shady deals and secret treaties driven by political self-interest of different European rulers.

What followed was a series of events and treaties that put this alliance system firmly in place. Following are the major developments:

- The Three Emperor's Agreement took place among Germany, Austro-Hungary and Russia in 1873
- After the Russo-Turkish War, the Congress of Berlin, led by Bismarck, took place in 1878. The so-called six 'great powers' of Europe - Germany, Russia, Austria-Hungary, Britain, France and Italy participated along with the Ottoman Empire and four Balkan states. It sounds complex but actually it was quite simple. The Ottomans were defeated and now the question was how to divide their land and influence areas (like the Balkan Peninsula) among the winners while ensuring winners do not start fighting among themselves
- The result was the Treaty of Berlin in 1878 which practically redrew the map of the Balkans (Remember the names of the states. They are going to be important in starting the First World War, even though they were small and not really powerful in themselves)
- In 1879 Germany and Austria-Hungary entered into the Dual Alliance
- In 1881 the Three Emperors' Agreement was renewed

- In 1882 Italy, Germany and Austria-Hungary concluded the Triple Alliance
- In 1887 a Reinsurance Treaty took place between Germany and Russia

The treaties were way too many and each had their finer points. But a general pattern emerged:

- Each treaty had the permutation and combination of the same five or six states. All of them were ambitious. All of them were threatened by each other. These treaties were driven as much by the instinct of self-preservation as by the need to stall each other.
- Germany would seem to be one common factor in all treaties. It entered multiple agreements with its archrival Austria to ensure its own safety while controlling its rival. Same holds true for its alliances with the other European states.
- Many of these alliances were shady business. As one can see from the list (not an exhaustive one) above, many of the countries were party to more than one treaty. But the details of one treaty were kept secret from the partners of another treaty. To give one example, Germany concluded the 'Reinsurance Treaty' with Russia without informing Austria-Hungary their partner in the Triple Alliance. As a result, even though almost all the powerful European states were in some kind of alliance with one another, they did not trust each other. There were elaborate spy networks to fish out each other's dirty deals and military secrets.
- Details of alliances and international agreements were kept secret not just from other alliance partners but also from the public domain of respective countries. The people of these countries, or their elected representatives (apart from England and France others did not have elected representatives. Most of them were ruled by authoritarians) were mostly kept in the dark. This was done in the name of 'national interest' and 'security'.

1.2.4.8. The Eruption: Rehearsal

Bismarck believed that the alliance system which would put limits to the expansion of any one European power would stabilise Europe. This was a politics of diplomacy, often called 'Realpolitik', because this was thought to be driven by the practical logic of self-defence. But after Wilhelm II became the German emperor in 1888 he had considerable differences with Bismarck. Bismarck had to resign in 1890, following which there was a significant change in German foreign politics. Instead of 'Realpolitik', a new term came in fashion - 'Weltpolitik' which is German for 'World Politics'. This was an expansionist imperialist policy that wanted to transform Germany into a global power. Naturally the other European states did not like it a bit. They entered into alliances with each other in order to alienate Germany. For example,

by 1894 there was a formal alliance between Republican France and Tsarist Russia, something quite unthinkable earlier.

In 1905 itself the Germans had a military plan to attack France, again something unthinkable in Bismarck's time. This is often referred to as the 'Great Memorandum of 1905'. Another important thing happened in 1905. The war between Japan and Russia that was going on since 1904 ended in a humiliating defeat for Russia. A peace treaty was signed with the mediation of the United States. While it increased the international stature of America, it also marked a change in the balance of power with Japan making political and territorial gains with an Asian empire on the rise now.

The Russo-Japanese war made a significant impact on the domestic politics of Russia. It started a chain of political movements that ultimately redefined world politics. There was already widespread poverty in Russia. Farmers as well as workers were in distress. The long-drawn war added to their suffering. In 1905 a mass political movement started that included peasant unrest, strikes by workers and agitation by soldiers. It forced the Tsar to accept reforms such as the establishment of the parliament (State Duma), a multi-party system and ultimately the adoption of the Russian Constitution in 1906. The revolution of 1905 is often considered as the 'dress rehearsal' (a term used by Lenin) for the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917.

By 1914 all the so-called 'Great Powers' of Europe were divided into two coalitions - there was the Triple Alliance of Germany, Austro-Hungary and Italy, and the Triple Entente among France, Russia and Britain.

1.2.5. World War I : Beginning and Main Events

On 28th June 1914, the Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir to the throne of Austria-Hungary was assassinated during his visit to Sarajevo by a member of a group of Serbian and Croatian nationalists. Amid all these groundbreaking developments the immediate trigger for the First World War would seem an isolated act; it could have such catastrophic impact because of the pre-existing volatile condition in Europe.

Russia was in alliance with Serbia and helped to form an alliance of the Balkan states in order to check the expansion of Austria-Hungary in this region. In 1878 through the Treaty of Berlin Austria-Hungary occupied Bosnia and Herzegovina, another Balkan state. However, since there were many Serbs living in Bosnia, their demand for freedom from the Austrian rule continued, with support from Serbia as well as Russia.

Against this background the assassination of an Austrian prince by Serbian nationalists quickly turned into a bilateral crisis between Austria-Hungary and Serbia. Germany was an ally of Austria-Hungary and Russia was of Serbia. Thus the bilateral problem snowballed into a wider diplomatic crisis known as the July Crisis involving at least three powerful European states. Countries like France and England which were not directly involved could not stay neutral for very long and war was formally declared on 28th July 1914.

By August 1914, there was a mobilisation of six million men by different European armies. That same month Germany invaded Belgium. The Belgian government had professed neutrality in case the war breaks out. As a result, both alliances wanted to gain strategic advantage over the Belgian territory. The German invasion led to a flood of refugees and killing of an estimated 5000 civilians. It was an indication of things to come - incremental loss of civilian lives and large-scale displacement of the population. The Belgian independence from German occupation became a rallying cry for the allied powers.

The First World War took place on three main fronts. The Western front constituted of a series of trenches in France; German troops were on the western side, the British and French troops were on the east. The trench warfare, opposing armies occupying deep-dug trenches for days, men often trapped to death in those trenches became one of the lasting images of the horror of the First World War. Two years into the war, all sides involved lost a large number of combatants. For the allied forces 1916 was a particularly terrible year. The Battle of Verdun and the Battle of the Somme had seen an estimated loss of around 600,000 men only on the allied side, on the German side a million and a half men either died or were wounded.

The Eastern front was regions of Western Europe under German control, such as Prussia and Poland. Here Germany was on the western side and Russia was trying to hold the eastern side. A so-called 'Middle-Eastern Front' opened when both Russia and the Ottoman Empire mobilised troops against each other. The Ottomans entered a secret alliance with the Germans. After Russia declared war on the Ottoman Empire, its allies France and Britain too joined. By 1917 both the human and economic toll inflicted by the war resulted in popular unrest and protests all over Europe. Economic blockade of the rival power was an integral part of war strategy. According to historian Michael Howard, Germany, which was industrially one of the most advanced states of Europe, suffered heavily due to the British economic blockade. In Germany, mortality among women and children increased by 50 percent. Hunger-related diseases were rampant. Howard informs that by the end of the war around 730,000 deaths were attributed by official German estimates solely to the economic blockade. However, there was food shortage in other European countries as well. Trumping up military production

and the diversion of raw material and resources towards it created a crisis for the industry, high inflation added to the economic hardship, particularly of the working classes, the urban poor and lower to middle income groups. While there were beneficiaries profiteering from the ongoing war, there were strikes and food riots. The bread riots in Petrograd started the February Revolution in Russia, forcing Tsar Nicholas II to abdicate his throne, marking the end of the Romanov dynasty.

After maintaining neutrality for a long time the United States joined the war in 1917 on the Allied side. In the Asian territories still under Ottoman control a series of battles took place between the British and Ottoman forces, the latter backed by German and Austrian troops. The Ottoman forces were gradually pushed back as the British troops entered and gained eventual control over the whole of Palestine.

After the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia, the new Soviet government, under the leadership of Lenin signed a peace treaty with Germany in Brest-Litovsk in 1918, ending Russia's engagement in the war. Russia had to concede a substantial part of its territories in the East to the Germans. Since 1917 bombardment of cities, civilian population and resources had become a fixture of the war strategy on both sides.

By late 1918 the Central army began to retreat. In Germany, a newly formed government of Social Democrats started peace negotiations with the Allied Army. On 11th November, 1918 Armistice was declared on the Western front, formally ending the war, though fighting continued on other fronts for some time. In 1919 Paris Peace Conference was held to officially end the war. A peace treaty was signed with Germany in Versailles. Separate treaties were signed with Bulgaria, Austria-Hungary and the Ottoman Empire.

1.2.6. World War I : After-Effects

1.2.6.1. Social and Economic Impact

The most immediate impact of the First World War was demographic. It was undoubtedly the deadliest war that the world had seen till then. An estimated 10 million military men died in the war. Around 2 million people are estimated to have died not directly in the battlefields but by the diseases caused by the war. Around 6 million people went missing. Millions of civilians died as a consequence of the war. Many more were maimed. Apart from the regular standing armies of respective countries a large number of young men were conscripted. Troops were instrumental in spreading the influenza pandemic of 1918 across Europe, killing a large number of people. Worldwide, one out of five people, that is, around 500 million people got sick,

around 50 million died. Everything put together the First World War obliterated a large portion of the total population of Europe and proved equally deadly for a large part of the rest of the world.

The next impact, a related one, equally severe and lasting, was economic. In this war France and Germany lost more than 80% of their male population aged between 15 and 49. This had a significant impact on the economy since a large part of the productive workforce was either wiped out or impaired. Both agricultural and industrial production collapsed. There was an acute shortage of food. Every few days the price of everyday goods doubled. Due to the war countries imposed restrictions on trade, capital flow and immigration of people. The war also resulted in increased taxation.

The conscription of a large number of men in active war duty opened doors for women to participate in economic activities to keep the home economy going. Even after the war, women's economic participation continued, even increased. This encouraged ongoing women's movements demanding voting, property and other rights. We would see in the decade following the First World War women would gain the right to vote in most European countries as well as in the United States and in Canada.

However, the economic impact was not bad for everyone. It boosted the American economy. America ramped up its natural resources in just a few years. Its economic output doubled in the four years of war, giving it competitive advantage in mass economic production. This helped immensely to catapult the United States into becoming a world power in the years following the First World War.

The First World War had a particularly devastating economic impact on Germany. German production dropped by 27%. Its debts increased. It had to print money to pay for the war. After the war it was forced to pay reparations to the Allied Forces, causing further economic distress.

Economy is directly linked to the socio-political impact of the First World War. It affected the balance of power in Europe as well as within the European countries. In Britain, for example, the economy actually grew, the government became richer but the people got poorer. The British government funded much of the war effort, but it was also forced to borrow from America. The distress of the people and huge loss of life and property resulted in civic unrest. It was not a coincidence that trade unions grew manifold during and after the years of the First World War.

Russia was badly hit. The economic distress led to a situation of mass starvation. This was a major factor behind the popular support for the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917. The economic hardship caused by the war and the efforts at compensating for the damages of the war caused disaffection among the German people. The terms of the Treaty of Versailles were thought to be humiliating. Germany had to acknowledge complete responsibility for the war. The Allies occupied all German territory on the Left bank of the Rhine, Germany had to give up all territory won in Eastern Europe since 1914, mineral rich Alsace-Lorraine had to be restored to France. Restrictions were put on the German armed forces. National Socialists would use the discontent against the terms of defeat and reparation to fan nationalist pride in order to come to power, paving way for Nazi atrocities and the Second World War.

1.2.6.2. Political Impact

The economic and social distress caused by the First World War had a wide-ranging political impact. On one end of the spectrum there was socialist upsurge across Europe. Many within the international socialist movement were opposed to the war which they saw as an advancement of the imperialist project, at the cost of the working classes. As the war progressed, these voices were drowned in the rising jingoism and nationalist fervour. Many socialist parties had to toe the line and support the war efforts in their respective countries. However, the resulting economic crisis, growing unemployment, inflation, food scarcity brought the question of class conflict and class privilege at the centre of political activities. The Bolshevik Revolution in Russia encouraged the possibility of a socialist revolution in other parts of Europe. In Germany, even before the war ended, a naval mutiny in 1918 turned into a revolution that quickly spread across several cities. Workers and Soldiers' Councils seized power on the Soviet model. The Kaiser had to abdicate power, Social Democrats, the largest party in Reichstag, formed the government. In 1919 the Spartacist uprising took place against this government. It was a working class revolt, led by the German Communist Party and conducted through a series of strikes and agitations. The revolt was brutally crushed but its ripple effect was felt across Europe. In England the Labour Party grew out of the radical trade union movement, particularly after the electoral reforms of 1918 which extended voting rights to all men aged over 21 and all women over 30. This reform added a significant number of working-class voters.

On the other end of the spectrum, disillusionment with the political establishment provided popular support to reactionary, right wing politics across Europe, epitomised by charismatic authoritarian leaders. This trend would gradually consolidate in the form of the Fascist Party in Italy and the National Socialist Party in Germany.

On the whole, the political cartography around the world underwent major changes. European powers were badly hit. The United States, on the other hand, isolated so far from the affairs of the world, grew in importance and stature.

Building on the Fourteen Points- a statement of principles prepared by the American President Woodrow Wilson as the foundation for peace negotiations - the League of Nations was founded in 1920 in the Paris Peace Conference. The Covenant of the League of Nations vowed

“to promote international cooperation and to achieve international peace and security
by the acceptance of obligations not to resort to war,
by the prescription of open, just and honourable relations between nations,
by the firm establishment of the understandings of international law as the actual rule of conduct among Governments, and
by the maintenance of justice and a scrupulous respect for all treaty obligations in the dealings of organised peoples with one another”
(https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/leagcov.asp)

These became the cardinal rules guiding international relations and have been reflected in the covenants of later international bodies such as the United Nations.

The First World War also had a significant geopolitical impact on West Asia. Fall of the Ottoman Empire and the intervention of several European powers changed the shape of Greater Syria that included Palestine and present-day Jordan, Syria and Lebanon. According to Palestinian American historian Rashid Khalidi, this region suffered around half a million deaths between 1915 and 1918 along with penury, starvation and large scale dislocation. Even as the war was still on the secret agreement between France and Britain, namely the Sykes-Picot Agreement defined their respective spheres of influence, paving way for the eventual partition of the Ottoman Empire. Unlike the Balkan states, the Arabs living under the Ottoman rule were not granted independence. Further in 1917, Great Britain issued the controversial Balfour Declaration in favour of “the establishment in Palestine of a home for the Jewish people”, arguably sowing the seeds of the Palestine-Israel conflict.

1.2.6.3. Literary and Cultural Impact

The First World War had both immediate and long term effects on the literary and cultural scene of Europe in the early twentieth century. The catastrophe of the war and loss of young lives in their prime were explored in war poetry that emerged as a distinct genre. Catherine

Reilly in her seminal book *English Poetry of the First World War* (1978) lists more than 3000 individual war poems by more than 2000 poets. The critic Edna Longley describes poetry as the unprecedented ‘mass medium’ of the First World War in Britain. It was more or less true for other European countries as well.

The war was as much military as it was ideological. A large portion of the literature produced during and immediately after the war contributed to creating and sustaining a romanticised notion of ‘The Great War’. Leading English newspapers such as *The Times*, *The Morning Post*, and *The Daily Chronicle* regularly published war poems. Wartime anthologies came out in rapid succession. War poetry became part of the curriculum. In *A War Imagined : The First World War and English Culture*, Samuel Hynes describes the myth of the Great War as a Grand Narrative defining “a generation of innocent young men, their heads full of high abstractions like Honour, Glory and England” (Hynes,7). Their subsequent disillusionment created an unassailable gap between pre- and post-war England.

Many of the war poets were soldiers who had first-hand experience of the carnage, its physical and psychological impact. Many lost their lives in the War. These included English poets Rupert Brooke (1887-1915), Isaac Rosenberg (1890-1918), Edward Thomas (1897-1917) and Wilfred Owen (1893-1918), French poets Charles Péguy (1873-1914) and Guillaume Apollinaire (1880-1918). Rupert Brooke’s poetry displays patriotism and youthful idealism about the war - consider these oft-quoted lines from his sonnet “The Soldier” - “If I should die, think only this of me/That there’s some corner of a foreign field/ That is forever England....” or these lines from “The Dead”:

There are waters blown by changing winds to laughter
And lit by the rich skies, all day. And after,
Frost, with a gesture, stays the waves that dance
And wandering loveliness. He leaves a white
Unbroken glory, a gathered radiance,
A width, a shining peace, under the night.

However, there are also instances in which the myth is questioned from within. Wilfred Owen, for example, in ‘Strange Meeting’, captures the unmitigated horrors of war with unwavering honesty:

It seemed that out of battle I escaped
Down some profound dull tunnel, long since scooped
Through granites which titanic wars had groined.

Yet also there encumbered sleepers groaned,
Too fast in thought or death to be bestirred.
Then, as I probed them, one sprang up, and stared
With piteous recognition in fixed eyes,
Lifting distressful hands, as if to bless.
And by his smile, I knew that sullen hall, -
By his dead smile I knew we stood in Hell.

Those who survived the war, such as the poet Siegfried Sassoon (1886-1967), bear witness to simultaneous efforts at public memorialisation and collective forgetting, not to mention glorification of war that would often be used to mitigate the responsibility of the political leadership and growing disaffection among people. Sassoon's poem "Aftermath," written in 1919, begins with the question, "Have you forgotten yet?" He goes on :

For the world's events rumbled on since those gagged days,
Like traffic checked while at the crossing of city-ways:
And the haunted gap in your mind has filled with thoughts that flow
Like clouds in the lit heaven of life; and you are a man reprieved to go,
Taking your peaceful share of Time, with joy to spare.
But the past is just the same - and War's a bloody game...
Have you forgotten yet?...

Memory then becomes a contested territory and, in the decade, following the war one finds efforts to shape collective remembrance of the war as war novels and memoirs pour out. John Hay Beith's novel *The Five Hundred Thousand* published in 1916 (two sequels published in 1917) exhibits a certain kind of positive portrayal of the war from a soldier's perspective. Ernest Raymonds' *Tell England* (1922), recounting the sacrifices of two English public school boys who volunteer for service and die in action, exemplifies construction of a sanitised and sentimental memory of the war. A more critical approach towards the war can be found in Siegfried Sassoon's semi-autobiographical Sherston novels, particularly in *Memoirs of an Infantry Officer* (1930). Memoirs started coming out a little later and included Robert Graves' *Goodbye to All That* (1929), Richard Arlington's *Death of a Hero* (1929), Vera Brittain's *Testament of Youth* (1933) etc.

Some of the most comprehensive critiques of the war came from women writers and activists. Irene Cooper Willis, a member of the radical faction of the British Labour Party,

brought out *How We Went into War: A Study of Liberal Idealism* (1918) questioning not just the war efforts but liberal values. Dora Marsden, the founding editor of *Freewomen* maintained a similar critical stance.

The war was seen not only as a political crisis, rather as a civilisational crisis; a complete and irreparable break from the past. It impacted national identities, class consciousness and gender identities. It shook Europe's confidence in its own political and cultural superiority to the core, paving way for a sense of disenchantment with the status quo, political as well as cultural.

Apart from those who fell in the war and those who survived there was a third group which would have a significant impact in shaping the public discourse around the war. They were the deserters and conscientious objectors, exposing the moral futility of war and resisting its glorification. Many of them ended up in Switzerland, a declared neutral zone. There were many other exiles residing in Switzerland at that time such as V. L. Lenin and the Irish writer James Joyce.

One such conscientious objector was the German artist Hugo Ball (1886-1927), who, along with Emmy Hennings (1885-1948), opened a bohemian gathering in Zurich in 1916 named Cabaret Voltaire. Other experimental artists and poets such as the Romanian poet Tristan Tzara (1896-1963) and the German writer Richard Huelsenbeck (1892-1974) joined and began to 'perform' their poetry in the cabaret. There would often be 'simultaneous poems' - three or more poets reciting their poems simultaneously in different languages, creating deliberate cacophony. They brought together different ideas and techniques explored by various avant-garde art movements of the day. Tzara, Ball and others named their efforts Dada - an apparently meaningless word, the first utterances of a child - a word that means 'nothing', to quote Tzara's *Dada Manifesto* 1918. It marked a conscious rupture not only with the past but between the settled link of word and meaning, sense and reason.

Cultural modernism was already underway in pre-war Europe in the form of different art movements such as Futurism, Cubism and Expressionism. However, Dadaism was the first among the European avant-garde that came directly as a response to the First World War. Surrealist André Breton remarks, "Cubism was a school of painting, futurism a political movement: DADA is a state of mind" (Nicholls, 247). This state of mind was characterised by a spirit of rejection, scepticism and anarchism shaped by the devastations of the First World War. Hans Arp, the German French artist and sculptor involved with the Dada movement writes, "In Zurich in 1915, losing interest in the slaughterhouses of the world war, we turned to the fine arts" (Ibid.). Their turn to 'Fine Art' is not to seek refuge in some kind of an idealised

world created by art; rather to turn art against itself. Dada is often considered anti-art. However, it did not deny the relevance of art; just questioned the piety and purity associated with it. Hugo Ball writes in 1916, “What we are celebrating is at once a buffoonery and a requiem mass” (Ball, 51).

In spite of there being a manifesto, Dadaism was never a programmatic aesthetic movement. The manifesto questioned the foundations of any such movement - “Does anyone think he has found a psychic base common to all mankind? The attempt of Jesus and the Bible covers with their broad benevolent wings: shit, animals, days. How can one expect to put order into the chaos that constitutes that infinite and shapeless variation: man”? It declares “.... Dada was born of a need for independence, of a distrust toward unity. Those who are with us preserve their freedom. We recognize no theory”. *The Dada Manifesto 1918* also questions the objective value attached to the subjective experience of art and its relation with the capitalist order. Even the most radical experiments of modernist artists do not “prevent the canvas from being a good or bad painting suitable for the investment of intellectual capital” (https://writing.upenn.edu/library/Tzara_Dada-Manifesto_1918.pdf).

Some of the features associated with Dadaism are:

- Rejection of the traditional view of art
- Expression of anger
- An ironic postulation
- Dark Humour
- Sound Poetry and Performance Poetry
- Replacing conventional use of language with verbal gestures that do not necessarily ‘mean’ anything - “he roar of contorted pains, the interweaving of contraries and of all contradictions, freaks and irrelevancies” (Tzara, 13)

(Consult relevant and authentic documents on the internet and note down important points on ‘Dada Manifesto’ and Dadaism)

The Dada movement added to already ongoing experiments with artistic forms, questioning, overhauling or overthrowing conventional rules dictating the relation of form and content. All such movements, paralleling, criss-crossing, even contradicting one another at times constituted literary and cultural modernism that will be discussed in Module 2, Unit 4.

The fact that rational political decision making could lead to such mass slaughter put the discourse of Enlightenment rationality, the edifice of western modernity, under scanner (Again not to forget that the European colonies have witnessed mass extermination in the name of

civilisation for a long time. But now, Europeans themselves faced the same and were horrified by it). This realisation necessitated new forms and vocabulary to express the horror. Ezra Pound published “Studies in Contemporary Mentality,” a series published through 1917, exploring and critiquing the ‘reasonableness’ of war.

The looming shadow of the First World War can obviously be detected in other, well known modernist texts such as James Joyce’s *Ulysses*, T.S. Eliot’s *The Wasteland* or “Sweeney among the Nightingales” which, according to Vincent Sherry, presents “the ‘Lost Generation’ of the first post-war moment” (Sherry, 124). In the poem ‘Gerontion’ composed in 1919, Eliot questions:

After such knowledge, what forgiveness? Think now
History has many cunning passages, contrived corridors
And issues, deceives with whispering ambitions,
Guides us by vanities. Think now
She gives when our attention is distracted
And what she gives, gives with such supple confusions
That the giving famishes the craving.

1.2.7. World War I : An Unfinished War

The First World War is often seen as a historical rupture -a moment in history that changed everything. And it did, in many ways. But it also preserved much of the history that came right before it. You must have noted that in this unit we have discussed events going as far back as the late nineteenth century in order to understand the reasons behind the First World War. Geoff Dyer writes in his book *The Missing of the Somme*, “Life in the decade and a half preceding 1914 has come to be viewed inevitably and unavoidably through the optic of the war that followed it” (Dyer, 5). On the other hand historians such as Michael Howard consider the two World Wars as essentially one, “a Thirty Years War of the twentieth century, a war interrupted by twenty one years of peace” (qtd. in Purdue, 19). There were obvious causal links between the two World Wars. But their linkage goes beyond causality. Even though the two World Wars began with the impetus of imperialist nation-states to expand their territorial boundaries, they signify the emergence of the ‘Empire as a world order’ as opposed to the good old imperialism. Whereas imperialism is about territorial expansion, Empire as world order does not depend on fixed territorial boundaries; it is an instrument of rule which is ‘decentred and deterritorialising’ (This last phrase is taken from Michael Hardt and Antonio

Negri's famous book *Empire*, written in 2001. You can have a look into this book, it gives you an idea how the modern empire is more than controlling land; it is about controlling resources).

1.2.8. Summing Up

This unit, as you must have noticed, has examined the background of the First World War from various perspectives. It has analysed the factors that led to the War, in the process going back to the events of the late nineteenth century. It has explored the main events that took place during the War and analysed their importance. Moreover, it has assessed the political, economic and socio-cultural impact of the War. Most importantly, the discussion on the impact of the War on literature will help you understand many of the literary works included in your syllabus.

1.2.9. Comprehension Exercises:

Essay Type Questions :

1. Critically examine the causes of the First World War
2. Comment on the socio-political effects of the First World War
3. Critically analyse the impact of the First World War on English literature of the twentieth century.

Mid-length Questions :

1. How would you relate European literary modernism to the First World War? Elucidate.
2. Do you consider The First World War to the result of imperialist aspirations of competing nation-states? Give reasons for your answer.
3. Did the First 'World War' give rise to the concept of the 'world as a battleground'? Give your considered opinion.
4. Write a short note on the Unification of Germany.
5. Write a short note on the concept of the 'Age of Empire'.
6. What is Balkan crisis? Elaborate.
7. What did the Covenant of the League of Nations vow? Elucidate the points.
8. Will you consider World War I as an 'unfinished war'? Explain.

Short Answer Type Questions :

1. Which were the opposing power blocks involved in the First World War?
2. What is Peace of Westphalia?
3. Who was the Archduke Franze Ferdinand? What happened to him?
4. How and when was the League of Nations established?
5. What is Woodrow Wilson's 'Fourteen Points'?
6. Who is Tristan Tzara?
7. What is 'Dada Manifesto'? Why is it important?

1.2.10. Suggested Reading

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Unit 3 □ The Second World War : An Overview

Structure

- 1.3.1. Objectives**
- 1.3.2. Introduction**
- 1.3.3. Causes of the War**
- 1.3.4. Major Events and Developments**
- 1.3.5. The End of Empires**
- 1.3.6. Literature**
- 1.3.7. Summing Up**
- 1.3.8. Comprehension Exercises**
- 1.3.9. Suggested Reading**

1.3.1. Objectives

This Unit is a continuation of the earlier sections dealing with the historical background of the Modern Age. It attempts to familiarize students with the causes, developments, consequences and the literature of the Second World War.

1.3.2. Introduction

The Second World War was declared on September 3, 1939. The war was fought between Britain, France and Russia, who were later joined by the United States of America forming the Allied forces, and Germany, also supported later by Italy and Japan who comprised the Axis powers. The war which began as a European conflict later assumed a global character with Germany raiding the French and British colonies in northern Africa and West Asia. Similarly, Japan occupied several islands in the Pacific Ocean, the South China Sea and large parts of South-east Asia.

As a consequence, the war, ironically, revived the anti-imperialist movements across the world. The suppressed Boers reestablished their apartheid regime in South Africa in 1948; Rashid Ali seized power in Iraq in 1941 but was quickly crushed; India intensified her nationalist movement and finally won freedom at the midnight of August 15, 1947. The Japanese invasion

drove the French from their possessions in Indochina. The United States, however, was opposed to this extension of Japanese power and imposed trade and maritime sanctions on the latter. Japan, therefore retaliated by attacking the U.S. naval and air-force base at Pearl Harbor in the Hawaii on December 7, 1941 thus giving the war a pan-continental character. In this sense World War II could also be considered a “total war” not only because it involved several nations across the globe but also for witnessing the complete defeat and subjugation of Germany and, finally, Japan with the first use of nuclear weapons when the U.S. dropped two atomic bombs on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki on August 6 and 9, 1945, respectively, thereby bringing the war to an end.

1.3.3. Causes of the War

Unlike the First World War, there was little doubt or controversy regarding the origins and causes of World War II. The hostilities were mainly ascribed to the power and policies of Adolf Hitler (April 20, 1889-April 30, 1945) and the racial and imperialist ambitions of Nazi Germany. However, it has now been historically confirmed that the beginnings of World War II can be traced to the First Great War, more specifically, to the Treaty of Versailles signed by the Allied victors and Germany in 1919. In fact many of the world leaders who participated in the Peace Conference which followed World War I together with later historians were unanimous about the Treaty as a shocking instance of injustice against Germany. Not only was this nation compelled to compensate the war-costs of the Allied forces, but was also economically devastated, territorially divided and nationally humiliated.

Moreover, the Versailles Treaty did not honour the terms of the Armistice of 1918 which had formally announced a ceasefire. France, thus brazenly occupied the Ruhr region in 1923 and went on to divide several parts of West Germany carving a Polish corridor and granting Bavaria and then Danzig, a major German sea-port, independence but under the control of French government (Hobsbawm 37). Several British statesmen described these moves as “acts of war”; and a contemporary newspaper predicted that “Day by day another European war is being made more and more certain...” (Fuller 21). Thus, the instability in European politics after World War I quickly escalated into aggression such as the German intervention in the Spanish Civil War 1936-1939, the Italian invasion of Ethiopia in 1935, the German re-occupation of the Ruhr and Rhineland in 1936, the German invasion of Austria in 1938 and of Czechoslovakia in 1939. Finally, in 1940, Germany attacked and occupied Norway, Denmark, the Netherlands, Belgium and France. Britain was, therefore left with the challenging task of withstanding and repelling the German *juggernaut* (*juggernaut*: large, powerful and destructive force that cannot be stopped; Hobsbawm 37).

1.3.4. Major Events and Developments

Historians have suggested that one of the reasons for the effortless German overpowering of France was the total economic, material and moral exhaustion of the French army and its citizens after the ravages of World War I (Fuller 82-83). Moreover, the use of a World War I strategy of entrenched warfare, by creating a long stretch of the Maginot line Front to block the German advance, proved futile against the enemy's superior tank and aircraft attacks. Thus the German tactic of a *blitzkrieg* or lightning war of annihilation and exhaustion reduced the French to concede defeat and accept a provisional French 'state' with its capital at Vichy, a health resort (Hobsbawm 38).

By removing France from the European theatre of war, the Germans could now concentrate on dealing with the invasion of Britain. However, the English Channel stood as a major deterrent against the German advance for, as Shakespeare had written in *Richard II* it acted as a natural defence, "This fortress built by Nature for herself,/ Against infection and the hand of war,/ This happy breed of men, this little world,/ This precious stone set in the silver sea,/ Which serves it in the office of a wall/ Or as a moat defensive to a house" (Act2 , Sc1 , ll 43-48).

Having lost her ally on the Continent, England, however, was denied the territory and the military strength to confront Germany on land. Therefore, the British had to depend on its navy and air-force, particularly the fighter plane, the *Spitfire* which inflicted considerable destruction on the German air-force, the *Luftwaffe*. Together with this, the Royal Navy guarded the Strait of Dover protecting the passage of American ships carrying food and military supplies to the besieged island. In fact, by declaring war against the U.S. and then by attacking Russia in 1941 Germany seemed to have sealed its inevitable defeat in this war. Hitler miscalculated the Russian determination to fight back after the initial German victories in the North. Repulsed by the proverbial Russian winter, the Germans thus capitulated before the relentless march of the Russians towards Berlin. They were joined by the Americans who, in 1941, had joined the Allied forces. On May 7, 1945 Germany unconditionally surrendered at the Allied Headquarters in Rheims, France; then on May 8, this instrument of submission was ratified under Russian supervision thus bringing to an end the European phase of this war.

In the Asian theatre of the war, Japan continued its unopposed aggression and occupation of the South-Asian countries and several Pacific islands. This forced the U.S. to intervene to protect its own trade and imperial ambitions in the region. Finally, the attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941 forced the U.S. into an active participation in the war against Japan.

The Americans, however, first concentrated on defeating Germany which took another three years; then, to prevent a prolonged engagement in the East, it dropped the two atom bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki which, conclusively, ended the Second World War.

1.3.5. The End of Empires

As one of the most important British colonies, India became automatically involved in the war. Therefore, a considerable amount of man-power and material resources was supplied from this nation to the war effort. The contribution of Indian soldiers in assisting the Allied forces in achieving victory over the Axis powers was unanimously recognized by British commanders. In fact, the Indian Division's role in Europe, Africa and in withstanding the march of the Japanese army in South East Asia received glowing tributes. General Sir William Slim, Commander of the 14th Army deployed against the Japanese, thus observed in 1946: "India was our base, and three-quarters of everything we got was from there. The best thing of all we got from India was the Indian army. Indeed the campaign in Burma (now Myanmar) was largely an Indian army campaign. The bulk of the fighting troops and almost the whole of those on the lines of communication were soldiers of the Indian Army, and magnificent they were"

The war, however, had a disastrous effect on the Indian economy and society. There was a rapid increase in the prices of essential commodities owing to an acute inflation following the British move on trading only against gold reserves. The diversion of resources towards the war effort created a severe scarcity of food items that had a direct effect on the common citizen. The Report of the National Planning Committee formed in 1938 clearly admitted to the failure of the government rationing system which encouraged corruption and the black-market. In fact, it has now been confirmed that the dreadful Bengal Famine, which killed about a million and a half of poor Bengalis was a consequence of the war and the inhuman indifference of the colonial administration (Majumdar 971).

As a result it soon became evident that the World War gave a significant impetus to the Indian Nationalist movement. This movement had asserted its demand for self-government (*Swaraj*) and adopted Non-cooperation as its strategy in the Congress Conference in Calcutta as early as 1920. In fact, the Congress who had formed a provincial government in 1937, opposed the British decision to drag India into the war. They demanded that the war aims include the end of the Raj and a granting of freedom to India. In 1940 the Civil Disobedience was revived by Mahatma Gandhi which soon became a mass struggle in 1942. The British government adopted severe repressive measures- arrested all the Congress leaders and crushed all peaceful protests with arms.

Despite suppressing all such popular non-violent movements, the British were faced with another armed challenge when Subhas Chandra Bose, a former Congress president, had escaped arrest in 1941 and thereby established contact with Germany and Japan for assistance in an armed struggle against the British. Therefore, under an agreement with the Japanese government, Bose gathered the Indian soldiers, taken prisoner by the Japanese in Malaya, to form the 'Azad Hind Fauz' or the Indian National Army. Inaugurating the Provisional Government of Free India in Singapore on October 21, 1943, Bose's army joined the Japanese army to the eastern frontier of India. Bose's example was followed by the Royal Indian Navy which, on February 14, 1946 mutinied and shook the confidence of the British Raj. Independence, however, did not come to India before the fateful and tragic division of the Indian subcontinent, particularly, of the Punjab and Bengal to form the nation of Pakistan on August 14, 1947. Following this, India won freedom from British rule on August 15, 1947. Similarly, Burma and Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) which were British colonies gained self-rule the following year. Finally, after the surrender of Japan, the majority Muslim population of Malaya (now Malaysia) organized a movement demanding self-government called the Malayan Emergency in 1948 and was successful in acquiring independence from the British in 1957 to form a federation of eleven states named Malaysia.

1.3.6. Literature

In comparison with the literature of the First World War, that of the Second has not been able to claim unequal respect, prominence and significance in the histories of English literature. This may be ascribed to the fact that the horrors, anguish and tragedies of the Great War, because it was the first of its kind and marked a complete break with the great history and tradition of Western civilization and seemed to predict its decline and dissolution. Moreover, the inter-war years which feature the great works of the major modernist writers, namely, D.H. Lawrence, T.S. Eliot, James Joyce, Virginia Woolf and E.M. Forster, seemed to overshadow the literature of the war that followed. (Bergonzi 71)

The idea of the war poet in fact was a development more specific to the First World War and was not commonly associated with the Second. The popular image of a patriotic Rupert Brooke or the pitiful protest of Wilfred Owen were, somewhat missing in the latter. The general feeling among the poets and novelists in this period was, as Bernard Bergonzi observes, "a stoical acceptance that since the folly of politicians had made the war unavoidable, Nazi Germany had to be defeated, but there should be no conventional heroics, nor any illusions about what war involved or any false expectation about the likely triumphs of the outcome" This sentiment is aptly expressed in Herbert Reads's poem, 'To a Conscript of 1940': "There

are heroes who have heard the rally and have seen/ the glitter of a garland around their head./
/Theirs is a hollow victory. They are deceived./ But you my brother and my ghost, if you can
go/Knowing that there is no reward, no certain use/ In all your sacrifice, then honour is reprieved’
(qtd in Bergonzi 71).

T.S. Eliot’s *Four Quartets*, which appeared in 1944, is one of the major poems to have been inspired by the war. Basically a poem of memory and introspection, the poem tries to trace the poet’s American origins which went to shape his identity. Eliot repeatedly uses the metaphor of darkness, which is literally a reference to the black-out of England during the war, regretfully observing, “O dark darkdark. They all go into the dark,/ The vacant interstellar spaces, the vacant into the vacant,/ the captains, merchant bankers, eminent men of letters,/ The generous patrons of art, the statesmen and rulers,/ ... all go into the dark” (‘East Coker’ Part III, 1-6). The poem also reflects on the loss and uncertainty of the times and its consequent sense of spiritual crisis. In fact, the opening lines of *Burnt Norton*, the first poem in the series, with Eliot’s preoccupation with the idea of time can be considered a relevant comment on the period: “Time present and time past/ Are both perhaps present in time future, / And time future contained in time past./ If all time is eternally present/ All time is unredeemable.” (‘Burnt Norton’, Part I, 1-5)

An important development for English poetry during the war years was poetic movement calling itself the New Apocalypse or Neo-Romanticism. This movement rejected the social and political poetry of the Auden group of poets. The poets of the New Apocalypse thus emphasized individualism, subjectivity mythology and medievalism in their poetry. The movement was based on the poetry of Dylan Thomas (1914-53), a Welsh writer with a gift for experiments in language, rhythm and syntax, whose poetry mainly dealt with the themes of man and nature, memories of childhood and the individual’s search for sexual and spiritual fulfillment in poems such as, ‘Fern Hill’, ‘In Country Sleep’, ‘Poem on his Birthday’ and ‘In the White Giant’s Thigh.’ Thomas also wrote a set of poems on the air raids namely, ‘Deaths and Entrances’, ‘Ceremony after a Fire Raid’ and the much anthologized, ‘A Refusal to Mourn the Death by Fire of a Child in London’.

The poetry of the New Apocalypse appeared in two anthologies, *The White Horseman* (1941) and *The Crown and the Sickle* (1944) containing the poems of J.F. Hendry, Henry Treece, G.S. Frazer and Nicholas Moore. Moore’s poem, ‘Soldiers in Ice’ included in the collection, *The Glass Tower* (1944) was a notable poem on World War II. However, among the many who were contributing to the popular literary journal, *Horizon* (1940) and in *Penguin New Writing* (1941) three can be considered as representative of the poetry of this time :

Alun Lewis (1915-44), Keith Douglas (1920-44) and Sidney Keyes (1922-43). All of them died in their twenties in the war but left behind a recognizable collection of writing. Lewis, who was Welsh, displayed a satirical and tragic sensibility in his poem, 'All Day It Has Rained'; his poems collected in *Raiders Dawn* (1942) and short stories in *The Last Inspection* (1943) remain important works of this period. Douglas's poems reveal his preoccupation with death as in the noted, "Simplify Me When I'm Dead" which appeared in his *Selected Poems* (1943). His *Alamein to ZemZem*, published posthumously in 1946, is one of the best prose memoirs of the war. Like Douglas, Keyes's poetry also shows a natural concern with death; this elegiac element marks the two collections, *The Iron Laurel* (1942) and the posthumous, *The Cruel Solstice* (1943). Another World War II poet often overlooked was Henry Reed (1914-86) whose *Map of Verona* (1946) contained two of the finest poems from the section 'Lessons of the War' - "Naming of Parts" and "Judging Distances": "Today we have naming of parts. Yesterday,/ We had daily cleaning. And tomorrow morning,/ We shall have what to do after firing. But today/ Today we have naming of parts."

A notable development during the war was the growth of the short story or prose sketch. A representative collection is available in Dan Davin's *Short Stories of the Second World War* (1983). Alun Lewis's "They Came," "Private Jones" and "Night Journey" were among the foremost examples. Another writer, Julian Maclaren-Ross (1912-64) whose collection, *The Stuff to Give to the Troops* (1944) contains a remarkable comic piece called, "A Bit of a Smash in Madras." Henry Green's (1905-73) stories gave some the most graphic descriptions of fire-fighting in "A Rescue" and "Mr Jonas" and he was joined in this theme by William Sansom's (1912-76) striking piece titled, "The Wall." One of the most distinctive stories written about the war was Elizabeth Bowen's (1899-1973) the "Mysterious Kor" describing the fantasy encounter between a girl and a soldier in the dark and crumbling landscape of bombed London.

The war years, however, were not very encouraging for the novel. There hardly was an emergence of any significant new writer or the publication of a prominent work. In fact, there was a sharp decline of the number novels from 4222 in 1939 to 1179 in 1945 (Bergonzi 27). A major reason for this may have been the shortage of paper; also, quite evidently, the young writers in service or other war work found little time or freedom to write novels. Nevertheless, despite this recession notable novels did not cease to appear during these years.

Virginia Woolf (1882-1941), who committed suicide in 1941 completed, but was unable to revise her *Between the Acts* which was later published by Leonard Woolf that same year. Situated in the end of the inter-war period in a typical English village it has premonitions of the

approaching battle in its references to low-flying aircraft. However, and characteristically, the novel deals more with a belief in the power of art to overcome the ravages of time. The London blitz features largely in Graham Greene's (1904-91) *The Ministry of Fear* (1943). Like his novels, *It's a Battlefield* (1938) and *The Confidential Agent* (1945), it was listed by Greene as an 'entertainment' or thriller. However, it remains one the best recreations of wartime London. Evelyn Waugh's (1903-66) *Put Out More Flags* (1942) was a satirical account of the early days of the war which was termed, by Waugh, in the novel as the 'Phoney War'. Though *Brideshead Revisited* (1945) was set in the period of the war it tends to be more of a retrospective portrait of an England in the early decades of the century.

The other novels of this period which deserves attention include Henry Green's *Caught* (1939), Patrick Hamilton's *Hangover Square* (1941) and Rex Warner's *The Aerodrome* (1941). Together with these, George Orwell's (1903-50) novel, *Keep the Aspidistra Flying* (1936) and *Air* (1939) seem to predict the bombing of London. Drawing on his experience of the Nazi-occupied Europe, Arthur Koestler (1905-83) published his first novel in English - *Arrival and Departures* in 1943. Finally, Kingsley Amis's (1922-95) novella, "I Spy Strangers" which was included in his collection of short stories, *My Enemy's Enemy* (1962) is a remarkable commentary on the war against the backdrop of the complex negotiations of European politics.

Any account of wartime writing would remain incomplete without a consideration of the non-fiction prose. Orwells *The Lion and the Unicorn: Socialism and the English Genius* (1941) was acclaimed as a collection of perceptive commentaries on English life and Western civilization. Richard Hillary's memoir, *The Last Enemy* (1942) was a detailed and graphic account of his war experiences as a fighter pilot during and after he was shot down in flames terribly burned and temporarily blinded. During this time there was an equal tendency among British writer to write of earlier times before the war; thus, a literature of nostalgia and escape became evident in such works as Cyril Connolly's *The Unquiet Grave* (1944) and Osbert Sitwell's autobiographies. Koestler's collection of essays, *The Yogi and the Commissar* (1945) also drew attention for its memorable insights on wartime England. Koestler thus warned his readers that while one totalitarian power had been defeated another was waiting to emerge in Europe. Though, widely criticized for his views at this time, his writing seemed to anticipate the nature of the developments in the postwar world. The Second World War in which about sixty million lives were lost and much more maimed and rendered homeless remains an apocalyptic disaster in world history. Probably the best observation on this event is contained in the following sentence from Orwell's *The Lion and the Unicorn* : "As I write, highly civilized human beings are flying overhead, trying to kill me" (Bergonzi 17).

1.3.7. Summing Up

This Unit attempted to map the historical background of the twentieth century and the Modern period by giving a brief but comprehensive account of the Second World War. Therefore, it sought the causes of the war and its major developments. Further, it suggested that a significant consequence of the war was the decline and dissolution of British imperialism particularly in India and south Asia. Finally, there is a detailed chronicle of the literature written about and during this period.

1.3.8. Comprehension Exercises

Long-answer type questions :

1. Discuss the major causes and developments of the Second World War.
2. Consider the main events that led to the end of the British Raj in India.
3. Give a critical account of the stories and novels written during the war years.
4. Critically analyse the revival of Romantic poetry during wartime.

Medium-answer type questions :

1. How did the Second World War affect India?
2. How would you explain the comparative indifference towards the literature of World War II?
3. Suggest an explanation of the nostalgic recreation of an earlier pre-war England in some of the works written during this period.

Short-answer type questions:

1. Briefly comment on the importance of the Treaty of Versailles.
2. Write a note on the poetry of the New Apocalypse.
3. Explain the reasons for the decline of the novel in the war years.
4. Write a short note on the non-fiction prose of World War II.

1.3.9. Suggested Reading

Allen, Walter. *Tradition and Dream : A Critical Survey of British and American Fiction from the*

1920s to the Present. Penguin, 1994.

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Gilbert, Martin. *The Second World War. A Complete History*. Chatto and Windus, 1970.

Hobsbawm, Eric. *The Age of Extremes. The Short Twentieth Century 1914-1991*. Abacus, 2012.

Mackay, Marina ed. *The Cambridge Companion to the Literature of World War II*. Cambridge University Press, 2009.

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Unit 4 □ Modern, Modernity and Modernism

Structure

1.4.1. Objectives

1.4.2. Introduction

1.4.3. Modern

1.4.4. Modernity

1.4.5. Modernism

1.4.5.1. Modernism: Ideas and Features

1.4.5.2. Modernism: The Movements

1.4.6. Summing up

1.4.7. Comprehension Exercises

1.4.8. Suggested Reading

1.4.1. Objectives

This Unit is aimed at acquainting students with the three basic terms whose meanings and implications are essential for an understanding of the literature of the modern period.

1.4.2. Introduction

The keywords *Modern*, *Modernity* and *Modernism* form a triad which helps to trace a historical ancestry and a conceptual map for the art and literature of the modern period. Though the terms are evidently linked and have an overlap of meanings and ideas, they also involve important differences which need to be carefully identified to recognise the contesting relationships between them. The terms are thus part of an aesthetic and cultural history in which they often tend to respond and react against each other. Therefore, though *Modern* remains foundational in this relationship, *Modernism* defines itself by opposing and sometimes denying it. Similarly, *Modernity's* contribution to *Modernism* remains doubtful and ambiguous owing to a conflict of interests and intentions among them. Consequently, any attempt to understand the literary and cultural developments of this time would require a serious engagement with the terms which contribute its identity and nature.

1.4.3. Modern

In an essay written in the 1960s entitled, 'Modernisms', Frank Kermode observed, "Somebody should write the history of the 'modern'; and he went to add that the term implied 'a serious relationship with the past ... that requires criticism and, indeed, reimagining.'" Though attempting such a history would be ambitious and gratuitous here, its necessity becomes evident when the etymological and semantic journey of the term is traced. *The New Shorter Oxford Dictionary* (1993) therefore states that the term 'modern' comes from the French 'moderne' which is itself derived from the Latin 'modernus' from the root 'modo' meaning 'just now.' This sense is a continuation of the Latin 'hodiernus' suggesting 'of today' or pertaining to 'the present and recent times' as opposed to the remote past. The term thus designated current fashion and not that which had become obsolete; a form of language in present use or at its most recent stage of development; and, finally, art and architecture marked by a departure from traditional themes and forms.

Raymond Williams in his book, *Keywords* (1981, [1976]) points out that, in its earliest sense, 'modern' was nearer in meaning to 'contemporary' or 'something existing now.' Thus, in the late fifth century, the Latin 'modernus' was used to refer to the Christian present as against the Roman past; similarly, modern English was distinguished from Middle English. A conventional literary comparison used to explain the term during the Renaissance would be a contrast between the 'Ancients and Moderns.' In fact, the modern period of literature is usually traced to the sixteenth century, often considered to be a part of what is termed the 'Early Modern' period. For the neo-Classical writers of the eighteenth century, the Ancient-Modern contrast implied the idea of the 'new;' modern became 'of the now or the present' and thus the 'new' thereby attesting to the term's fluidity of meaning.

In England, however, the term modern did not acquire any special prominence. After the publication of George Meredith's *Modern Love* in 1862, it remained in obscurity till Michael Roberts's anthology, *The Faber Book of Modern Verse* which appeared in 1936. It soon became evident that the sense of the term was conflated with the idea of 'new,' innumerable references of which are found in the 1890s such as the 'New Spirit,' the 'New Hedonism,' the 'New Drama,' the 'New Party' and the 'New Woman.' Therefore, when Ezra Pound (1885-1972) raised the slogan, "Make It New" for Modernism in his 1934 collection of essays, it became a necessary signature of the writing which emerged and dominated the literature of Europe, England and America between 1880 and 1950. This was variously named as the literature of 'the Modern' or of Modernism generally conforming to the exhortation of the French poet, Arthur Rimbaud (1854-1891): "It is necessary to be absolutely modern."

The innovations that defined the 'newness' about the 'modern' has been addressed in the earlier module. However, what was distinctive about the development of the new industry and technology was a definitive shift from the 'heavy' industries of the nineteenth century to a science and technology which was more personal, domestic and even invisible such as electricity, x-rays and radiation. The personalized nature of technology became evident in the motor car, telephone, radio, gramophone and other household gadgets causing a transition of the character of industry from that of production to consumption. Further, the development of mass communication and the airplane deeply affected and changed both the nature of war and everyday individual experience- as illustrated in Virginia Woolf's (1882-1941) novel, *Mrs Dalloway* (1925).

One important result of these new developments was a growth of mass culture in Europe and America between 1880 and the Second World War. In Britain, this was influenced by the extension of education following the Education Act of 1870. Not only did this legislation increase the level of literacy but also created a new reading public, particularly, among the working-class. Thus, while in the nineteenth it was believed that the working-class could be kept under control by keeping them illiterate, the twentieth century was prompted to admit that this control could be achieved by making them read the 'right' kind of books. The Newbolt Report published in 1921, in fact, argued that the teaching of English Literature would have a considerable influence in developing the shared nationalist and social values and beliefs that would bring a sense of order in the new industrial masses. Therefore, the inclusion of English literature as a discipline in universities was strongly recommended by two professors of Cambridge University- F.R. Leavis and I.A. Richards.

The growth of a reading public brought about a significant change in publishing and the nature of the relationship between the writer and society which was distinctive to the Modern. With paper becoming cheaper and the printing and marketing of books more efficient, it became possible to produce newspapers, journals and books in large quantities and at exceptionally reduced prices. The demand for a variety of subject matter encouraged publishers to oppose the monopoly of the circulating libraries such as that of Charles Mudie. In 1885 George Moore published a pamphlet attacking these libraries- *Literature as Nurse or Circulating Morals*- and then, that same year, went to publish a novel in a single volume called *The Mummer's Wife*. This became a direct challenge to the convention of the expensive three-decker or three-volume novels established by these libraries.

With the one-volume novel, writers gained a greater freedom over the length and structure of their work; it allowed them to experiment with the traditional forms and styles of fiction to

produce shorter and more poetic novels. A fundamental change, however, was created between writers and readers. Therefore, the stable sense of beliefs and values shared by the Victorian novelist with readers was denied to the twentieth century author whose work was at the mercy of the economics of contemporary taste and the open market. Though modern writers were free to innovate with their own individual artistic beliefs and styles, they also became increasingly distanced from their readers losing much of the authority and influence of their Victorian predecessors.

The term 'bestseller' first appeared in the 1890s and can thus be considered another modern addition. During this decade lists of bestsellers began appearing in newspapers and journals. The bestseller which catered to a mass readership for their gripping plots, credible characters and a shared system of values became a direct threat to the innovative, complex and serious work of the modernist writers. This anxiety about popular and mass literature had already been voiced by Matthew Arnold in his *Culture and Anarchy* (1869) and reiterated by several modernist thinkers such as Theodore Adorno (1903-69) and Max Horkheimer (1895-1973) in their book, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1947). A split was, therefore created between the literature of the masses and that of the educated and intellectual reader. In the writing of the great modernists such as Joseph Conrad (1857-1924), T.S. Eliot (1888-1965), Ezra Pound, D.H. Lawrence (1885-1930), Virginia Woolf and James Joyce (1882-1941) there developed a literature of 'high modernism', particularly after World War I, whose intellectual range and formal experimentation challenged and were often considered hostile by the common reader. In spite of its generic and natural links, critics have, therefore, admitted that the experimental tendency of Modernism was a reaction against the historical developments and implications of the term Modern.

1.4.4. Modernity

In his essay, 'The Painter of Modern Life' written in 1860, the noted nineteenth century French poet, Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867) is said to have first used the term 'modernity.' For Baudelaire the term referred to an art which was popular and, therefore, transient. The term, however, has a wider historical implication by which it designates the Modern Age as beginning in the Renaissance, developing through the Age of Enlightenment and, finally, including in its sweep, the twentieth century. Therefore, the term implicitly identifies with Renaissance humanism and the consequent secularization of European society; it adopts and advocates the Enlightenment belief in reason, progress and human mastery over nature; and, eventually, it engages with the life and ideas which followed industrialisation, urbanisation and the radical changes which characterised the society and culture of the twentieth century. The name

Modernism, which denotes the art, literature and culture of the first half of this last century, therefore, forms a small phase within the wider historical rubric of Modernity.

The world-historical origins of the term, therefore, imply that it can be contextualized within the important economic and social developments and changes in Europe during the periods of its development. One of the main features of this change and growth is the shift from feudalism to capitalism that reorganised agricultural and rural life in Britain towards the end of the fifteenth century. This was evident in the growth of commerce and the emergence of towns and cities. This major transition was considerably hastened by the Industrial Revolution in the late eighteenth and in the nineteenth centuries. This resulted in a massive migration from the country to the city and the inevitable shift in the forms and customs of life from the rural to the urban. Thus, the stable values of a community experience disintegrated in the random variety, anonymity and alienation of city life. This is clearly apparent in the change of the nature of work. Earlier, labour was organised in terms of the seasons, the light of the day and the time taken to complete a task; now, factory and industrial jobs were fixed by clock time. Therefore, modernity and modernism tend to be anxiously preoccupied by this sense of time.

One of the significant influences which shaped the idea of modernity was the Enlightenment. This refers to process involving a search for rational and universal laws that named, classified and ordered the natural and human worlds. The Enlightenment, therefore, believed that history was an onward enterprise towards human progress and development; and that the 'rational' individual had a responsibility to be the observer, knower and master of the environment. Originating in the seventeenth century, the Enlightenment tended to promote a Europe-centred view of the universe; thus, the European world-order became dominant in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Drawing inspiration from the extension of the frontiers of knowledge brought about by global travel, the movement imbibed ideas from the philosophical writings of Rene Descartes (1596-1650), the scientific discoveries of Sir Isaac Newton (1643-1727) and the French thinkers such as Voltaire (1694-1778) and Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778). While the French Revolution of 1789 represented a celebration of its values, the working-class uprisings of 1848 incipiently marked the beginnings of a distrust which anticipated its possible defeat.

Therefore, announcing the emergence of human civilization from ignorance and superstition, the Enlightenment emphasised modernity as a mastery over nature contributing to the growth of knowledge needed to establish progress in society, governance ethics, art, and literature. Modernity thus saw the emergence of the nation-state and the triumph of capitalism and industrialisation which created imperial ambitions and the new social and class conflicts. These

implications, however, has led to a redefinition of modernity in recent times. Predicated in the Enlightenment, the term has thus been considered as an assertion of European superiority, power and control justifying the notion of Empire.

Modernism, therefore, has a complex relationship with modernity implying a critique and often a denial of the latter. Though acknowledging its association with the general tradition, modernism opposes the rationalist and dominating spirit of Enlightenment modernity as having failed to liberate human society reducing men and women to become subjects of, what Adorno calls, 'instrumental reason'. This tends to divide human society by assuming autocratic control in the imperial projects and in the suppression of the working class. Therefore, the progressive ideas and intentions of modernity became the focus of controversy and criticism in the writing of such thinkers as Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900), Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) and Karl Marx (1818-1883).

1.4.5. Modernism

1.4.5.1. Modernism: Ideas and Features

Modernism is a movement which involved the thought, art, literature and culture of the period between the end of the nineteenth century and the Second World War. This movement has been generally identified by the development of an individual form and style of expression; this was the consequence of the formal experiments and innovations that characterized the literature of this period. Therefore, art and literature made radical departures from history and tradition redefining thematic concerns and expressive modes thereby assuming the nature of the *avantgarde* or 'advance guard' which denoted an enterprise at the forefront of change and experimentation; a cultural attempt to search for new ways of viewing life and art which included a sense of both the aesthetic and the ideological. The *avantgarde*, therefore, became a prophecy of change and an anticipation of a revolutionary literature of the future.

However, as a movement in art and literature modernism is equally difficult to define for many of those writing during this period were often disinclined to accept this designation. Therefore, the variety and multiple nature of modernism sometimes tend to evade a generalised nomenclature; it resorts to specialized and exclusive movements or schools of aesthetic and literary practice. Moreover, modernism is characterized by contradictory shifts and reversals: there have thus been instances when some of the major features have been abandoned and the movement has reached a point where it almost turned around upon itself. It is this paradoxical and complex nature which has become a signature of modernism.

The term modernism was retrospectively assigned to this movement in the 1950s in American universities. Therefore there was little consensus regarding the origins and the duration of the movement. In her essay, "Mr Bennet and Mrs Brown" (1924), Virginia Woolf had attempted to give it a date: "On or about December 1910 human nature changed.... All human relations shifted - those between masters and servants, husbands and wives, parents and children. And when human relations change there is, at the same time, a change in religion, conduct, politics and literature." This dominant sense of social and cultural change is basic to modernism which, in D. H. Lawrence's (1885-1930) novel *Kangaroo* (1923) is given another year of inception together with an apocalyptic suggestion, "It was in 1915 that the old world ended" (qtd. in Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane (eds). *Modernism 1890-1930*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1983 [1976], 33)

As in the case of the definition, there is a controversy about the beginnings of the movement; further, the international character of modernism gives the movement differing dates in separate countries. Cyril Connolly, however, attempts to give it a generally accepted national identity and a periodicity in the title of his 1965 book, *The Modern Movement: One Hundred Key Books from England, France and America, 1880-1950*. In this work, France is considered the source of Anglo-American modernism: "The French fathered the Modern Movement which slowly moved beyond the Channel and then across the Irish Sea until the Americans finally took it over..." However, for Richard Ellman and Charles Feidelson, two noted scholars of modernism, 1900 would be more appropriate: "1900 is both more convenient and accurate than Virginia Woolf's 1910", they wrote in, *The Modern Tradition: Backgrounds of Modern Literature* (1965). Modernism is also marked by a publication-date of the list of representative works - 1922; this year saw the appearance of Eliot's *The Waste Land*, James Joyce's (1882-1941) *Ulysses*, Lawrence's *Aaron's Rod*, Woolf's *Jacob's Room*, Marcel Proust's (1871-1922) *Sodom and Gomorrah*, Rainer Maria Rilke's (1875-1926) *Duino Elegies*, Bertolt Brecht's (1898-1956) first play, *Baal* and Eugene O'Neill's (1888-1953) *Anna Christie*. Thus, whereas the term modern is often a general prescription for a new type of writing, modernism becomes a more specialized category separating the 'high' modernism from that which merely featured during this time. This exclusiveness is suggested by the list of representative modernists usually given precedence over the others, namely Joseph Conrad (1857-1924), Ezra Pound (1885-1972), Eliot, Joyce, Lawrence, Woolf, W.B. Yeats (1865-1939) together with those in Europe and America such as, Henrik Ibsen (1828-1906), Proust, Paul Valery (1871-1945), Andre Gide (1869-1951), Thomas Mann (1875-1955) Franz Kafka (1883-1924), Frank Wedekind (1864-1918), Brecht, Luigi Pirandello (1867-1936), Henry James (1843-1916), Wallace Stevens (1879-1955), William Carlos Williams

(1883-1963), F. Scott Fitzgerald (1896-1940) Ernest Hemingway (1899-1961) and William Faulkner (1897-1962).

Modernism is characterized by a disillusionment with contemporary history which, for them, could be described with the phrase used by Eliot as a comment on Joyce's *Ulysses* - an "immense panorama of futility and anarchy". In fact, this disorder and despair was evident in the incalculable violence, destruction and death perpetrated by the two World Wars. For the modernists, the wars clearly proved the failure of the ideas of reason and progress upheld by the Enlightenment. Modernism, therefore, emerges as a reaction against this earlier movement. A strong sense of historical crisis together with a profound feeling of skepticism and nihilism suggested by a pronounced sense of 'de-humanism' seems to mark modernist writing particularly, in Eliot's *The Waste Land*. Joyce's *Ulysses* and in the poetry of W. H. Auden (1907-1973) and others writing in the 1930s.

This gives modernism a crisis-centered view of reality and, therefore, a tendency to shift the focus of art and literature from an objective, historical and social concern to an exploration of the individual experience, consciousness and memory. This led to a preoccupation with a literature of introspection and alienation specifically in the stream of consciousness novel which redefined the narrative methods of modernist fiction by rejecting the theory of realism which had dominated the novel till this time. Thus, modernism is usually defined as literary movement which is based on this opposition to realism. As a result, there was a significant change in the nature and method of literary representation. This involved a shift from the depiction of a material reality, whether natural, or social to the medium and manner of this portrayal. In other words, the focus of literature and art turned away from the representation of the objective world to that of the aesthetic. Modernism is thus distinguished by this strong sense of aesthetic self-consciousness.

Literature is, therefore, often preoccupied with the difficulties and challenges of dealing with language and form. As in the examples of Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916) and Andre Gide's *The Immoralist* (1902) novels, therefore, deal with the growth of the artist and the problems of writing fiction. In Pirandello's noted plays such as *Six Characters in Search of an Author* or *Henry IV*, the drama actually deals with the making of a play or the self-creation of a character's identity. This engagement with art is given substance by the modernist compulsion to innovate and experiment with aesthetic tradition and literary form. This implied a sense of 'de-creation' evident in the changed use of language, syntax and style. Not only does modernist poetry use '*vers libre*' or free verse, the symbolism and imagery which figured in the poetry of Pound, Eliot and Yeats is often very individualistic

and abstract. The structures of poetry and fiction also underwent radical alterations as in the preference for the fragmentary and the random replacing the coherent order of narrative; similarly, simultaneous portrayals and juxtapositions of different ideas and moments of experience contributed to a spatial idea of artistic form. This is best illustrated in the poetry of Pound, Eliot, Yeats, H.D. (Hilda Doolittle, 1886-1961) and also in the novels of Woolf, Joyce and Dorothy Richardson (1873-1957).

Influenced by the ideas of the French philosopher, Henri Bergson (1851-1941), modernist writing undertook a revision of the notion of time in their writing. For Bergson, time could be divided into the chronological or clock time which was linear moving through hours, minutes and seconds; opposed to this was Bergson's theory of time as 'duration' which referred to those times and moments in an individual's life that were significant and valuable. Duration, therefore, is measured in terms of time as experience; of time seasoned in the mind as memory of moment or place. In his book, *Time and Free Will* (1889), Bergson emphasized that facts and events are only the external surface of life which has to be intuitively explored to attain a deeper understanding of reality. Woolf's novel, *Mrs Dalloway*, which had an earlier been titled, 'The Hours', deals with experiences of the protagonist, Clarissa on a single day in London. While the actual events of that day are simple and innocuous, the thoughts and memories that accompany them constitute the real narrative and meaning of the novel.

One important aspect of modernism is, therefore, its relationship with the city. In his posthumous collection of essays titled, *The Politics of Modernism*, Raymond Williams clearly underscores this link: "It is now clear that there are decisive links between the practices and ideas of the *avantgarde* movements of the twentieth century and then specific conditions and relationships of then twentieth century metropolis" (37). Though this concern with the city began in the nineteenth century, as is evident in William Wordsworth's (1770-1850) *The Prelude* (1850), it was the French poet Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867) whose treatment of the city in his writing anticipated the modernist conception of the metropolis. Therefore, the city symbolized the themes of the multitude or the masses and, simultaneously, the experience of solitude and anonymity - again *The Waste Land* stands as an appropriate example. While on the one hand, the city represents variety, vitality and mobility, on the other, it also suggests alienation, loss and despair. Not only were the cities of modernism like London, Paris, Berlin and, later, New York the spaces of complex urban experiences, they also acquired a new importance as large national territories representing wealth, power, ambition and culture. In this capacity, the modernist city became implicated in the imperialist enterprise of accumulation, domination and control of other forms of knowledge, society and culture (Williams, 43-45).

However, modernism was able to find other ideas of form and order that the crisis of history and politics had denied. Therefore, as a counterpoint to the chaos of history, modernists returned to the revival of myth. This mythic tendency had been initiated in the Romantic Movement and, in many discussions, Modernism is often viewed as a continuation of Romanticism. Myth was seen as basic to human societies, consciousness and culture - a form with which primitive men and women tried to understand their world. In fact, in the book *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872), Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900), a German philosopher whose writing was a major influence on modernism, lamented the loss of the mythic consciousness in modern man. In the writing of Yeats, Eliot and Joyce there was thus an attempt to recreate and adapt the old myths to contemporary situations. Importantly, Sir James Frazer's *The Golden Bough* (1890-1915), a twelve-volume comparative study of different myths, went to influence Eliot's *The Waste Land*; while Joyce in his *Finnegan's Wake* and Proust in his *In Search of Lost Time* (1913-1927; English, 1922-1931) created individual mythic structures for their novels.

Finally, the modernist self-consciousness with the forms and processes of art was a direct result of its sense of doubt and difficulty regarding the nature and meanings of language. Therefore, the assumption that language was a transparent medium easily and immediately yielding meaning came under suspicion and question. Rather, language often had a tendency to disguise and conceal meaning and, thereby, prevent communication and understanding. Modernism, thus recognized that the relationship between language and meaning was arbitrary and, therefore, ambiguous and uncertain; that, in fact, language did not simply reflect the objective world but was actually a medium with which thoughts and ideas about that world was conceived and created. Therefore, modernist writing reveals an increasing awareness about the fact that instead of expressing ourselves in language by speaking and writing, it is language which tends to speak and write us. This inversion of the traditional view of language becomes a serious and repeated concern in modernist fiction. Joyce's *Ulysses* is thus considered a novel dealing with the problems of language as much as it also portrays the experiences of the protagonist on a day in June 1904 in the city of Dublin. A similar preoccupation with language and narration is found in the novels of Joseph Conrad and in the work of the American modernists such as, Wallace Stevens, William Carlos Williams, F. Scott Fitzgerald and William Faulkner.

Modernism, therefore, is not merely a movement in art and literature that was innovative, formally experimental and consciously aesthetic but also a committed attempt to explore a wide, antithetical and complex range of ideas across diverse disciplines and domains of knowledge whose intellectual expanse and sophistication often tend to be intimidating. Yet,

the importance and value of modernism lies precisely in this character: thus, this intellectual depth and subtlety is both a difficulty and a challenge; the diversity and complexity both formidable and adventurous.

1.4.5.2. Modernism: The Movements

The conceptual map or the series of ideas that developed and shaped Modernism will remain incomplete if sufficient attention is not given to the major contribution made by the art and literary movements that are almost simultaneous with it. Though the development of movements were not a novel occurrence - for there had been several such in the nineteenth century. However, those that consecutively emerged during this time seemed to have a generic difference in terms of their aesthetic nature and intention. Just as we had earlier represented Modernism by a community of writers and their works, the movements, in fact, also constitute the intellectual and aesthetic milestones giving us the main directions to its nature and development.

Imagism is believed to have announced the beginnings of English and American Modernism. The term was coined by Ezra Pound to denote a programme in poetic style marked by the use of free verse, a classical sense of precision, clarity and austerity and a concrete expressive method. Imagism originally developed from *Les Imagistes*- a journal created by T. E. Hulme in 1909 in London and approved by Pound, H.D. (Hilda Doolittle) and Richard Aldington, its three founding members, in 1912. Two manifestoes of this movement appeared in 1913, namely R.S. Flint's 'Imagisme' and Pound's 'A Few Don'ts for Imagists' whose principles were collected later by Pound in an essay titled, "A Retrospect' (1918). Imagist poetry was initially published in *Les Imagistes* (1914) and later anthologized in three volumes edited by Amy Lowell called, *Some Imagist Poets* (1915-1917).

The main principles outlined by Pound for this poetry were:

- "1. Direct treatment of the 'thing' whether subjective or objective.
2. To use absolutely no word that does not contribute to the presentation.
3. As regarding rhythm: to compose in the sequence of the musical phrase, not in sequence of a metronome [device used by musicians to mark a selected sequence of time]." (Childs 98)

This poetic style was based on Pound's definition of the 'Image' - "an 'Image' is that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time." Thus Imagism also implied a poetry of the synthesis of thought and feeling that was definitive of modern poetry. The often quoted example of an image is the one taken from Pound's "In a Station of the

Metro”: “The apparition of these faces in the crowd;/Petals on a wet, black bough” (qtd. in Childs, *Modernism*, London: Routledge, 2003, 99). Imagism influenced the poetry of Pound’s main disciple, T.S. Eliot both in his early, *Prufrock and Other Observations* (1917) and *The Waste Land*. In fact, Eliot’s description of the evening in the famous opening lines of ‘The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock’ is also cited as representative: “Let us go then, you and I,/ When the evening is spread out against the sky/ Like a patient etherized upon the table” (*Selected Poems*, London: Faber, 1976, 6:1-3). It also featured in the poetry of Lawrence, Joyce, Ford Madox Ford (1873-1939), and the American poets Marianne Moore (1887-1972) and William Carlos Williams.

- **Symbolism**, as another important school of modernist poetry, was actually derived from late nineteenth century French poetry, particularly, that of Charles Baudelaire, Arthur Rimbaud (1854-1891), Stephen Mallarme (1842-1898) and Paul Valery (1871-1945). Their poetry was introduced into England through Arthur Symons critical study, *The Symbolist Movement in Literature* (1899). Symons had thus defined symbolism as “a form of expression ... for an unseen reality apprehended by the consciousness”. It has, therefore, often been suggested that Modernism was a revival of symbolism. Symbolist writing involved the use of mysticism which turned away from everyday reality and tried to evoke a sensuous and spiritual apprehension of occult hidden behind the material world. Symbolism was a form of aestheticism which believed that a poem was an independent entity having its own meaning and value. W.B. Yeats is considered one of the principal followers of this poetic movement mainly owing to his absorption in Celtic mythology and mysticism. In “Symbolism in Poetry” (1900), Yeats had insisted that “a continuous indefinable symbolism” is “the substance of all style” (qtd. in Roger Fowler, ed. *A Dictionary of Modern Critical Terms*. London and New York: Routledge, 1997, 240). Yeats’s romanticism utilized rural Ireland’s folk traditions as a reaction against urbanization and materialism. Thus, in the poems of the 1920s such as “Michael Roberts and the Dancer” (1921), “The Tower” (1928) and also later in “Meditation in the Time of Civil War”, “The Second Coming” and “Sailing to Byzantium” Yeats created an elaborate symbolical and mythological framework as a defence against the chaos and disillusion of the modern world.
- **Impressionism** concerns the form and style of painting by noted European artists of the nineteenth century such as Auguste Renoir, Claude Monet, Edgar Degas, Alfred Sisley and Edouard Manet. This implies that Modernism has been considerably influenced by movements in art and painting of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In an essay titled, “Impressionisten” (1898), the Austrian poet, Rainer Maria-Rilke (1875-

1926) described impressionism as the "pantheism of light". This form of painting, therefore, emphasized the importance of light and colour in the depiction of nature and the human world. Impressionist painters believed that any act of sight included a halo or haze of light and colour; thus, this style of art explored the effect or play of the 'atoms' of light and colour involved in viewing the world.

In literary Impressionism, therefore, the same principle is adopted to suggest a particular quality or nature of an individual temperament as in Oscar Wilde's poem "Symphony in Yellow"; or, as in the line from Symonds's "Impression" - "The pink and black of silk and lace" - where the colours convey the sensuousness of the fabric and the person wearing it. However, Impressionism seems to have had a more direct connection with the idea of the stream of consciousness technique in fiction which also included the metaphors of 'atoms' and 'halo' in Woolf's famous observation in her essay, "Modern Fiction" (1919): "Examine for a moment an ordinary mind on an ordinary day. The mind receives a myriad impressions - trivial, fantastic, evanescent, or engraved with the sharpness of steel. From all sides they come, an incessant shower of innumerable atoms; ... Life is not a series of gig-lamps symmetrically arranged; life is a luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginnings of consciousness to the end" (*Common Reader*. London: Harcourt Brace, 1973 [1925], 128).

Joseph Conrad, often considered an Impressionist writer, consciously employed this method in his novels particularly, in *Heart of Darkness* (1899) where the unnamed narrator has this observation on Marlow's method of story-telling: "...Marlow was not typical (if his propensity to spin yarns be excepted), and to him the meaning of an episode was not inside like a kernel but outside, enveloping the tale which brought it out only as a glow brings out a haze in the likeness of one of those misty halos that sometimes are made visible by the spectral illumination of moonshine" (118).

On November 5, 1910, Roger Fry the founder of the design company, the Omega Workshop, organized an exhibition of paintings of such noted painters as Pablo Picasso, Paul Gauguin, Henri Matisse, Vincent Van Gogh and Paul Cezanne and coined the term 'Post-Impressionist' as a title for the collection. This exhibition was a first attempt to introduce England to a radically different form of artistic work which had broken from tradition and realism and promoted a formal experimentation having a strong inclination towards abstraction. Many English writers were deeply stirred by these qualities in the paintings; in fact, a few histories of literature suggest that Modernism in England had its source in this exhibition which coincided with the year Woolf had fixed as the date for the beginnings of Modernism.

The term **Expressionism** is considered to have been derived from the painting of Van Gogh. However, as a movement it was mainly associated with *avantgarde* literature, painting and cinema in the German-speaking countries between 1910 and 1922. Adopted as a general term in 1911 for painting and literature it became a critical idea in 1913 to refer to a form of representation dealing dominantly with a sense of crisis. In fact, the Great war was a major influence on this movement and shaped its thought and feeling. Thus, Expressionist writing involves a feeling of anxiety and an opposition towards industrial capitalism that had turned the machine, meant to control nature, against humanity. Consequently, both in painting and in literature, Expressionism is marked by a sense of nihilism, irrationalism, irony and violence. There is, thus a preoccupation with grim tragic themes and situations of suffering, alienation, despair and death. In terms of form, the critic Leonore Ripke-Kuhn described it as a method characterized by "concentration, conciseness, impact, firmly-structured form and the rhetoric of passion" (Bradbury and McFarlane, 534). The most noted Expressionist painter was Edvard Munch whose painting, "The Scream" has almost become iconic of this movement.

The English equivalent to Expressionism is said to be a movement called **Vorticism**. This was basically an English response to the various *avantgarde* tendencies on the continent. Its founder was Wyndham Lewis (1882-1957) who had published an important, but short lived, journal entitled, *BLAST* in 1914 to announce the Vorticist manifesto. In Germany, Expressionism was duly represented in the plays of Ernst Toller and Georg Kaiser; while in fiction Kafka remained its most notable novelist. Apart from Lewis's own writing, there are few English practitioners of this theme and style; however, Christopher Isherwood's (1904-86) *Goodbye to Berlin* (1939) was an exception. Some scholars have also identified sections of Joyce's *Ulysses* and Woolf's *The Waves* (1931) to have suggestions of this form.

Futurism originated in Italy with the publication of "The Founding and the Manifesto of Futurism" in 1909 by the poet Filippo Tommaso Marinetti (1876-1944) in a newspaper called *Le Figaro*. This movement, however, was a celebration of the industrial changes and the culture of the machine in the early twentieth century; it was, as Marinetti said, an attempt to exalt "the beauty of speed". Futurism, thus advocated a complete break with past traditions suggested by a call to destroy libraries and academic institutions; it glorified war, militarism and the nationalist spirit. Though the movement expressed radical opinions, its politics was basically conservative and reactionary prompting it to become a supporter of fascism. Ironically, World War I brought about an end to the movement as one of its members was killed and Marinetti himself was injured in battle. However, a Russian version of Futurism which developed between 1907 and 1913 in the writing of Velimir Khlebnikov (1885-1922) Alexei Kruchenykh (1886-1968) and Vladimir Mayakovsky (1893-1930), fared better and had an

important influence in shaping a new poetry after the Soviet Revolution. The Russian movement, therefore, did not favour the Italian 'aesthetics of the machine'; rather it concentrated on experiments with form and language to create a poetry of the future.

Futurism, however, found an heir in a European and American movement known as Dada or Dadaism. The origin of this name, 'Dada' is uncertain but it is believed to be a Romanian term for affirmation - 'da, da' or 'yes, yes'; it is also the colloquial French for a 'hobby horse' or a type of toy for children. Dadaism began in Zurich in 1916, encouraged by the poet Tristan Tzara, (1896-1963) as a form of protest against the massacre and madness of the Great War. Dadaists believed that humanity could be rescued from this crisis through social reforms aimed at changing the quality of life. As in Futurism, Dada writing thus made use of the absurd, the illogical and the irrational in order to shock and attack contemporary society and its violent, war industry through what they considered 'anti-art'. A noted instance of this was the sculpture by Marcel Duchamp entitled, *Fountain* -- which was actually a urinal signed, 'R. Mutt'. Nevertheless, Dada is considered to have anticipated Surrealism another important modernist movement.

The term **Surrealism** was taken from a review written by the French poet and dramatist Guillaume Apollinaire (1880-1918): "To characterize my drama, I have used a neologism for which I hope to be forgiven. ... I have coined the adjective 'Surrealist' which does not mean symbolical. ... When a man wanted to imitate the action of walking, he created the wheel which does not resemble a leg. He had thus used surrealism without knowing it" (qtd. in Esslin, Martin. *Theatre of the Absurd*. New York: Penguin, 1995, 362). Later, in 1924, the French poet, Andre Breton (1896-1996) in the First Manifesto of Surrealism announced that this was an attempt to find a "resolution of these two states [of] dream and reality, which are seemingly so contradictory, into an absolute reality, a surreality" (qtd. in Childs, 121)

Surrealism recommended an exploration of the unconscious in both painting and literature through the use of the techniques of automatic writing and often by seizing random, incoherent, illogical and bizarre images. Sigmund Freud's (1856-1939) analyses of dreams in *Interpretation of Dreams* (1900) and his theories dealing with the unconscious were a major influence on this movement. In painting, Surrealism is usually represented by the work of the Spanish artist, Salvador Dali, Joan Miro together with those by the Russian Marc Chagall. Together with Breton, the other French writers who are generally associated with this school of art and writing include, Louis Aragon (1897-1982), Paul Eluard (1895-1952), Philippe Soupault (1897-1990) and Rene Creval (1900-1935). In England, Surrealist poetry found expression in the 1930s in the writing of David Gascoigne. However, earlier examples of this

style were found in Eliot's "Morning at the Window" and also in the "Night town" and "Circe" sections of Joyce's *Ulysses*. In fact, the hallucinatory war memories of Septimus in *Mrs Dalloway* also forms an important attempt in surrealist writing long before it was officially recognized: "Diagrams, designs, little men and women brandishing sticks for arms with wings ...circles traced round shillings and sixpences - the suns and stars; ...how the dead sing behind rhododendron bushes; odes to Time; conversations with Shakespeare; Evans, Evans, Evans- his messages from the dead." (131)

The movements of Modernism, therefore, confirm the innovative, experimental variety of this development in art and literature. The conceptual range and critical engagement of the movements with the growth of knowledge and new ideas in several disciplines and with society, art and culture gave modernism a distinctive position among similar developments in the history of literature. The movements also justify the international character of Modernism and also emphasize that it was not a discrete feature. Recent studies have, therefore, suggested that, far from being singular, there are diverse, different and many Modernisms.

1.4.6. Summing Up

In attempting to deal with the history, nature and meanings of the three terms, Modern, Modernity and Modernism, this unit has tried to address some of the basic ideas, features and concerns of art and literature, mainly of England and briefly of Europe and America, in the first half of the twentieth century. Together with providing explanations of each term individually, it has also analysed the relationships between them. This section thus constitutes an important map of the thought, the movements, the aesthetic and ideological commitments which shaped the art and writing of the Modern Age.

1.4.7. Comprehension Exercises

Long-answer Type Questions:

1. Discuss the term Modern in relation to the changes in the nature of publishing and the relation between the writer and society that occurred in the early twentieth century.
2. Critically analyse the relationship between the term Modernity and the Enlightenment.
3. In what way is Modernism a critique of the Modern and Modernity? Substantiate your answer with examples from your study of modernist texts.
4. Critically consider the major features of Modernism.

Medium-answer Type Questions:

1. Trace the origins and explain the meanings of the term Modern.
2. Analyse the major features of the term Modernity.
3. Attempt an explanation of the tendency to retreat from history which is basic to Modernism
4. Consider the influence of Imagism or Surrealism (or Futurism, Expressionism, Symbolism, Impressionism) on modern writing.

Short-answer Type Questions:

1. Explain why the Modern is associated with the idea of the 'new'.
2. Briefly suggest the implications of the Modern social changes that influenced Modernism.
3. In what way is Modernity linked to the imperialist enterprise?
4. Comment on the debate over the fixing of the date for Modernism as a movement in art and culture.
5. What is the implication of the phrase 'aesthetic self-consciousness' in Modernist writing?
6. Write brief notes on any two of the following: a) Vorticism; b) Dadaism; c) Post-Impressionism; d) Surrealism; e) Imagism; f) Symbolism; g) Futurism; h) Expressionism; i) Impressionism

1.4.8. Suggested Reading

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Unit 5 □ Science and the Modern World

Structure

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1.5.1. Objectives

This Unit on 'Science and the Modern World,' divided into a number of interlinked topics and sub-topics, has the following objectives:

- To acquaint students with the history of emergence of modern natural science through a series of revolutions.
- To discuss the socio-historical settings of the nineteenth and early-twentieth century developments in science and technology.
- To explain the distinctiveness of the twentieth century scientific and technological perspectives.
- To examine relationships between science, technology and European imperialism, and their social and aesthetic impacts.
- To explore the relationship between science and technology and the Modernist movement in art and culture of the first half of the twentieth century by examining different genres and sub-genres of art and literature.
- To consider the issue of ethical responsibility towards humanity, as it is reflected in literature and art against the backdrop of the two World Wars.
- To encourage students to explore the complex field of science and the modern world further by providing them with self-assessment questions and a suggested reading list.

1.5.2. Introduction: The Modern World and Revolutions in Modern Science

The project of 'Modernity,' which defines a period in the social and cultural history as specifically 'Modern,' is basically a Western project, deriving its impetus from the late-Renaissance and 'Enlightenment' philosophy. The emphasis on rational conclusions drawn from empirical assessments of concrete human experiences in the philosophy of Bacon (1561-1626), Descartes (1596-1650), Hobbes (1588-1679), Locke and others breaks up old 'systems,' 'types,' and 'absolutes,' as proposed by Christianity. It also presupposes a new order of reality, involving a constant impulse to renewal with frequent reversals of roles and perspectives. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels noticed in *The Communist Manifesto* (1848) that the drive to become 'modern' had already "drowned the most heavenly ecstasies of religious fervour, of chivalrous enthusiasm, of philistine sentimentalism" (Marx and Engels, <https://www.columbia.edu/~ey2172/marx.html>, 11). In this revolutionary task to offer a radically novel world-view science and technology were used as the most effective weapons. The growth of modern science and that of modern world are, therefore, directly correlated, and our present understanding of this entire dynamics requires us to look back at the revolutions inaugurating modern science.

The first major revolution in modern science began as far back as 1543 with the publication of *On the Revolutions of the Celestial Spheres* by the Polish astronomer Nicolaus Copernicus (1473-1543). His idea that the earth was a planet in the orbit around the sun challenged the earlier Ptolemaic system of the universe, and was later proved empirically by Italian astronomer Galileo Galilei (1564-1642), the first person to use telescope and discover heavenly changes to unsettle the divine absolutism. The Copernican revolution reached its watershed in 1687 with the publication of the British physicist Isaac Newton's (1642-1727) *Philosophiæ Naturalis Principia Mathematica*. The implications of the above classics in modern science are noted by Janet Radcliffe Richards in the following terms: "Spinning around in an infinite universe is decidedly less comfortable than being enclosed by spheres and angels and God... Where... was the throne of God? Where was Hell? ... If the Bible was not literally true in its account of heaven and earth, what did that imply for the rest of it?" (9). Copernicus, Galileo and Newton broke down the distinction between the heaven and the earth and brought them into a single explanatory scheme, and the English naturalist Charles Darwin's (1809-1882) theory of evolution in *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection* (1859) and *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex* (1871) destabilised the distinction between human and sub-human. The importance of Darwinian revolution, along with the new science of psychoanalysis, will be discussed in the next unit. The above revolutions paved the way for much more radical scientific theories at the turn of the century and in the first half of the twentieth century, when each branch of natural science was developed into highly complicated study of our 'spinning' and fleeting existence. We shall discuss them in the fourth section of this unit. But, the bridge between Enlightenment rationalism and twentieth century science and technology is found to be constructed by the industrial revolution, which can be further interlinked with two key factors of the modern world: imperial capitalism and modern warfare. This unit tries to show how the growingly intriguing roles played by science and technology in the modern world have left their marks on the most powerful aesthetic movement of the first half of twentieth century, named as 'modernism.'

1.5.3. Industrial Revolution and the Emergence of Scientific Disciplines

1.5.3.1. Industrial Revolution and Applied Science : Students of English literature are well familiar with the following lines of "The Chimney Sweeper" in *Songs of Innocence* (1789) by William Blake (1757-1827) that catch social and psychological impacts of Industrial Revolution in the most striking manner. One of the earliest literary indictments of child labour

and industrial pollution, the poem interconnects science/technology - represented by the image of chimney - and human suffering:

When my mother died I was very young,
And my father sold me while yet my tongue
Could scarcely cry, 'weep weep weep weep.'
So your chimneys I sweep and in soot I sleep. (Blake 69)

In Blake's apocalyptic reading of the late-eighteenth century English society, the death of mother signifies the collapse of an old home, with the father figure turning into a helpless victim of the capitalist labour market. Blake himself is in this sense one of the first moderns to consider the consequences of the application of scientific knowledge by an exploitative socio-economic system. Blake was significantly the contemporary of the first group of the British engineers/mechanics, Bramah (1748-1814), Maudslay (1771-1831), Muir (1806-88), Whitworth (1803-87), Trevithick (1771-1833), I.K. Brunel (1806-59), and the most acclaimed George Stephenson (1781-1848). Under the pressure of the limitless profit-seeking capitalist economy, these people turned the direction of modern science. As J.D. Bernal writes in his *Science in History*, the "growth of the applications of science in the mid nineteenth century was so much more rapid than the growth of science itself that their handling and development fell into hands of practical men" (Bernal 547). Industrial Revolution - a term first used by Friedrich Engels in his *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, written originally in German in 1845, and re-used by the English economic historian Arnold Toynbee (1852-83) to describe Britain's economic development from 1760 to 1840, and was later applied in a more general way - thus superimposed "an evolutionary technical development on the revolutionary innovations" of the last centuries (Bernal 547).

This technological turn involved:

(1) the use of new basic materials, chiefly iron and steel, (2) the use of new energy sources, including both fuels and motive power, such as coal, the steam engine, electricity, petroleum, and the internal-combustion engine, (3) the invention of new machines, such as the spinning jenny and the power loom that permitted increased production with a smaller expenditure of human energy, (4) a new organization of work known as the factory system, which entailed increased division of labour and specialization of function, (5) important developments in transportation and communication, including the steam locomotive, steamship, automobile, airplane, telegraph, and radio, and (6) the increasing application of science to industry. These technological changes made

possible a tremendously increased use of natural resources and the mass production of manufactured goods.(<https://www.britannica.com/event/Industrial-Revolution>)

Blake's engravings, illustrating his own poetic works, and his use of personal symbols may be seen as a conscious aesthetic rebellion against mechanization and commercialization of all forms of human activities.

The major technological innovations associated with the Industrial Revolution manifest the above components: the steam-engine, the railways, the telegraph, and the civil engineering. These innovations changed the European - and, particularly English - living-style forever. Thus, Margaret Hale, the protagonist of Elizabeth Gaskell's (1810-1865) mid-nineteenth century novel on the industrial England, *North and South*, 1854, mourns: "...associations, which ... made her cry upon 'the days that are no more,' with ineffable longing" (468). The railways was originally a product of the spread of coal-mining in England, and the great success of running wheels by a steam engine and the discovery of locomotive helped the mining to a great extent. As Bernal notes, the "railway age covered Britain with its network in the [eighteen] thirties and forties and spread to the rest of the world throughout the century. It also led to an enormous increase in the ... civil engineering" (547). We find in Charles Dickens' (1812-1870) sketch of 1860s, "Refreshments for Travellers":

I travel by railroad. I start from the home at seven or eight in the morning, after breakfast hurriedly. What with skimming over the open landscape, what with mining in the damp bowels of the earth, what with banging, booming and shrieking the scores of miles away, I am hungry when I arrive at the 'Refreshment' station where I am expected. (169)

One dominating feature of the Industrial Revolution is then the triumph of the machine, and this is directly related to the study of engineering and metallurgy as two prime branches of Physics and Chemistry, respectively. The evolution of steam-engine at the hands of James Watt (1736-1819) and his followers, on the other hand, contributed to the study of heat energy, besides mechanics. And, to use Bernal's observation again, "[i]t was the coincidence of the advent of railways with [Danish physicist and chemist, Hans Christian] Oersted's [(1777-1851)] discovery of the effects of electric currents on a compass that provided a cheap and foolproof method just when the need was greatest, and ensured the successful invention of the electromagnetic telegraph" (548). In a colony like India, with "the expansion of railways and irrigation works, there was an increasing need for the training of natives as mechanics, plate-layers, drivers, etc." and "so, in 1875, Calcutta got its first School of Apprentices" (Kumar 189). Circulation

of news was directly related to commerce, but, in this manner, applied science and technology led to the study of multiple disciplines of theoretical science.

1.5.3.2. Advancement of Scientific Learning : Since the late-eighteenth century scientists in Britain, France, the United States of America and other centers of industrialization had advocated a radical and liberal outlook. Two most notable names of this movement are the American physicist, Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790), and the English chemist, Joseph Priestley (1733-1804), who can be considered two founders of disciplines of modern natural science. It was upon Priestley's theorem that the French chemist Antoine Laurent Lavoisier (1743-1794) developed chemistry as a rational and quantitative science. The introduction of telegraph during the later phase of the Industrial Revolution created the requirement for trained electricians and, in connection, technical schools and departments of physics at the universities. The working of the cross-Atlantic cable was possible much later in 1866, thanks to the discovery of the greatest physicist of the late-nineteenth century, William Thomson, Lord Kelvin (1824-1907). Electricity and magnetism were two main scientific preoccupations of the nineteenth century, as evident in the experiments of the British scientists Humphry Davy (1778-1829) and Michael Faraday (1791-1867). In 1831 the British scientist Charles Babbage (1792-1871) established 'The British Association for the Advancement of Science,' attended by the English biologist Thomas Huxley (1825-1895) and the Irish physicist John Tyndall (1820-1893). It was on December 17, 1903, Wilbur Wright (1867-1912) and Orville Wright (1871-1948) made four brief flights at Kitty Hawk with their first powered aircraft.

In the course of the nineteenth century chemistry grew as the most prominent scientific discipline because of its use in textile industry. A seminal step in the advancement of chemistry was taken by a weaver and school teacher of Manchester, John Dalton (1766-1844) by introducing the Atomic Theory. Two other "great generalizations stand out as the major contributions of the nineteenth century. One, in the field of physics, was the doctrine of the *conservation of energy*; the other, in the field of biology, was that of *evolution*." The notion of the *conservation of energy* "was inspired by the study of the conservation of coal to power that had already been achieved in practice by the steam-engine from the dawn of the Industrial Revolution. It was given a more and more mathematical form and emerged as the science of *thermodynamics*" (Bernal, 555). On the other hand, a major achievement of the late-nineteenth century physics is the *electromagnetic theory of light* proposed by Scottish mathematician James Maxwell (1831-1879), and another in the field of chemistry is the Periodic Table of Russian chemist Dmitri Mendeleev (1834-1907). Nineteenth century thus marked the "winding up of the great scientific drive of the Newtonian period and a preparation for the stormier scientific and political revolution of the twentieth century" (Bernal, 561).

1.5.4. Science and Technology in the Early Twentieth Century

1.5.4.1. *The World of Atomic Theory* : The Twentieth century signalled both an explosion and a fall of Western culture and civilization. T.S. Eliot's (1888-1965) "The Waste Land," 1922, focuses on the cracked earth on which nothing stands for a long time:

What is the city over the mountains
Cracks and reforms and bursts in the violent air
Falling towers
Jerusalem Athens Alexandria
Vienna London
Unreal (Eliot, 233)

Long before Eliot, Marx and Engels in *The Communist Manifesto* had predicted that all solid things would melt into the air, and twentieth century science had to deal with the dissolving away of the solid foundations of socio-political and rational ideologies. In this respect "the experience of objectlessness" - to quote a phrase of Russian painter, Kazimir Malevich (1879-1935) - is one of the central effects of new scientific observations (qtd. in Gay 136). On the other hand, the triumph of technology became evident in every aspect of life in the beginning of the twentieth century to affirm how humans had outstripped Nature. Nature became only an object of fleeting memory, profoundly expressed by Edward Thomas (1878-1917) in "Adlestrop", posthumously published in 1920:

Yes. I remember Adlestrop -
The name, because one afternoon
Of heat the express-train drew up there
Unwontedly. It was late June. ...
And willows, willow-herb, and grass,
And meadowsweet, and haycocks dry,
No whit less still and lonely fair
Than the high cloudlets in the sky. (Thomas, 117)

In this connection, James McFarlane points out that "[n]ew concepts in science more and more took on the nature of poetic conceits; the crucial advances in science (not merely in the relatively new field of psychology but also in the more traditional physical sciences) followed the exploitation of the same kind of imaginative, intuitive insight that went towards the making of a poem" (84).

The nineteenth century started with Dalton's atomic theory, and it ended with that of the British Nobel-laureate physicist John Joseph Thomson (1856-1940) -the President of the Royal Society from 1915 to 1920 - discovery that cathode rays were composed of previously unknown negatively charged particles, which are now called electrons. In the field of physics, particularly, continuity had been a central idea, which in the new century was challenged by the discontinuity of atoms suggested in the radioactive and the quantum theories, and finally by the theory of Relativity. It was in December 1895 the German engineer and physicist W.C. Röntgen(1845-1923) reported the discovery of X-Ray, a new type of radiation that could go through thick screens. The greatest Polish scientist, Socialist leader and two-time Nobel-laureate Marie Salomea Skłodowska- Curie (1867-1934) and her French husband Pierre Curie (1859-1906) conducted pioneering research on radioactivity and showed how atoms of elements like polonium and radium emit energy in undreamt of quantity. Radium especially was proved to be so powerful that it shines in dark and inflicts fatal injuries to bodies coming close to it. With the experiments of Ernest Rutherford (1871-1934) and Frederick Soddy (1877-1956) - both British - essential features of radioactive transformations were disclosed. And, these offered certain basic irresolution that could not be explained in terms of the existing theory of physics and chemistry. Max Planck (1858-1947), a German physicist, revolutionized the study of atoms by suggesting that the energy given off by atoms is not continuous but it comes off in pieces. Energy, like matter, is atomic, and this atomicity lies in the curious quantity action. In 1900 Planck calculated the quantum of action, now known as Planck's constant h . Planck described his theory as a 'lucky intuition' but "as time went on physicists recognized ever more clearly that- because Planck's constant was not zero but had a small but finite value - the microphysical world, the world of atomic dimensions, could not in principle be described by ordinary classical mechanics" (<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Max-Planck>). The researches of Niels Henrik David Bohr (1885-1962), a Danish physicist and a colleague of J.J. Thomson and Rutherford, made fundamental contributions to the understanding of atomic structure and quantum theory in the first two decades of the twentieth century, for which Bohr received the Nobel Prize in Physics in 1922. Bohr's three works, translated into English, embody his principal thoughts and profoundly influenced the early twentieth century scientific thought: *The Theory of Spectra and Atomic Constitution* (1922), *Atomic Theory and the Description of Nature* (1934), and *The Unity of Knowledge* (1955).

Interlink between science and technology in the early decades of the twentieth century was established in the field of electrical engineering. The generation of high velocity particles helped to increase the range of electrical transmission, required for high-tension lines mainly in industry. Another significant development was the discovery of the radio-wave by two scientists

almost simultaneously at two opposite corners of the globe: Guglielmo Marconi (1874-1937), an Italian inventor, who in 1899 flashed the first wireless signal across the English Channel and two years later in 1902 he received the letter "S", the first trans-Atlantic message from England to America; and Jagadish Chandra Bose (1858-1937), one of the founders of modern Indian science. Nuclear splitting was discovered in 1938, mainly through the experiments of the elder daughter of Pierre and Marie Curie, Irène Joliot-Curie (1897-1956), and her husband Frédéric Joliot-Curie (1900-1958) - the couple won the Nobel Prize in Chemistry in 1935, continuing the legacy of the senior Curies. Science and technology in the nineteen thirties and forties took a decisive turn towards the discovery and application of both the nuclear bomb and the nuclear electricity. We would focus on the relation between science and war in the following sections from different perspectives. The use of radioactivity in the medical science, on the other hand, should be appreciated as a much later development, and the journey of Yuri Gagarin, 'the first man in the space,' began a new era of space technology only in the nineteen sixties. However, the early-twentieth century witnessed a great progress in the field of Meteorology, as in 1900, the troposphere was discovered and in 1918 Vilhelm Friman Koren Bjerknes (1862-1951), a Norwegian physicist and meteorologist, discovered the polar-front theory of cyclones. This paved the way for advanced weather forecasting.

The March, 1931 issue of the *Poetry Magazine* includes Don Gordon's poem, "Atomic Theory," which ends with the following lines:

Upon bone and blood, upon every atom,
I impress myself as intaglio incised in stone.
Atoms bearing grooves may be touched in space,
May seek known mortise and remembered edge.

I etch my thoughts upon the living wall, I set my seal upon
the atoms.

If the impress must tremble in space, if the intaglios blur,
Then far in advance I relinquish the will to endure.

I have laughter for patterns that feed the sidereal winds. (6)

1.5.4.2. Relativity and the Space-Time Continuum : A profound revolution in the theoretical physics was in process that reached an optimum point by the introduction of relativity by another German Albert Einstein (1879-1955), who independently in 1905 "argued that under certain circumstances radiant energy itself seemed to consist of quanta (light quanta, later called photons), and in 1907 he showed the generality of the quantum hypothesis by using it to

interpret the temperature dependence of the specific heats of solids" (<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Max-Planck>). The Special (1905) and General (1916) theories of Relativity result in an irreversible paradigm shift in our understanding of the physical world by overturning the Newtonian Physics. The Einsteinian Revolution - his equation for matter transformed into energy, $E = MC^2$, and concept of the space-time continuum - can be seen to inaugurate a new world-view, which is also found in the words of the British novelist David Herbert Lawrence (1885-1930) from a different perspective in his collection of essays, *A Selection from Phoenix*: "We should ask for no absolutes, or absolute. Once and for all and for ever, let us have done with the ugly imperialism of any absolute. There is no absolute good, there is nothing absolutely right. All things flow and change, and even change is not absolute" (186). In Joseph Conrad's (1857-1924) *Nostromo* (1904), and William Faulkner's (1897-1962) *The Sound and the Fury* (1924) same set of events are perceived by different characters, reflecting on the relativity of truth in the modern world.

We may take help of the explanations of Einstein's theory in Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy, edited by Simon Blackburn, for a preliminary notion, for this has entirely changed our relationship with the universe:

The assumptions on which Einstein's special theory of relativity (1905) depends are (i) all inertial frameworks are equivalent for the description of physical phenomena, and (ii) the speed of light in empty space is constant for every observer, regardless of the motion of the observer or the light source. ... As a consequence of the second postulate, no matter how fast she travels, an observer can never overtake a ray of light. ... However, near her speed approaches to that of light, light still retreats at its classical speed. The consequences are that space, time, and mass become relative to the observer. ... Events deemed simultaneous as measured within one such system will not be simultaneous as measured from the other: time and space thus lose their separate identity, and become parts of a single space-time. (326-327)

In the field of the philosophy of literature, Russian modernist thinker, Mikhail Bakhtin (1895-1975) makes seminal contribution in connection to temporal and spatial parameters of literary narrative. Bakhtinian 'chronotope' - aesthetic representation of time and space - merges the two parameters into an intersection of time and space. Although abstract thought can be related to time and space as separate entities, defining them apart from the emotions and values attached to them, Bakhtin observes in *The Dialogic Imagination : Four Essays* that "living artistic perception (which also of course involves thought, but not abstract thought) makes no such divisions and permits no such segmentation" (243). The blurred boundaries

between documentary, memory, and history in modernist art suggest a new spatiotemporal outlook.

As Mrs Ramsay says in *To the Lighthouse* (1927), by Virginia Woolf (1882-1941), the whole human life consists of "little separate incidents which one lived one by one, became curled and whole like a wave which bore one up with it and threw one down with it, there, with a dash on the beach" (<https://opentextbc.ca/englishliterature/wp-content/uploads/sites/27/2014/10/To-the-Lighthouse-Etext-Edited.pdf> 33). In *Mrs Dalloway* (1925), Woolf uses the Big Ben as a means by which the reader and the characters regain a sense of the here and now, a 'waking up' from the interior to the exterior reality. The chimes of Big Ben punctuate the novel with reality, bringing the reader and the characters back to exterior time, or the public space. The technologies of the modern world all serve the same function in the stream of consciousness narrative - an effect of new sense of time-space relation in the novels of Woolf and James Joyce (1882-1941). In *Mrs Dalloway*, especially the aero plane, sky-writing, and the car backfiring represent a London hurtling towards modernity. Henri-Louis Bergson's (1859-1941) philosophy was also highly influential in the nineteen twenties to suggest that intuition and immediate experience as being more significant than rational science as the basis for understanding reality. The German dramatist and Marxist thinker, Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956)'s 'epic theatre' claims that stage should distance itself from the world around and present itself as a self-conscious spatio-temporal construction. The so-called absurd play, *Waiting for Godot* (1952), by Samuel Beckett (1906-1989), an Irish playwright, uses a single tree, whose abrupt changes form the stage setting. Two characters circle around the tree and they assume that a great distance is being covered by them. The time and space are thus seen as a continuous process. Modernist narrative experiments with time and space in the context of the relativity of experience undermines the certainties and hierarchies, which European imperialism offers.

1.5.5.3. Developments in Biology : Molecular Biology developed as a separate field of study with the contributions from the study of electrons in the fourth decade of the twentieth century, particularly with the experiments of W.T. Astbury (1898-1961), primarily an English Physicist. The Indian scientist J.C. Bose made significant contributions to the study of plants. The study of hormones dates back to 1905, when the term was coined by E.H. Starling (1866-1927), a British physiologist. These studies and the extension of the great French chemist and microbiologist Louis Pasteur's works helped greatly to form the bio-technology. Ivan Petrovich Pavlov (1849-1936), a Russian physiologist, developed the concept of the conditioned reflex, that challenged, to a great extent the Western psychoanalysis as centered on the theories of Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), an Austrian neurologist. Ronald Ross (1857-

1932) became the first British Nobel laureate in 1902 for his Calcutta based researches on the transmission of malaria.

1.5.5. Science and Imperialism

1.5.5.1. Understanding Imperialism : Marlow, the main narrator of a seminal modernist novella, *Heart of Darkness* (1899), by Joseph Conrad, a Polish turned British novelist, provides the following observation on the capitalist imperialism of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century in opposition to European explorations and exploitations of foreign lands in the earlier centuries:

... They were no colonists; their administration was merely a squeeze, and nothing more, I suspect. They were conquerors, and for that you want only hard force - nothing to boast of, when you have it, since your strength is just an accident arising from the weakness of others. They grabbed what they could get for the sake of what was to be got. It was just robbery with violence, aggravated murder on the great scale, and men going at it blind - as is proper for those who tackle a darkness. The conquest of the earth, which mostly means the taking it away from those who have a different complexion or slightly flatter noses than ourselves, is not a pretty thing you look into it too much. What redeems it is the idea only. (141)

The transformation of random robbery with violence into the most technologically informed and ideologically organized "conquest of the earth" establishes the multi-layered and long-term relationships between modern imperialism and science. One of the strongest reflections of this entire dynamics could be found in modernist art and literature, mainly because of the fact that the period of modernist art roughly falls between the climax of imperial competition in the eighteen nineties and the post-Second World War national liberation and decolonisation movements in Asia and Africa. The plunder of the colonies around the globe at least since the seventeenth century by the application of physics and mathematics -the two most potent symbols of European travels across the seas are the ship and the compass - had played a crucial role in the transition to industrial states in Europe. Now, following the analysis of Karl Marx and Vladimir Ilych Lenin (1870-1924), it is understood that "the combination of monopolisation and intensified competition ushers in the epoch of imperialism. Among the capitalist countries this generates a tendency towards inter-capitalist war" (Bottomore 254).

Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, and a series of modernist texts like Ford Madox Ford's (1873-1939) *The Good Soldier* (1915), D.H. Lawrence's *Kangaroo* (1923), and Edward Morgan Forster's (1879-1970) *A Passage to India* (1924), push the narrative to the fringes

of the European Empire and suggest multiple implications of imperialism. As Fredric Jameson suggests in "Modernism and Imperialism", imperialism designates both "the rivalry of the various imperial and metropolitan" - that is technologically advanced - "nation states among themselves," and "the relationship of metropolis" - the heart of the Empire - "to the colony" (155). Science played a pivotal role in setting both the relationships, and the service of science provided to what Lawrence in afore-mentioned passage calls "ugly imperialism" concerns the question of ethics in terms of the position of science in the modern world.

1.5.5.2. Cartography and Oceanography : Imperialism forcefully imposes histories - or, names in the map according to the imperial plan - on geographies of its colonies, which are henceforth identified as parts of the world. "Cartography, the art and science of graphically representing a geographical area, usually on a flat surface such as a map or chart," is thus an essential part of the imperial domination(<https://www.britannica.co>). This dynamics is most poignantly articulated again by Marlow in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* :

... when I was a little chap, I had a passion for maps. I would look for hours at South America, or Africa, or Australia, and lose myself in all the glories of exploration. At that time there were many blank spaces on the earth ... The glamour's off ... It had got filled since my boyhood with rivers and lakes and names. (142)

The above project is, however, challenged in Conrad's other novel, *The Secret Agent*, 1907, in which a spy of some foreign country, Adolf Verloc employs his mentally challenged brother-in-law, Stevie, to plant a bomb at Greenwich observatory, and therefore to create a void at the heart of the world-time, being controlled by the British Empire. Cartography, on the other hand, introduced a whole range of applied sciences and technologies: "Few activities relating to the earth's surface, whether land use planning, property ownership, weather forecasting, road construction, locational analysis, emergency response, forest management, mineral prospecting, navigation-the list is endless-would be practicable without maps" (<https://cca-acc.org/resources/what-is-cartography>). Cartography is also interlinked with the imperial survey of colonized (wo)men and nature to arrive at multiple versions of the evolutionary theory.

The imperial scheme to scale the farthest point of navigation is directly related to the science of oceanography, that is, the knowledge about the seas and oceans. The idea that the continents of the earth had shifted from their original position was first put forward by the German climatologist Alfred Wegener (1880-1930) in 1912. And, as J.D. Bernal notes,

While in the study of the solid crust of the earth it is the structural and historic elements that predominate, in that of the waters and airs it is the dynamic element and the rapidity

of change which need to be understood. ... Its development in the early twentieth century was more extensive than spectacular. ... The greatest advances have been made on the edges of the ocean basins, the continental shelf furrowed with sinuous and deep canyons of still unknown origin, which have been studied with the anti-submarine device of the First World War.... The coastal landing operations of the Second World War led to the first really quantitative study of beaches and of waves and currents that serve to form them. (801)

As evident from the above observation, oceanography marks the passage from imperialism to the two great World Wars. Section 9.2.6.7 considers the relationship between science and wars. Oceanography, on the other hand, has centrally contributed to climatology, a chief scientific concern of the late-twentieth and twenty first centuries. Before that let us have a brief overview of the impact of science and technology on the chief modernist art forms.

1.5.6. Impact of Science and Technology on Modernist Painting, Literature and Film

1.5.6.1. *Painting* : The modern world witnessed a series of key developments, connecting art and science. The Kodak Company brought cheaper cameras to the market. This created a crisis for the portrait and landscape painters as the camera provided the most 'life-like' reproduction of any chosen object. "As a consequence, artists needed to assert an alternative, non-representational approach that differed from that of camera," as Peter Childs writes in *Modernism* (114). The discovery of X-Ray, too, had a major impact on the development of modernist painting, as it changed the perception regarding penetrability. Growing experiments in Chemistry made painting colours much cheaper, and painters now began to practice their art independently without any patronage of rich people. So, someone like Vincent van Gogh (1853-1890) could survive and work depending on his meagre earning. As an effect of the social and political revolutions in the eighteenth, nineteenth and early twentieth century classical art works were exhibited publicly, and the great Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 generated people's art, in collaboration with people's science. High-speed transport system helped the suburban artists to reach cities, and city-based artists to reach the countryside. This helped to form art movements, and also created market for artworks. With an unprecedented expansion of middle-class buyers and dealers, painting and sculpture became profitable business, though, as in case of Gogh, this did not much improve the artist's living condition. Interest in the so-called 'primitive' life and art in European colonies across the seas radically altered the form and content of European painting and sculpture, based on the Greco-Roman model of beauty.

Explosion of technology and growing automation also created a deep-seated crisis and anxiety in the artist's mind. The crisis of humanity and unbound violence during wars provoked rebellion among artists. Painting, like science, became interested in catching the molecules rather than the whole object, and breaking away from the chronological time and well-coordinated cartography. Theories of light and optical science contributed to the new concept of vision.

In the light of above developments, we may briefly discuss certain key movements of early twentieth century modernist painting. To quote from Peter Child's note on Impressionism in *Modernism* :

The last representational art movement was arguably impressionism, as practised by Renoir, Monet, Degas, Manet and Sisley. Most impressionists shared the general law that all life concerned a vision of beauty: cafes, villages, boulevards, salons, bedrooms and theatres all expressed a joy of life, a wholeness and a radiance. Impressionism was, in many ways, the essence of realism because its aim was to paint a specific object at a specific moment, to capture the effect of light and colour at an instant in time. ... Impressionism's unit of colour was the brushstroke, which was challenged by Georges Seurat (1859-91). More concerned with how vision worked than with the broad impressions created by the effects of light on objects, Seurat [and a group of post-Impressionist artists] wanted to paint the constituent blocks or atoms of seeing. As language could be stripped down to its letters and sounds, painting could also perhaps be reduced to its smallest elements: the molecule or dot. (115)

Post-impressionist drawing derived a lot from chemical studies on colours and optical physics, working on halo and mixing of colours in vision. Expressionism is primarily associated with the works of seminal post-impressionist, Vincent van Gogh, in whose self-portraits the self appears to be trying to escape, to fly away from itself in search of new expressions. "Nothing is small, nothing is great. Inside us are worlds" (qtd. in Childs, 123-24): such is the claim of the most typical expressionist painter, Edvard Munch (1863-1944), who, under the influence of Freudian psychoanalysis presents self as a battleground. Cubism marked a decisive shift from the representational to the 'abstract' art. Cubist paintings are "nearly all still life," and its internal logic is like this:

In terms of the object, art is a two-dimensional medium, but it is usually trying to represent three-dimensional space and, in this, can never be fully faithful to reality. In terms of subject: humans have bifocal vision; the eyes see depths; the individual can move around an object to see it from different directions; the point of focus and the centre of vision can

move between foreground and background as a person's point of interest shifts while scanning over the object. (Childs 117)

Paul Cezanne (1839-1906), a French post-Impressionist painter, was influential in the aesthetic development of many twentieth century artists and art movements, especially Cubism. And it was Pablo Picasso (1881-1973), a Spanish painter, who radicalised modern painting to explore its greatest potentials. Picasso and Georges Barque (1882-1963), a French artist, "were intent on making works of art that would not let the viewer forget their distinct essence as human products. They shattered surfaces that in nature belong together and resembled fragmented reality by transforming a curved object ... into some strange geometric contour that resembled virtually nothing ..." (Gay 155). Cubist painting thus offers the viewer a scope to put the fragments together into a recognizable semblance of actuality. The most technology-oriented art movement of the early twentieth century was perhaps Futurism, whose leader Filippo Tomaso Marinetti (1876-1944), a French painter, published the first 'Futurist Manifesto' in *Le Figaro* in 1909 and declared: "we affirm that the world's magnificence has been enriched by a new beauty; the beauty of speed. ... We will sing of great crowds excited by work, by pleasure, and by riot; we will sing of the multicoloured, polyphonic tides of revolution in the modern capital" (qtd. in Childs 121). Two main responses to the experiences of war in the field of art were, however, Surrealism, in the works of Luis Bunuel (1900-1983) and Salvador Dali (1904-1989) of Spain, and Dadaism that emphasized the irrational and absurd as a movement of 'anti-art,' a phrase by Marcel Duchamp (1887-1968), a French-American painter. With Duchamp, painting "repudiated entirely what he called retinal art and adopted the geometrical methods of industrial design. It became like the blueprint of a machine, albeit a symbolic one, that embodied his ideas of man, woman, and love" (<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Marcel-Duchamp>). The mingling of science/technology and painting marked a new era of post-modern art.

1.5.6.2. Literature : Virginia Woolf's depiction of 'life' as "a luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end" (qtd. in Poplawski 195) signifies the scientific consciousness of the literary artist. As this entire module is devoted to the analysis of modernist literature, and this unit, too, approaches different aspects of modern science through the lens of literature, we here restrict ourselves from providing any detailed account of literary art of the period. Let us, however, consider very briefly a specific literary genre, called Science Fiction, or Speculative Fiction, at its modernist phase.

In 1818 Mary Shelley's novel about the ethical dilemma associated with creativity and uncontrolled scientific progress, *Frankenstein* inaugurated the genre of modern Science

Fiction. The novel is the story of the consequences of scientist Victor Frankenstein's experiment with reanimating human corpses through the use of electro-galvanism. As Tarun K. Saint points out,

The genre's ability to foreground alternative perspectives with respect to key cultural and socio-political issues subsequently came to the fore in works such as *The War of the Worlds* (1897), nineteenth century master of the scientific romance, H.G. Wells's [1866-1946] allegorical tale on colonialism, and Yevgeny Zamyatin's parable of totalitarianism *We* (1924). Zamyatin's masterpiece was in turn one of the inspirations for British author George Orwell's better-known *1984* (1949). (XIV)

Another tradition of the SF genre can be traced back to the works of the French novelist, Jules Verne (1828-1905), whose *Around the World in Eighty Days* (1872), exhibits the far-fetched and the unbelievable in a way that inspires the reader's trust. The genre is, therefore, closely interlinked with the binary of utopia and dystopia. In European colonies nationalist aspirations for native progress and freedom were often expressed in the form of SF, as evident in Jagadish Chandra Bose's tale, "Runaway Cyclone" (1896), which is one of the earliest science fictions written in any Indian vernacular (see Ray 2019 & 2022).

1.5.6.3. Film : Joseph Conrad's preface to his novel, *The Nigger of the Narcissus*, includes a declaration that the task of the author is "by the power of the written word to make you hear, to make you feel - it is, before all, to make you see." Ezra Pound (1885-1972), an American modernist poet and theorist, wrote in 1916: "I see, you wish to give people new eyes ..." (both qtd. in Armstrong 2017). This preoccupation with vision in the modernist art is, however, best exercised in the most technologically complex modern art form, film. "Modernist photography - the Vorticist photography of Alvin Langdon Coburn and Man Ray's 'rayographs' for example - typically seeks to foreground the technology of perception. Aerial stereoscopic photography, designed to make objects leap out in exaggerated relief, has been related to Cubism, not simply in their flat planes ... but in an analytic and synthetic approach to vision" (Armstrong 103-104). All these techniques reconfigure the way of looking at an object and they are fully explored by the cinema, which, with a primary object to depict life, derives much of its elements from literary realism. And, as one of the greatest film makers of all times, Satyajit Ray (1921-1992) notes in *Our Films Their Films* that the "development of [filmic] language" from D.W. Griffith (1875-1948), who in USA perfected the motion-picture in *A Corner in Wheat* (1909), "to Godard" (1930-), the pioneer of the French new wave film in the nineteen sixties, "is equivalent to that from Chaucer to Joyce in English literature - a matter

of 600 years as against 60 in the cinema" (94). In the history of modern film making, Sergei Eisenstein's (1899-1948) works in Russia are the most significant achievements after Griffith:

Eisenstein's *Strike*, 1924, and *The Battleship Potemkin*, 1925, move away from the practices of conventional cinema by dealing with historical situations that dramatise human oppression, using characters as representatives of different classes, turning masses into the protagonist, and technically juxtaposing apparently unrelated images and moments with rapid shifts in rhythm. By cutting and editing, placing alternative movement side by side, and thereby reaching new synthesis, such films create 'dialectic montage.' After the October Revolution of 1917, under Lenin's leadership and pursuing Gorky's socialist realism, a new revolutionary use of camera for social analysis developed in Eisenstein, Pudovkin and Dovzhenko. (Banerjee and Ray 298-299)

In a parallel development the French 'poetic realists' of the nineteen thirties, including Jean Renoir (1894-1979), a major influence on Satyajit Ray, started to use camera for catching simple life of common people. Renoir's *Rules of Game* (1939), is distinguished by a new application of lens, called 'deep focus.' European film took another decisive turn in the nineteen forties at the hands of Italian artists, including Luchino Visconti (1906-1976) and Cezare Zavattini (1902-1989) - an avowed Marxist who scripted *Bicycle Thieves* (1948), directed by Vittorio De Sica (1901-1974), inspiring Satyajit Ray to make *Pather Panchali* (1955). The new technology of photography allowed these artists to inaugurate 'neo-realist' cinema and helped the post-colonial cinema to focus on the layered lives of the exploited mass in the post-Second World War period.

1.5.7. Science and Humanity: Wars and Ethical Responsibility

A pioneer of the Bengal Renaissance, a great chemist, an educationist and a social reformer, Prafulla Chandra Ray (1861-1944) retorted against the Western science and technology in the context of the First World War in an essay, "Then and Now," "The more we come into close contact with different races, in this age of steam and electricity, the more we are rendered vulnerable to onslaught after onslaught" (27). This observation recalls the master-slave dialectic proposed in one of the foundational philosophical texts of Western modernity, *The Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807), by Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831). Hegel suggests the limitation of the master that he "cannot see himself (his self) reflected in those around him whom he reduces to the status of objects; he lives an illusion. The slave, on the other hand, is first shaken by the fear of death which founds slavery, and then forced to recognize that he has his being for another" (Armstrong 135). The final recognition of being

subjugated by others on part of the exploited mass, particularly of the colonies, led in the early twentieth century to consider the role of science and technology in respect of humanity. The outbreak of two great wars of the first half of the century, primarily an outcome of the imperial competition for grabbing the resources around the world, created the fear and anxiety that is reflected in P.C. Ray's afore-mentioned opinion. In spite of P.C. Ray's passing reservation about inter-racial interactions; the only answer to the series of 'onslaught' mentioned by him was to re-establish the relationship between modern scientific development and mankind at a global scale. In the context of the First World War, another thinker, a seminal French philosopher Emmanuel Levinas "undertakes a sustained critique of Western metaphysics and ontology" by invoking "the concept of the Other" and arguing that the freedom of the Self must rest on the demands of the relation with the Other- the exterior, the unknown (Ray, 2021 261). That science could play a pivotal role in crossing the border between the Self and the Other was proved during the Nationalist movement of India in the inter-wars period. In Mulka Raj Anand's novels, the focus is mainly on the spread of the Gandhian anti-imperialist thought across India by using the modes of modern transport, like railways. As Ulrika Mande comments, modernist technology "enhanced our ability to see, hear, travel, discover, and comprehend, and in the process, they reconfigured our understanding of the self" (33). During the pre-war days Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) had launched a massive experiment at Santiniketan in Bengal of interrelating modern Western science/technology with tradition and humanism: in as early as "1902 the poet was anxious about the condition of educational system in Santiniketan, that due to the lack of money experiments and examination in the disciplines of Physics and Chemistry could not be introduced. But it was noticed that Botany, Agricultural Science, Meteorology, and Physiology could easily be practiced there" (Ray, 2019 35).

In any way, worldwide destruction of humanity in the opening decades of the twentieth century forced one to reconsider the project of Western civilization and argue for a new humanist outlook. One of the most profound humanist responses to the First World War is found in First World War literature, which is discussed separately in this module. However, we may quote from Santanu Das's study on the same literature as relevant to our present discussion:

If First World War writing is seen as a resurrection of the dead, these soldier-writers seem to be evoking moments they had known with the searing immediacy of their bodies. ... It is a great irony that the world's first industrial war, which brutalised the male body on such an enormous scale, also nurtured the most intense of male-bonds. The myth of heroic masculinity fostered through the works of Rider Haggard and Rudyard Kipling

and encouraged through the public-school sporting system exploded in the mud and blood of the Western front. A very different order of male experience, one that accommodated fear, vulnerability, support and physical tenderness, sprang up in its place. (136)

The human feelings that Das stresses as countering the brutality of the war, are part of the great legacy of the so-called 'modern' world. The anti-human tendencies of the First World War, on the other hand, were pushed to extremes in the Second World War. The processes of war production and supply, the mobilization of civilians and the types of weapons employed underwent new levels of specialization. "The human cost of WWII was truly enormous but is still impossible to measure exactly. ... The lowest figure that is at all plausible is some 40 million dead, but other estimates go as high as 55 million" (Sommerville 242). The experiences of Nazism and Atomic explosions left a deep and permanent scar on the community of mankind, which under the leadership of such mid-century thinkers, like Albert Einstein, Romain Rolland (1866-1944), Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948), and Rabindranath Tagore, participated in a new struggle of upholding the humanist and internationalist notions of reason and progress in opposition to all forms of totalitarianism.

1.5.8. Summing Up

A series of revolutions in human understanding of the cosmic and the natural worlds since the European Renaissance had contributed to the making of the modern natural science, before the relationship between science and technology, on the one hand, and capital and industry, on the other, took a definite form during the Industrial Revolution in England and Western Europe from the late eighteenth to the nineteenth century. The Industrial Revolution ensured the unprecedented growth of applied science and technology, but it also helped to the advancement of multiple scientific disciplines. However, the social effects of industrial capitalism in alienating (wo)man from his/her true selves become apparent in the contemporary literature. A decisive turn in the study of science at the turn of the century corresponded to the conceptual and real-life uncertainties regarding human existence and the world of matter and energy. The early twentieth century Physics and Chemistry were mainly preoccupied with the study of atoms and that of the space-time relativity. The intriguing relationship between science/technology and the European imperialism took a new turn in the twentieth century as the competition among the imperial states led to the outbreak of two consecutive World Wars. The introduction to the modern technologically advanced warfare forced to review the role of science and technology from the perspective of ethical responsibility of the Self to the Other.

This entire dynamics can be best understood through the continuous changes and experiments in the modernist art and its different forms, like literature, painting and cinema.

1.5.9. Comprehension Questions

Long-answer type questions :

1. Estimate the importance of Copernican and Newtonian Revolutions with regard to the growth of modern science.
2. How did the Industrial Revolution help the growth of applied science and advancement of new scientific disciplines?
3. Write a short essay on the significance of the atomic theory and the theory of relativity in changing the framework of human understanding of the world of matter and energy?
4. Discuss multiple aspects of the relationship between science, technology and imperialism.

Middle-length-answer type questions :

1. Write a short note on literary responses to the Industrial Revolution.
2. Briefly discuss the 'space-time continuum.'
3. Write a short note on any one movement in the modernist painting.
4. Write a short note on the genre of science-fiction.
5. Write a short note on the main streams of the modernist film.

Short-length-answer type questions :

1. What are cartography and oceanography?
2. How did Kodak camera change the mode of painting?
3. Name two modernist novels that use multiple narratives.
4. Who were the inventors of the radio?
5. What is Pavlov's theory?
6. Who was the first British Nobel laureate?
7. What was the main motto of Futurism?
8. Who wrote *The Phenomenology of Spirit*?
9. Name three architects of the mid-twentieth century humanist movement.

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Unit 6 □ Charles Darwin and Sigmund Freud

Structure

- 1.6.1. Objectives**
- 1.6.2. Introduction: From Anthropocentric to Bio-centric Thought**
- 1.6.3. Charles Darwin's Career: A Short Sketch**
- 1.6.4. Key issues of Darwin's Theory of Evolution**
- 1.6.5. Social-Darwinism: Socio-cultural and Literary Impacts**
- 1.6.6. Sigmund Freud's Career: A Short Sketch**
- 1.6.7. Freud's Concept of Psychoanalysis, and Its Relevance to Language, Literature and Culture**
- 1.6.8. Summing Up**
- 1.6.9. Comprehension Questions**
- 1.6.10. Suggested Reading**

1.6.1. Objectives

This Unit on 'Charles Darwin and Sigmund Freud' is divided into a number of interlinked topics, and has the following objectives:

- To acquaint the students with the major turn in the Western Thought that forms the philosophical and scientific basis of modernist culture.
- To acquaint the students with the lives and times of two seminal thinkers of Western modernity, Charles Darwin and Sigmund Freud
- To introduce the key concepts of Darwin and Freud and their relevance in the study of literature and culture.
- To explain the major distortions of Darwin's theory in the name of Social-Darwinism in relation to culture and politics.
- To introduce psychoanalysis as a tool of understanding language, literature and culture.

1.6.2. Introduction: From Anthropocentric to Bio-centric Thought

One of the finest minds of the early-twentieth century Bengal Renaissance and a precursor of Bengali Modernist literature, Sukumar Ray (1887-1923) wrote a series of short essays on various scientific inventions, discoveries, theories and lives of major scientists mainly for child-readers. Such an essay, "Darwin" begins with the following words:

We used to be told when we were children, 'the ancestors of human beings were monkeys.' This was also told to us that some learned fellow, named Darwin, had said this. However, Darwin had never said like this. The real concept is that in some ancient time the common ancestor of both human beings and monkeys lived. Both human beings and monkeys come from the same ancestor - but nobody has any idea about the exact time period. (Ray, Sukumar 81; *translated from Bengali*)

The apparently simplistic beginning of Sukumar's essay not only clarifies one of the central misconceptions regarding Charles Darwin's theory of evolution - that, as we shall notice later in this unit, has strong political implications - but also rather bluntly states human beings and monkeys as two interconnected branches of the tree of natural selection. The Copernican Revolution in modern science - referred to in the previous unit of the present module - had shifted the earth along with human beings, and everything revered and rationalized by him/her including God, from the centre of the universe to an orbit. The British naturalist Darwin (1809-1882) displaced human beings from the position of superiority even on the earth by proposing, as Janet Radcliffe Richards writes, "a mechanism by which mindless [Natural] processes might produce the kind of complexity that had previously seemed explicable only in terms of the intentions and power of what Locke called a cognitive Being" (17).

Darwin thus offers an explanation of the organic complexity of the biosphere - which is made up of the parts of our planet where life exists - "as something that just happened over vast periods of time, when simple creatures with no aspirations at all, influenced by nothing but unconscious natural forces, reproduced more of their kind than could survive" (Richards 17). His direction of analysis being from the bottom upwards, focuses on how order and complexity in Nature could come about without any intervention of the 'conscious' and 'developed' mind or brain. This inaugurates a radically new phase of thinking that exposes the limits of anthropocentric - or, human-centric - thought by disclosing an understructure of wonderful mechanism of simple elements which bring about higher forms of existence. Various expositions of limitations of human 'purposes' and 'goals' as governed by some understructure

of interplaying basic forces and elements radicalise modern thought, as espoused by Darwin's immediate contemporary the German social-scientists, Karl Marx (1818-1883) and Friedrich Engels (1820-1895) in case of social evolution, and later contemporary the Austrian neurologist Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) in his study of individual human being's most private worlds of dream and sexuality. In respect of Freud, especially, the most sustainable concept remains that of the unconscious. Although he gives a new technical meaning to the term, much of his insights come from his vigorous readings of myths, art, poetry, drama and prose-fiction. In this unit we would try to understand some of the basic streams of Darwin and Freud's thought and their cultural implications. The works of these thinkers radically altered the most fundamental interpretations of 'reality' in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century, and initiated the modernist movement in social-thought, science, philosophy, art, literature and culture.

1.6.3. Charles Darwin's Career: A Short Sketch

In the afore-mentioned essay, Sukumar Ray proceeds to note that Darwin in his childhood had a "strange interest in collecting various extraordinary things" from his surroundings and was a "soft-hearted fellow" who could not pursue medical studies and shifted towards natural history (82; *translated from Bengali*). Charles Robert Darwin was born on 12th February, 1809, in Shrewsbury, Shropshire, England. To repeat the *Britannica Ready Reference Encyclopedia* entry:

The grandson of Erasmus Darwin and Josiah Wedgwood, he studied medicine at the University of Edinburgh and biology at Cambridge. He was recommended as a naturalist on HMS *Beagle*, which was bound on a long scientific survey expedition to South America and South Seas (1831-36). His zoological and geological discoveries on the voyage resulted in numerous important publications and formed the basis of his theories of evolution. Seeing competition between individuals of a single species, he recognized that within a local population the individual bird, for example, with the sharper beak might have a better chance to survive and reproduce and that if such traits were passed on to new generations, they would be predominant in future populations. He saw this natural selection as the mechanism by which advantageous variations were passed on to later generations and less advantageous traits gradually disappeared. He worked on his theory for more than 20 years before publishing it in his famous *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection* (1859). The book was immediately in great demand, and Darwin's intensely controversial theory was accepted quickly in most scientific circles; most opposition came from religious leaders. Though Darwin's ideas were modified by later developments in genetics and molecular biology, his work remains

central to modern evolutionary theory. His many other important works included *Variations in Animals and Plants Under Domestication* (1868) and *The Descent of Man* (1871). He was buried in Westminster Abbey. (111-112)

Charles Darwin died in Downe, Kent on 19th April, 1882.

1.6.4. Key Issues of Darwin's Theory of Evolution

The American zoologist George Gaylord Simpson (1902-1984) commented in 1966 that "all attempts to answer questions about the nature of human beings and the meaning of life before 1859 had been worthless, and that we should be better off if we ignored them completely" (Richard 4). *The Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or The Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life* and *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex* carry the unmistakable implication that all conventional beliefs regarding our own nature and destiny require radical reconsideration. They also generate a feeling of smallness within an inscrutable design of Nature, which is beautifully caught by the central narrator of the Polish-British writer Joseph Conrad's (1857-1924) novella, *Heart of Darkness*, 1899: "It made you feel very small, very lost, and yet it was not altogether depressing, that feeling. After all, if you were small, the grimy beetle crawled on - which was just what you wanted it to do" (185).

The theory of evolution is not Darwin's invention; it rather has a long history. Evolution of different beings on the earth had been studied from multiple perspectives before Darwin touched the issue. The eighteenth and early-nineteenth century thinkers in this tradition include Baptists Lamarck (1744-1829), Georges Cuvier (1769-1832), Adam Sedgewick (1785-1873), Patrick Matthew (1790-1839), Richard Owen (1804-1892), Louis Agassiz (1807-1873), Thomas Henry Huxley (1825-1895), and Charles Darwin's own grandfather, Erasmus Darwin (1731-1802). Charles Darwin reformulates the earlier thoughts to construct a verifiable scientific theory, whose main theorems may be summarised in the following points:

1. Biological types or species have no fixed or static existence; they rather exist in the states of continuous change and flux. This quality seems to be corresponding to the modernist notion of uncertain, insignificant and passing existence that defies any conscious planning as was suggested by the Enlightenment modernity. The helplessness of the modernist subject who fails to rule his/her own life becomes a major literary theme across various contexts, as it is articulated in the American novelist William Faulkner's (1897-1962) 1932 classic, *Light in August*: "Yes I would say Here I am I am tried I am tired of running of having to carry my life like it was a basket of

eggs they all run away. Like there is a rule to catch me by, and to capture me that way would not be like the rule says" (337; *emphasis in the original*). Both internal and external natures are not static. All existences are variable and unstable, just like the experience of carrying a basket of eggs which tend to "run away."

2. All life takes the form of a struggle to exist and reproduce the greatest possible number of offspring, who vary among themselves. To suggest that reproduction and natural selection - explained in the next point - are at the root of the development of all species, including human, is to challenge the Christian belief in unchanging humanity modelled on God's image. In literature and art, a direct consequence is the spread of naturalism that refutes spirituality and favours environment and heredity. The major exponents of literary Naturalism are the French novelist, Emile Zola (1840-1902) and the American novelist, Jack London (1876-1916). We may, however, quote from D.H. Lawrence's poem, "Snake," 1920, to understand the spirit of environmentalism: "He dark enough/ And lifted his head, dreamily, as one who has drunken, / And flickered his tongue like a forked night on the air,/ so black/ Seeming to lick his lips,/ And looked around like a god..." (Thomas 148).
3. Nature culls out those organisms that are less adapted to any given environment, which is again subject to constant changes. Nature allows the organisms, better adapted to an environmental state because of some randomly occurring variations, to survive and flourish. This process is known as the process of natural selection. This is, therefore, a matter of organic variations and selections, and neither "prudent sagacity" nor "deliberation of enormous strength" - to quote two phrases from Conrad's long-story *Typhoon* (53)- on part of human beings can control the above process.
4. The whole process of evolution by natural selection involves an extremely long period of time.

All the above ideas had significant impact on the modernist writers in England and elsewhere. The English biologist Sir Julian Huxley (1887-1975) in his introduction to *The Origin of Species* pithily explains the importance of Darwin's key concepts in the following terms:

Why is *The Origin of Species* such a great book? First of all, because it convincingly demonstrates the fact of evolution: it provides a vast and well-chosen body of evidence showing that existing animals and plants cannot have been separately created in their present forms, but must have evolved from earlier forms by slow transformation. And

secondly, because the theory of natural selection, which the *Origin* so fully and so lucidly expounds, provides a mechanism by which such transformation could and would be automatically produced. (11)

Darwin's theory thus negates the possibility of any conscious intervention in the process of natural selection and resultant evolution. When in Ted Hughes' (1930-1998) poem "Hawk Roosting," 1957, the bird asserts, "It took the whole of Creation/ To produce my foot, my each feather:" (Thomas 466), it unknowingly gives credit to the process of natural selection.

1.6.5. Social-Darwinism: Socio-cultural and Literary Impacts

In his 1932 science fiction, *Brave New World*, Aldous Huxley constructs a totalitarian utopia, in which state-controlled hatcheries would engineer human-embryos and classify bottle-grown babies into certain fixed races according to their preordained social roles. Such misappropriation of Darwin's theory of evolution itself has a long and complex history with multiple crossovers between different social and anthropological thoughts. Darwin's theory, it may be repeated, is specifically concerned with the organic evolution that happens without any conscious planning. This is a non-teleological explanation of the living world. A teleological account presupposes that there must besome *telos*, or goal, of every process, and, therefore, Huxley's above novel is a teleological one. Now, the theory of evolution was used in a variety of purposes and mainly to the purpose of justifying racial and economic hierarchy of an imperial world order of the nineteenth and twentieth century. It was in 1898 *Degeneration*, a book by Max Nordau (1849-1923), a Jewish-Hungarian physician and a follower of the Italian criminologist, Cesare Lombroso (1835-1909), was translated into English. Lombroso's theory foregrounded physically 'abnormal' features of any individual as indicators of inheritors of criminal tendencies. Lombroso assumes the existence of born criminals as a distinct anthropological type, and Nordau associates anarchic desires with primitive peoples, which include the colonised natives of Asia and Africa, considered as savages, as well as marginalized sections of the European societies, consisting of women, working class, jobless poor, disabled, outlaws and others. Joseph Conrad found the theory of degeneration, coupled with the evolutionary issues, useful while writing his novels like *Heart of Darkness* and *The Secret Agent*, 1907. The second novel is set in 1886 London as an abode of the Anarchist movement, and depicts degeneracy at the centre of the British Empire.

The theory of Evolution was also conjoined with the English philosopher and biologist Herbert Spencer's (1820-1903) ideas. Spencer originated the expression 'the survival of the fittest' without any consideration of the role of natural selection in his *The Synthetic Philosophy*,

1896. Spencer is remembered as the father of Social Darwinism, used "to justify laissez-faire economics and the minimal state, which were thought to best promote unfettered competition between individuals and the gradual improvement of society to justify laissez-faire economics and the minimal state, which were thought to best promote unfettered competition between individuals and the gradual improvement of society" (<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Herbert-Spencer>). Especially in the nineteenth century America Social Darwinism gave birth to the first distinctively American philosophy, Pragmatism. The American philosophers "tested the validity" of human action "by the relative success of the result" (Horton and Edwards 167). Another origin of this tradition is the English economist Thomas Malthus (1766-1834), whose theory that population growth always tends to outrun the supply of food to a community, and, therefore, betterment of a community is impossible without strict limits on reproduction has had a huge impact on modern social thought. Social Darwinism provided one of the most powerful justifications of the Anglo-American imperialism around the globe based on the racial discrimination, as it is most famously expressed by the Indian born English author, Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936) in his "The Ballad of East and West" (1889): "Oh, East is East, and West is West, and never the Twain shall meet" (https://www.kiplingsociety.co.uk/poem/poems_eastwest.htm).

1.6.6. Sigmund Freud's Career: A Short Sketch

Sigmund Freud was born on 6th May 1856 at Freiberg, Moravia, which was a part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. In 1873 he was sent to the University of Vienna to study medicine, and did his specialization in anatomy and physiology. He was appointed a lecturer at the university in neuropathology. In 1886 he went to Paris and started his research in psychoanalysis. On returning to Vienna, he set up himself as a private clinical practitioner, specializing in nervous diseases. From 1900 to 1920 he mainly worked on the unconscious, socialization and morality. Freud was always conscious of his Jewish origin. He supported a much younger Swiss psychoanalyst named Carl Gustav Jung (1875-1961). Like his contemporary German sociologist, Max Weber (1864-1920), and the French sociologist, Emile Durkheim (1858-1917), and the German scientist Albert Einstein (1879-1955), with whom Freud was closely associated, Freud was deeply affected by the events of the First World War. Freud and Einstein tried together to stop the War and were concerned with what should be done to prevent such War in near future. Freud was not a Communist, but after the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, led by Vladimir Ilyich Lenin (1870-1924), and the formation of the USSR, Freud admitted that he had always thought that a more equal distribution of social wealth would improve people's lives and lessen, though not eradicate, aggressiveness and violence. Freud

was in touch with the first non-Western psychoanalyst of colonial India, Girindrasekhar Bose (1887-1953), who in 1922 established the Indian Psychoanalytic Society in Kolkata. In his later career Freud had to deal with the growth of Nazism in the 1930s' Europe, and started working on collective violence. *Civilization and its Discontents* was published in 1930 and *Moses and Monotheism* was published in 1939. In 1938 Freud left Vienna after the city had been occupied by the Nazis. He spent the last year of his life in London. Freud died in London on 23rd September 1939.

1.6.7. Freud's Concept of Psychoanalysis, and Its Relevance to Language, Literature and Culture

In *An Outline of Psycho-Analysis*, published posthumously in 1940, Freud writes, "My interest, after making a long detour through the natural sciences, medicine, and psychotherapy, returned to the cultural problems which had fascinated me long before, when I was a youth scarcely old enough for thinking" (qtd. in Bocock xxv). In spite of Freud's above recognition that study of culture demands the highest level of maturity, his entire oeuvre is marked by a highly complex aesthetic consciousness, and includes serious readings of literature, myth, religion etc. Freud is one of the first modern thinkers to offer an organised study of language as a sign system, and in this way his works anticipate many preoccupations of the late-twentieth century poststructuralist reading of the singularity of art and literature. This stress on the importance of language in psychoanalysis is a legacy left by Freud for his follower the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan (1901-1981), who is again a major influence on culture studies and literary criticism in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. On the other hand, Freud's works involve a thorough study of European aesthetic traditions. For example, the focus on symbols and images in Freudian psychoanalysis can be traced back to Shakespearean plays. Freudian treatment of dream as a storehouse of meaningful signs is also directly influenced by the Romantic concept of imagination, as advocated mainly by German Romantics and the English Romantic poet, Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834). In England "writers like May Sinclair, John Rodker and Dorothy Richardson were among the first to read and absorb Freud's work" (Armstrong 73).

"The Ancient Egyptians in the Bible treated dreams as having a meaning which needed interpretations. Joseph had been able to interpret the dreams of the Pharaoh as containing messages, or predictions, about what was going to happen in the future" (Bocock 33). As Freud explains, dreams are made of symbols, which stand for other things and events in a process he calls *displacement*. As dream elements carry multiple meanings that unravel

repressed sectors of mind, Freud calls it *condensation*. Therefore, this entire dynamics is interrelated with language and meaning - two main concerns also of Freud's immediate contemporary the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913). As Lacan points out in *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* (1973), Freud reconstructs the study of human psyche in relation to language, and he depends on the imperfections of human communications in order to get into the untraced realms of human mind. In this connection one may recall the realization of Marlow, the narrator of Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*: "We live, as we dream - alone. ..." (172).

Freud relates dream sensations to the experience of sexuality. In the *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1905), he provides a much expanded notion of sexuality from the common idea of adult heterosexuality. Significantly, "Freud made unsystematic observations of infants and children" to "develop his understandings of infant sexuality and desires" (Bocock 43). These observations lead to some culturally shocking concepts, like the 'Oedipal Complex,' which Freud detects to be most expressively represented in the ancient Greek tragedy *Oedipus Rex* by Sophocles (497/496 BC) and *Hamlet* by Shakespeare. Freud's study of the attachment between the mother's body and the son becomes a major theme of modernist literature, as exemplified by Lawrence's 1913 novel *Sons and Lovers*, and William Somerset Maugham's (1874-1965) short story "The Kite" (1947). In his controversial novel, *The Rainbow*, 1915, Lawrence deals with sexual energy: "She turned on him blindly and destructively, he became a mad creature, black and electric with fury" (126). Associated with the study of sexuality is the issue of social morality that suppresses all sorts of sexuality except that which serves the aim of socially sanctioned reproduction. So Freud's concept of the unconscious delves into the repressed wishes and desires that socially regulated consciousness represses and rejects. He introduces three key terms in this regard:

Psychoanalysis is concerned with the repressed material of unconscious or id. This repressed material is not readily recallable into consciousness It is the area from which internal feelings and desires emerge from the 'instincts'. This area is obscure, and difficult to describe. ... The ego develops as a result of contact with the external world, both physical and socio-cultural, through sense perceptions and through the acquisition of language. Its roots remain in contact with id. The superego stands like a parent in relation to a child compelling the ego to obey. (Bocock 77)

The German Expressionist playwright and poet Iwan Goll (1891-1950) in his play *Methusalem* (1922) names three characters as 'Id,' 'Ego,' and 'Superego.' The stream of consciousness narratives of James Joyce, Virginia Woolf and Ford Madox Ford (1873-1939) explore the

intriguing interface between the compelling authority of society and the individual subjectivity. Freud's influence can be found also in the Bengali modernist writings of Jagadish Gupta (1886-1957), Manik Bandyopadhyay (1908-1956), and many others.

1.6.8. Summing Up

Groundbreaking theories of both Charles Darwin and Sigmund Freud displace human beings from their former positions as autonomous self-governing beings, and unravel multiple forces - internal and external - as regulating their physical as well as mental nature. Darwin's theory of evolution considers life in terms of the most elemental and simple beings. Freud, on the other hand, depends on slips and gaps in human communication to find out the uncontrollable but repressed regions of the individual's own subjectivity. Both these thinkers radically change the modernist aesthetics. Although Darwin's theory being focused on the organic world has nothing to do with human civilization, it has been coupled with many anthropological pseudo-sciences to justify the social power structure. This misinterprets non-teleological aspect of Darwin's concept in terms of teleological ideologies, and leaves a huge impact on the racist and imperialist approaches in art and literature. Freud's treatment of dream, sexuality, language, and unconscious disturbs the moral control of society, and is closely associated with modernist cultural traditions in both the East and the West.

1.6.9. Comprehension Questions

Long-answer Type Questions :

1. Estimate the importance of Nature in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century turn in Western scientific and philosophical thinking.
2. How was the theory of evolution re-appropriated to serve the imperial politics and social hierarchy?
3. Write a short essay on the significance of modern psychoanalysis in studying literature?
4. Discuss multiple aspects of Freud's concept of psychoanalysis.

Middle-length-answer Type Questions :

1. Write a short note on *The Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection*.
2. Name the proponents of the evolutionary theory, besides Darwin.
3. How did Darwin's theory challenge the Christian notion of human being?

4. Briefly discuss Freud's career.
5. How do both Darwin and Freud dismantle conventional morality? Explain in your own words.

Short-length-answer Type Questions :

1. What are *displacement and condensation*?
2. Name a major post-Freud psychoanalyst.
3. Name a modernist novel that uses both evolutionary theory and psychoanalysis.
4. What is Thomas Malthus' theory?
5. Who is the father of Social Darwinism?
6. Name two Naturalist fiction writers.

1.6.10. Suggested Reading

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Module - 2

Modern British Literature : Poetry

Unit 7 □ Modern British Poetry- An Introduction

Structure

- 2.7.1. Objectives**
- 2.7.2. Introduction**
- 2.7.3. Edwardian Poetry**
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- 2.7.5. Modernism : A Historical Timeline**
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- 2.7.7. The Avant-Garde, and Different Modernist Movements**
- 2.7.8. Major Twentieth Century British Poets**
- 2.7.9. Summing Up**
- 2.7.10. Comprehension Exercises**
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2.7.1. Objectives

This Unit will try to introduce various strands of Modern British Poetry to you. It will also historically contextualise the corpus of this poetry and thereby trace the correlation between the various facets of the genre. Moreover, this unit will familiarise you with major poets of the time.

2.7.2. Introduction

While reading the British poetry of the twentieth century, we need to consider various factors such as its historical context, multiple groups of poets having different affiliations, personal orientations of the poets, and their use of language, poetic forms and structures. Given the heterogeneity of styles, forms, and structures of the corpus of modern British poetry, it is difficult to categorise them under a single essentialist rubric. They fall under such categories as Edwardians, Georgians,

Modernists, Poets of the Thirties, War Poets and the like. Poets belonging to a particular group shared some common features. For example, major British 'Modernist' poets such as Eliot, Pound, and Yeats deal with themes of their own choice and maintain their own distinctive styles, but at the same time shared some fundamental tenets of poetic principles. Ideologically, Modernist poetry demonstrates the "wide panorama of futility and anarchy" through a fragmented, disjointed narrative of human cognition and experience.

Of all the poetic movements taking place during the period, Modernism was the most prominent and, therefore, we need to provide some introductory information about it here. Modernism as a movement stems from a historical conjuncture of different movements-literary, cultural, political, social. It would perhaps be wise to consider modernism as a meta-movement embodying within its fold several micro-movements such as Imagism, Cubism, Futurism and Vorticism. The political volatility of the late 19th century caused by the progressive disintegration of the imperial ties, different anti-establishment movements, First World War- all these inform the aesthetic universe of European modernism. The vectors of political and social changes that shaped the aesthetic registers of modernism make it inherently fragmentary, disjointed, and laced it with a nostalgic obsession for mythic temporality. Despite its internal dichotomies and inconsistencies, modernist aesthetics brings to the fore an array of compelling questions that, on one hand, unsettle the core of our existential foundation and, on the other, endow us with a beacon of hope for an illusory brighter tomorrow.

Critics differ about the period of literary modernism. The last decade of the nineteenth century is often considered to be the inaugural phase of modernism in British literature and the beginning of the 1950s is supposed to be its terminal point. However, this historical period is broad and extensive. According to some critics, Modernism began in 1901 after the death of Queen Victoria. It is, however, almost universally acknowledged that the 1920s was the era when "High Modernism" thrived - 1922 being its *annus mirabilis*, with the publication of a number of substantial texts such as Eliot's *The Wasteland*, Joyce's *Ulysses*, and Virginia Woolf's *Jacob's Room*, to name a few.

2.7.3. Edwardian Poetry (1901-1910)

King Edward's tenure (1901-1910) is termed as Edwardian Period. The death of Queen Victoria in 1901 seems to appear as a defining moment in British literature. With King Edward's ascent to the throne, a new kind of liberalism permeated British culture and literature shared a remarkable affinity with it. Edward's rise in power begets a far relaxed atmosphere, being influenced by an array of social and cultural changes. Discussions regarding women's suffrage

and the dissemination of education to lower-class children beyond the elementary level unfolded a new arena of liberal expectations. Edwardian Poetry epitomized the spirit of the times. Henry Newbolt, John Masefield, Thomas Hardy, A.E. Housman, John Davison, and Rupert Brooke were the representative poets of the Edwardian era. What constitutes the fulcrum of Edwardian poetic sensibility is the increasing skepticism about language which led to many formal and aesthetic experimentations. Alongside this, increasing skepticism about the creative imagination comes as a marker of Edwardian poetry. Edwardian poetry's firm articulation of tradition played a pivotal role in shaping the British national and cultural identity. Growing demands for national heritage and the embedding of literature within it contributed to the invention of a tradition that remains the staple of British Literature. Overall, Edwardian poetry comes as a point of departure from the excessively sentimental moralizing of Victorian poetry. It shifts the paradigm to another dimension both extending and departing from the values of fin-de-siècle poetic sentiments and sensibilities.

2.7.4. Georgian Poetry

Georgian poetry is the name commonly ascribed to a group of poets who contributed to a series of anthologies titled *Georgian Poetry* (1912-22) edited by Edward Marsh. Marsh gave the title to the series with the hope that the accession of George V in 1910 will herald a new age of great poetry. John Drinkwater, Edmund Blunden, Ralph Hodgson, Edward Thomas, Harold Manroe, Rupert Brooke, Siegfried Sassoon, Robert Graves, Walter de la Mare, A.E. Housman are some of the major Georgian poets. Unlike their contemporaries, the Georgians did not have any specific goal or programme. They moved away from the overtly sentimental Victorian lyrics and opened up a new vista of English poetry that was buoyant, animated, and vibrant. Although it petered out within ten years, its resonances could be felt in the poetry of the later eras, especially in the poets of the thirties. Marsh, the editor of volumes mentioned earlier, considered that poetry should be intelligible, musical, and 'racy'- by 'raciness' he meant intensity of thought and feeling. Rupert Brooke greatly embodied these qualities.

2.7.5. Modernism : A Historical Timeline

Europe was gradually moving away from traditional mindset as new discoveries and inventions were taking place and findings of new researches such as those of Charles Darwin, Karl Marx, and Sigmund Freud unsettled the old concepts and ways of thinking. We need to have some idea about these landmark events in order to understand the roots of cultural modernism. Given below is a time chart that documents the years of such landmark publications and

events. This chart is *mainly* focused on events/publications that took place in Europe and England.

Year	Event
1857	<i>Les Fleurs du mal</i> (The Flowers of Evil)
1859	Darwin's <i>On the Origin of Species</i> gets published.
1867	Matthew Arnold, <i>On the Study of Celtic Literature</i>
1867	Karl Marx, <i>Das Kapital</i> , vol. 1.
1871	Paul Valery was born "The Drunken Boat" by Rimbaud was published
1872	Friedrich Nietzsche, <i>The Birth of Tragedy</i> .
1873	<i>Studies in the History of the Renaissance</i> by Walter Pater published
1884	Greenwich Mean Time (GMT) was introduced.
1890	James Frazer, <i>The Golden Bough</i> (2 vols; 3rd edn in 12 vols (1906-15).
1892	<i>The Book of the Rhymers' Club</i> (a second anthology in 1894).
1893	W.B. Yeats, <i>The Rose</i>
1895	W. B. Yeats, <i>Poems</i> .
1896	<i>The Savoy</i> magazine (Jan.-Dec.).
1897	Lionel Johnson, <i>Ireland and Other Poems</i> . <i>The Dome</i> magazine founded.
1899	Arthur Symonds, <i>The Symbolist Movement in Literature</i>
1899	<i>The Interpretation of Dreams</i> by Sigmund Freud published
1900	"The Symbolism of Poetry" by Yeats "The Darkling Thrush" was published in <i>The Graphic</i> .
1900	<i>Interpretations of Poetry and Religion</i> by George Santayana published.
1902-3	Georg Simmel, "The Metropolis and Modern Life."
1902	John Masefield, <i>Salt-Water Ballads</i> ; Walter de la Mare, <i>Songs of Childhood</i> . <i>Times Literary Supplement</i> founded.
1903	W. E. B. Du Bois, <i>The Souls of Black Folk</i> ; <i>Camera Work</i> magazine founded
1904	Thomas Hardy, <i>The Dynasts</i>
1907	Henri Bergson, <i>Creative Evolution</i>

1908	Ezra Pound arrives in London. <i>English Review</i> periodical founded
1909	Gertrude Stein, <i>Three Lives</i> ; F. T. Marinetti, "The Founding and the Manifesto of Futurism" Poetry Recital Society founded
1910	W. B. Yeats, <i>The Green Helmet and Other Poems</i> ; F. T. Marinetti delivers "Futurist Speech to the English' in London; Crisis magazine founded
1912	Edward Marsh, ed., <i>Georgian Poetry</i> (Vol.1) Ezra Pound coins the term 'Imagisme'; Pound, <i>Ripostes</i> ; F. T. Marinetti, "Technical Manifesto of Futurist Literature"; Guillaume Apollinaire, <i>The Cubist Painters</i> ; Robert Delaunay, "Note on the Construction of Reality in Pure Painting"
1913	Robert Frost, <i>A Boy's Will</i> ; F. S. Flint, "Imagisme"; F. T. Marinetti, "Destruction of Syntax-Wireless Imagination-Words-in-Freedom" Luigi Russolo, "The Art of Noises: A Futurist Manifesto".
1914	Amy Lowell, <i>Sword Blades and Poppy Seed</i> ; Mina Loy, "Aphorisms on Futurism"; "Parturition"; Clive Bell, "The Aesthetic Hypothesis"; <i>Blast</i> magazine founded (second and final issue 1915). <i>The Egoist: An Individualist Review</i> (formerly the <i>New Freewoman</i>) founded <i>Vanity Fair</i> magazine founded (until 1936).
1915	T. S. Eliot, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock"; F. S. Flint, "The History of Imagism". Vorticist exhibition at the Doré Galleries, London.
1916	Hilda Doolittle, <i>Sea Garden</i> . First Dada performances at the Cabaret Voltaire, Zurich; Tristan Tzara, <i>The First Celestial Adventure of Mr Antipyrine</i> .
1917	T. S. Eliot, <i>Prufrock and Other Observations</i> ; Mina Loy, "Songs to Joannes". <i>The New Poetry: An Anthology of Twentieth-Century Verse in English</i> ; Dada magazine founded Guillaume Apollinaire's <i>The Breasts of Tiresias</i> staged in Paris.

1918	Oswald Spengler, <i>The Decline of the West</i> (Vol.1); Tristan Tzara, "Dada Manifesto 1918; Enfranchisement of women aged 30 and over in Britain; Declaration of the Weimar Republic
1919	T. S. Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent"; H.D., "Notes on Thought and Vision"; <i>The Chapbook</i> magazine (originally the Monthly Chapbook) founded
1920	<i>The Sacred Wood</i> by T.S Eliot; <i>Hugh Selwyn Mauberley</i> by Ezra Pound; <i>The Dial</i> magazine founded; Freud, <i>Beyond the Pleasure Principle</i> .
1922	E. E. Cummings, <i>The Enormous Room</i> . T. S. Eliot, <i>The Waste Land</i> ; Virginia Woolf, <i>Mrs Dalloway</i> ; James Joyce, <i>Ulysses</i> ; <i>Faade</i> by Edith Sitwell.
1923	T. S. Eliot, "Ulysses, Order and Myth"; D. H. Lawrence, <i>Birds, Beasts and Flowers</i> .
1924	André Breton, "First Manifesto of Surrealism"
1925	T. S. Eliot, "The Hollow Men"; Ezra Pound, <i>A Draft of XVI Cantos</i> ; W. B. Yeats, <i>A Vision</i> .
1927	Wyndham Lewis, <i>Time and Western Man</i> ; Martin Heidegger, <i>Being and Time</i> .
1929	André Breton, "Second Manifesto of Surrealism"; Wyndham Lewis, <i>Paleface: The Philosophy of the Melting Pot</i> .
1930	W. H. Auden, <i>Poems</i> (2nd edn, 1933); Samuel Beckett, <i>Whoroscope</i> ; T. S. Eliot, "Ash-Wednesday".
1931	Gertrude Stein, <i>How to Write</i> .
1932	F. R. Leavis, <i>New Bearings in English Poetry</i> .
1934	T. S. Eliot, <i>After Strange Gods</i> ; Ezra Pound, <i>ABC of Reading</i> .
1935	T. S. Eliot's <i>Murder in the Cathedral</i> (verse drama).
1937	Picasso, <i>Guernica</i> .
1938	Brian Coffey, <i>Third Person</i> ; Harriet Monroe, <i>A Poet's Life: Seventy Years in a Changing World</i> ; Ezra Pound, <i>Guideto Kulchur</i> .

1939	W. B. Yeats, <i>Last Poems and Two Plays</i> .
1947	Gertrude Stein, <i>Four in America</i> ; Stein's <i>The Mother of Us All</i> is performed and published (posthumously).
1948	T. S. Eliot, Nobel Prize for Literature; Ezra Pound, <i>The Pisan Cantos</i> , awarded Bollingen Prize.

2.7.6. Modernist Poetry: Cultural and Historical Context

In the article, "Modernist Poetry in History", David Ayers regards two major figures - Walter Pater and Charles Baudelaire - as integral to Modernist poetics' expansion. He argues that Pater's aestheticism and its successor movement known as 'Decadence' represented a departure from the Arnoldian model of adapting to the social situation of art. *Pater's Studies in History of the Renaissance* (1873) depicts the human mind to be the centre of constant transition and mutability. Pater's aestheticism creates a "space for pleasure and internal autonomy" (Ayers20). Keeping the Baudelairean figure of the "Dandy" in mind, Ayers observes, "Another consequence is the aesthetic development of the person of the poet himself or herself in terms of lifestyle, the type of the alienated artist" (21). From Ayers' argument, it becomes clear that the modernist artist, with his/her bohemian cult, becomes intrinsic to the modernist tradition of representation- the bohemian artist both inhabits and confronts the bourgeois value system. The city remains the focal point of both the artists' bohemian activities and the nucleus of their representation. Tim Armstrong quite compellingly argues: "Many recent accounts of modernism have begun with the metropolitan centre: Paris in the 1840s, the detached and ironic gaze of the masculine walker, the flaneur, and Baudelaire's essay on 'The Painter of Modern Life'" (23). He mentions Flaubert, Mallarmé, Rimbaud, Laforgue to trace the evolving trajectory of modernist poetry. Regardless of their historical contexts, the stress remains on the "oppositional stance expressed in the aesthetic term and the opening of a rift between bourgeois modernity on the one hand and aesthetic modernity on the other" (Armstrong 23). The divide between the 'bourgeois' and the 'aesthetic' breaks down the culturally cherished notion of a universally accepted paradigm of Enlightenment modernity. However, this divide remains instrumental to the poetics of modernism and its structure of representation.

The relationship between politics and aesthetics is central in Modernist poetry. Keeping in mind the emergence of new regimes of governance, Micheal Tratner observes:

In the early twentieth century, the political landscape of English-speaking countries, and indeed of the entire world, underwent a remarkable number of quite radical changes. Two new political systems emerged - communism and fascism - and many predicted that one or the other of these systems would take over the entire world (68).

At this historical conjuncture women of England also gained their voting rights after a sustained movement. Interestingly, the resultant proliferation of voters also resonated with the spurt of the Labour Party activities which aimed at representing the demands of the working-class citizenry. Besides, Irish independence, the rise of Pan African freedom movements, and the Indian war of independence had an abiding impact on the political topography of England in particular and Europe in general. These changes propelled the envisioning of new cultural forms. Tratner observes:

... The sense of imminent and radical change meant that politics needed to generate images of a new reality, of new cultural forms. Politics itself was driven to reject 'realism' because it was necessary to develop policies for governing bodies that had never existed before and which were going to exist in a matter of a few years. Politics became 'aesthetic' in the sense of seeking to produce representations of imaginary social structures (70).

Politics and aesthetics were so closely intertwined in modernist poetry that the sense of this 'imminent and radical change' catapulted modernist poetry into the imagination of a veritable dystopia, found in Eliot's poetics. What emerged in this era is a politics of cultural hybridization/mixture through an effort to transcend the limits of human consciousness to envision the world order in a new light. This attempt is reflected in the forms and structures of modernist aesthetics. Micheal Whitworth comments quite succinctly on the form of modernist poetry:

The modernists set a high value on form, and works which they considered "formless," "shapeless," or "baggy" they dismissed as not being art. But they were suspicious of form as a straitjacket, as something that would prevent them from expressing their true visions, or prevent them from depicting the actual chaotic nature of the modern world. If we are to understand their form, then we need to go beyond definitions of form that work for conventional rhyming poems. Older definitions of form are useful starting places for new models: for example, we can stretch the analogy of rhyme to cover ideogrammic and mythic method. But to go further we may need to consider other kinds of unity (153).

This departure from the conventional paradigm of form is the hallmark of modernist aesthetics. Whereas in the traditional language and form the thrust is placed on temporality, sequence,

and coherence, modernists seek to demonstrate the disruptive flows of time. They break away from the conventional sense of harmony, order, and coherence through poetic representation. Analogous to the matrix of a decentred, diffused, politically turbulent time, modernist poetry offers the template of an aesthetic design that is not apparently "formless", yet significantly different from the conventional poetic forms.

2.7.7. The Avant-Garde, and Different Modernist Movements

During the first quarter of the twentieth century, modernist poetry was marked by experimentation of various kinds. These experimentations spurred the growth of a phenomenon known as 'historical avant-garde'. The core features of the historical avant-garde were radical experimentation with the form of art, critical irreverence toward the dominant paradigm of artistic and poetic representation, and the cultivation of an unorthodox attitude to life. The objective of the avant-garde was to push the boundaries of art and thereby cross the divide between life and art. Peter Burger argues that the avant-garde ambition to traverse the divide between life and art was ultimately thwarted by the inherent aestheticism of the institution under bourgeois capitalism. In his *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, Renato Poggioli notes:

An authentic avant-garde can arise only when the concept as we know it (or at least a potential version of it) emerges. It is evident that such a concept (or its equivalent) is present in the Western historical consciousness only in our epoch, with the most remote temporal limits being the various preludes to the romantic experience (15).

Poggioli, persuasively, draws an analogy between Romanticism and the *Theory of the Avant-Garde*:

On the plane of aesthetic metaphysics, we must examine the doctrines going under the names of the "aesthetic of the dream" and the "poetics of the supernatural," equally dear to the romantic and the avant-garde artist. There the relationship between symbolists and surrealists, on the one side, and the extreme (particularly the German) romantics, on the other, seems almost that of the disciple to master (58).

The avant-garde aesthetic, thus, harbours the dream of an extraordinary world different from the debilitating conditions of the ordinary present. This dream of a different world remains inextricably linked with the Modernist envisioning of new world order.

Given below are brief introductions to some schools of art and literature which resorted to artistic innovations and experiments.

Futurism : Futurism was one of the major movements that influenced the art of the modernist aesthetic. The techniques and technologies of modern advertising were central to Filippo Tommaso Marinetti's *Manifesto of Futurism*, published in 1909. Futurism was largely concerned with the exaltation of speed, and industrial culture. What Futurism adopts is a relentless pursuit of mobility and aggression. The impact that Futurism leaves on modernist poetry can be encapsulated in the following ways:

- 1) The poet must present himself with an "ardour, splendor and generosity, to swell the enthusiastic fervour of the primordial elements."
- 2) No work without an aesthetic character can be a masterpiece. Poetry thereby needs to entail violence, instrumental to an attack on the unknown forces.

Lawrence Rainey comments that with Futurism "the distinction between poetry and the most ephemeral of commodities, the daily newspaper" got blurred. No wonder, the *Futurist Manifesto* plays a pivotal role in redefining the characteristics of modernist poetry by promoting a poetics of collage and verbal abstraction.

Imagism : Imagism was the brainchild of F.S. Flint, Ezra Pound and T.E. Hulme. Imagists engaged in a debate with the Futurists in terms of the modes and politics of representation. Resolutely departing from the Futurist call of going beyond the "limits of art", they fixate their attention on the 'thing' and its direct treatment. By doing so they promoted minimalism in English poetry. As shown by Paul Peppis, the three dominant strands of imagism are: 1. direct treatment of the 'image'. 2. To use absolutely no word that does not contribute to the presentation. 3. Regarding rhythm: to compose in the sequence of the musical phrase, not in the sequence of a metronome (32). Ezra Pound's fourteen-word poem "In a Station of Metro" provides an excellent example of an Imagist poem: "The apparition of these faces in the crowd:/Petals on a wet, black bough."

Vorticism : Vorticism was another major aesthetic movement co-founded by Wyndham Lewis, Ezra Pound, Henri Gaudier Brezka, and others. The journal *Blast : The Review of the Great English Vortex* edited by Lewis embodied the principles of Vorticism. This was originally advertised as containing "Discussion of Cubism, Futurism, Imagism" it is these three prior movements that most influenced Vorticism. With its bright pink cover and bold-faced type, *Blast* (1914) adopted the style of Futurism, combining with it the jagged geometry and multi-perspectival approach of Cubism. Various manifestoes written in an aphoristic style hovering between aesthetic criticism, agitprop, and wry humour fill the pages of *The Blast*. As Peppis argues the poems of *Blast*

...present Lewis's boisterous declarations and arguments, by turns antagonistic, esoteric, hilarious and obscure in visually striking form: nearly newspaper-sized pages, covered with black block letters, composed to maximise visual impact and explore language as a visual medium and the printed page as compositional field. (34)

Thus, *Blast* plays a pivotal role in taking literary and aesthetic experimentation to the level where poetry can seamlessly be integrated with the banal, the everyday and the mundane spheres of life. By absorbing the non-poetic into the poetic form and discourse *Blast* contributes immensely to the interdisciplinarity of modern poetry.

Poets of Thirties or Auden Group

In the 1930s a group of poets emerged on the literary scene with a resolute commitment to left-wing politics. They belonged to a generation that had been school children during the First World War. They derived knowledge about the horrors and brutalities of the war by reading the poems of Owen, Sassoon, and Brooke.

The poets of the thirties are noticeably different in style and approach from the poetry of the 1920s. Unlike Eliot, the poetry of the Auden group explores the relationship between the private world and the public world to show how they remain implicated within each other. W.H. Auden during this period uses form and language to communicate a more social perspective on the modern world. As a result, his poetry is more accessible and more popular. However, both Auden and Eliot share the same poetic quest for meaning instrumental in the ordering of a world that was falling apart.

Although W.H. Auden's poetic voice was powerful and influential throughout the 1930s, many other writers responded to the events of that decade with equal dedication and fervor. They also considered 'this' and 'in our time', and their writing fused the private and public worlds, attempting to win a wider readership. A number of these poets were called the Auden Group because they shared a style and viewpoint similar to W.H. Auden. The most important members of this group were Louis MacNeice, C. Day Lewis, and Stephen Spender. Despite the heterogeneity, their poetry is marked by a focus on social themes and on the use of clear, ordinary language.

Their rejection of poetry as an auto-telic medium was linked with their criticism of the fascist worldview. Their fight against Fascism not only revolved around the Spanish Civil War but extended to sympathy for Marxism and the celebration of the achievements of the Russian revolution. With the shift of focus from the mythical tradition to social and political commitment,

the poets of the Thirties departed from the experimental art and style of early modernist poetry. This reaction against esoteric poetry and recondite allusions resulted in an engagement in the immediate and insistent problems. We can mention in this respect Auden's *Poems* (1930), Spender's *Poems* (1932), and C. Day Lewis's *The Magnetic Mountain* (1933). In the anthology *New Signatures* (1932), Michael Roberts clearly rejected the traditions set in the Pound-Eliot era. In 1933, Geoffrey Grigson founded a poetry magazine, *New Verse*. It foregrounded contemporary speech and actual socio-political issues in poetry. The concern for contemporary events was reinforced by the need for intelligibility and wider readership, and the poets reverted to more traditional syntax, meters, and forms like the sonnet, the heroic couplet, *terza rima*, and so on.

Movement Poetry :

The term Movement literature was coined by the editor of *The Spectators* J.D. Scott. In *The Spectators* (1954), he referred to the literature of the 1950s to indicate a shift in the poetic paradigm. Movement poetry featured poets like Philip Larkin, Kingsley Amis, John Wain, DJ Enright, and Robert Conquest. The cultural context of the movement poetry was the second world war that had a pivotal role in the further disintegration of social relations which showed considerable signs of collapse in the 1920s. Repudiating both the experimental pyrotechnics of Avant-Garde poetry and the metaphorical abstractions of new-romantic poetic sentiment practiced by Dylan Thomas, movement poetry revels in a poetic tradition that is ironical, nostalgic, and mundane. Through incisive use of realism, movement poets forged a distinct cultural identity that was at odds with the broad, cosmopolitan identity of early twentieth-century poetry. On the other hand, in movement literature, European sympathies were predominantly brushed aside as intellectually pretentious and hollow. It cultivated a sense of cultural insularity. Remaining restricted predominantly to university-going male urban elites, movement literature, despite its penchant for the English tradition, could not expand its scope. However, with its razor-sharp depiction of reality, it ushered in a new kind of literature marked by cynicism, disillusionment, and anger. Two anthologies were produced during this phase: Enright's *Poets of the 1950s* (1955) and Conquest's *New Lines* (1956). While Amis attained some success as part of the group with his poetry, he fortified his recognition through his novel, *Lucky Jim* (1954).

2.7.8. Major Twentieth Century British Poets

W.B. Yeats (1865-1939)

Of the triumvirate of modernist poets, W.B. Yeats remains a unique figure representing both romanticism and modernism. Born a generation before Eliot and Pound, Yeats, through his

poetry, evocatively brings to the fore the shifts and transitions in modernist poetry. Unlike the other modernists, the poetry of Yeats, as stated before, represents a romantic fervor to such an extent that he is often hailed as 'the last romantic.'

Yeats' Irish upbringing and his association with the Irish freedom struggle lent a political import to his poetry. His deep-rooted interest in mysticism and search for indigenous myths and folklores shaped his poetic world and brought his readers in close touch with the lost world of Irish culture and civilization. Owing to his inextricable association with Irish politics, his poetry also remains charged with political undertones.

The aesthetic development of Yeats is usually divided into three phases. In the first phase, his poetry remains marked by a self-conscious romantic charm. His affinity with Celtic twilight and Irish nationalism remains aligned with the envisioning of a utopian Ireland. His poetry collection *The Rose* (1893) unravels the search for an idyllic landscape of his dream. It also records his aesthetic quest for a unifying, self-sustaining world order. A key poem in this phase is "The Lake Isle of Innisfree" which resonates with the urge for a journey to the "Lake of Innisfree" where he can discover the "deep heart's core".

The second phase was dedicated to Irish nationalism. The quest for a sublime, dream-like Irish landscape yields to growing disillusionment with the changing nature of Irish politics. His increasing awareness of the violent turn in Irish politics is recorded in "Easter 1916", where he uses the birth of a "terrible beauty" as a refrain. The refrain with a blurring of the ontological contraries highlights the overcoming of dualities that informs the poetic philosophy of late Yeats. Yeats' "The Second Coming" (1921) encapsulates his vision of death and dissolution. It also envisions the onset of a gigantic force to restore the order that has fallen apart.

In the third phase, Yeats turns more philosophical and introspective. Between the First World War and 1930, Yeats published *The Wild Swans at Coole* (1917), *Michael Robartes and the Dancer* (1921), *The Tower* (1928), and *The Winding Stairs* (1929). In two famous Byzantium poems, Yeats expresses a strong desire to travel to the world of art and poetry, overcoming the strains of death, decay, and decrepitude. Through the adept use of images like the gyres, winding stairs, and spinning top, Yeats conjures up an elaborate symbolic design. The symbolism of Yeats goes beyond the law of dialectical temporality to create a self-reflexive order where his aesthetics and politics converge.

T.S. Eliot (1888-1965) :

In Modernist poetry, the impact of T.S. Eliot was so enduring that the Modern age was often hailed as the age of Eliot. Eliot reigns as a towering figure in the age not merely as a poet but

also as an essayist, critic, and dramatist. The eclecticism of his genius is testified by his belonging to multiple literary and cultural traditions. In an era that was steadfastly preoccupied with the new forms of subjectivity, poetic forms, and the meanings of tradition, Eliot lent a cosmopolitan character to British poetry by imbuing it with the cultural values drawn from various parts of the world.

Eliot was born in St Louis, Missouri in 1888 in a family which firmly believed in unitarian Christian doctrine. His grandfather William Greenleaf Eliot had come to St. Louis to establish a Unitarian church. His father was a businessman. Interestingly, Eliot seemed to have inherited the legacy of writing poetry from his mother, a social worker who used to write poetry. One of the major tropes that haunt Eliot's poetry recurrently is the trope of failure. In a recent biography of Eliot, Craig Raine argues that Eliot derives this theme of 'buried life' from Matthew Arnold. Eliot's poetics is marked by a painful realization of the growing incapacity to realize the full scope of human emotions.

Raine observes, "Eliot is also a modernist, with a commitment to a classicist position. He is, therefore, skeptical about emotion, about strong emotion, as an obvious good in itself" (xx). In his poetic theory of impersonality, Eliot dwells on the necessity of maintaining an impersonal aesthetics of poetry. Going against the grain of Romantic individuation of the self, Eliot, in his essay "Tradition and Individual Talent," argues that poetry does not offer a reflection of human personality but an escape from it. He also considers the role of the poet as instrumental to the growth and dissemination of a tradition that is adequately equipped with the 'historical sense'.

"The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" published in 1915 was Eliot's first claim to fame. The 'love song' was a sarcastic take on the romantic tradition of love lyrics. Eliot subverted the idea of a blissful romantic evening by envisioning the evening as diseased - a "patient etherized upon a table." The idea of love was supplanted with a rigorous invocation of the image of a narcissistic, insular bald man, full of doubts and self-scrutiny. *The Waste Land* (1922) is Eliot's magnum opus. It unravels the vignettes of a dystopian world shattered and left in jeopardy after the First World War. In this poem, Eliot draws on multiple cultural traditions to show how the entire world is plagued by these vicissitudes of loss and disharmony. The final section of the poem offers a solution to the prevailing scenario of crisis by invoking the necessity of *Datta* (To Give/Bounty), *Dayaddham* (Compassion), *Damayata* (Self-restraint). The search for inner peace (*Shantih*) in Eliot remains inextricably linked with the aesthetic quest for a narrative closure that *The Waste Land* lacks throughout. If *The Wasteland* is about a quest for peace in a world gone haywire, in *Four Quartets* (1936), Eliot turns

more introspective to comment on the value and purpose of human existence. Subsequent to his conversion to Anglicanism in 1927, Eliot shares his musings on time and religion in *The Four Quartets* (1936-1942).

Ezra Pound (1885-1972) :

In the book *Pound Era*, Hugh Kenner repudiated the culturally cherished idea of reading the modern age as an 'age of Eliot'. While Eliot and Yeats extended the scope and rubrics of Modernist poetry through their poetic outputs, Ezra Pound spurred the movements that go into the making of a modernist poetic canon. The two major movements that Ezra Pound remains associated with are Imagism and Vorticism. Born in Idaho, Ezra Pound turned out to be a cultural impresario of the era.

In *Hugh Selwyn Mauberly* (1920), Pound experiments with the formal and aesthetic designs of the poem. Quite like T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* and Gertrude Stein's *Tender Buttons*, he deploys the technique of collage in the composition. The *Cantos*, written over a period of 50 years, exerted an enormous influence over contemporary and later poets such as H.D. (Hilda Doolittle), Richard Aldington, William Carlos Williams, Louis Zukofsky, Charles Olsen, and Robert Lowell. Despite his own literary output, Pound is perhaps best-known as the editor of T.S. Eliot's poem *The Waste Land* (1922), which is dedicated to Pound who is called 'il miglior fabbro' ('the better craftsman').

Pound also became interested in politics and economics, specifically C.H. Douglas's theory of Social Credit Economics, which he encountered while working under Alfred Orage for the journal, *The New Age*. Pound moved to Rapallo, Italy, in the 1920s, and, under the impression that Italian leader Benito Mussolini would implement Douglasite economic reforms, supported Italian fascism. Remaining in Italy during World War II, Pound repeatedly appeared on Rome Radio, issuing statements critical of United States involvement in the war. As a result, he was arrested during the Allied liberation of Italy in 1945. During his internment in Italy, he wrote *Pisan Cantos*. This won the Library of Congress's Bollingen Prize in 1949, while he was being tried for treason in the United States. Pound pleaded insanity to escape the charges, and was institutionalized at St Elizabeth's mental hospital in Washington, DC, for 12 years. After his pardon and release in 1958, Pound returned to Italy, where he died in 1972. Although both his fascist associations and antisemitism have made Pound a controversial figure, he remains a seminal force in the creation of Modernist aesthetics.

Thomas Hardy (1840-1928)

Although relatively lesser known as a poet, Thomas Hardy remains one of the influential figures in the field of Modern poetry. He thrived predominantly in the Edwardian era. From 1898 to 1928, Hardy published eight volumes of poetry. The entire body of work bears testimony to his poetic flair. *The Dynast*, a closet drama written by Hardy, unravels his visions of 'evolutionary meliorism.' In the wake of the Boer war, he wrote many poems using the vantage point of the soldiers. Apart from his novels, his *Wessex Poems*, a collection of 51 poems, set against the compelling backdrop of Dorset, contours the imaginary topography of Wessex. Hardy adopted a modern style in his poetry that intertwined poetic convention and tradition. Analogous to his novels, his poetry is also marked by a sense of fatalism. In his war poems like "Drummer Hodge", and "In Time of the Breaking of Nations," Hardy uses visceral imagery, and colloquial speech. As a poet Hardy influenced the poets of his following generation like Robert Frost, W.H. Auden, and Philip Larkin.

Gertrude Stein (1874-1946) :

One of the lesser known Modernist poets, Gertrude Stein was known for pervasive experimentation with the language and poetic genre. In *Tender Buttons* (1914), Stein deploys her unconventional poetic method to describe everyday objects, estranging them from reality in a manner analogous to Cubism. A consistent engagement with repetitive words and soundscapes militates against, and contributes to, the continuities and discontinuities of meanings in her poetics. In *The Autobiography of Alice. B. Toklas* (1933), Stein adopts the persona of Alice to narrate her own autobiographical experiences. Stein's repetitive style is often considered to be emblematic of postmodernist art forms.

Wyndham Lewis (1882-1957) :

As a co-founder of *Blast* manifesto, and thereby the Vorticist movement, Wyndham Lewis remains one of the catalytic figures behind the Modernist poetic movement. His foray into the literary world started with his essays published in *The English Review* edited by Ford Madox Ford in 1909. Till dissension with Roger Fry in 1913, Lewis was part of the Omega workshop dedicated to the exhibition of the artworks by painters. After having a rift with Fry, Lewis decided to create his distinctly English movement Vorticism with Ezra Pound, Brzeska, Jacob Epstein and others. His first novel *Tarr*, a specimen of formal and artistic experimentation, was published in 1918. His other notable works include *The Art of Being Ruled* (1926), *Time and Western Man* (1927), *The Childermass* (1928), *The Lion and the Fox: The Role of the Hero in the Plays of Shakespeare* (1927), and *The Apes of God* (1930).

Edith Sitwell (1887-1964) :

Edith Sitwell was one of the prominent British female poets of the modern era. Sitwell's early work was often experimental, full of melodies, striking conceits, new rhythms, and private allusions. Sitwell published poetry continuously from 1913, some of it abstract and set to music. Her first book, *The Mother and Other Poems* was published in 1915. Her claim to fame was *Wheels*, an anthology edited by Sitwell and her brother. In this anthology, she and her brothers spearheaded a spirited revolt against the prevailing conventions of Georgian poetry. The notoriety sought by the Sitwells in their artistic battles may, at the time, had obscured the originality of her talent. The visual sensibility and verbal music of her early poetry, *Clowns' Houses* (1918), *Bucolic Comedies* (1923), and *The Sleeping Beauty* (1924), in which she conjured up a world of beautiful objects, and unfamiliar images, revealed the influence of W.B. Yeats and T.S. Eliot. In *Façade* (1922), her stress on the value of sound in poetry comes to the foreground. Her later works include *Street Songs* (1942), *Green Song* (1944), *Song of the Cold* (1945), *Gardeners and Astronomers* (1953), and *The Outcasts* (1962).

Mina Loy (1882-1966) :

Mina Loy, originally Mina Lowy, was another famous British Modernist woman poet. Influenced by the Futurist Movement, Loy advanced Feminist poetics. Between 1914 and 1917, Low's poetry was published in *Little Magazines*. In 1915, she published love songs for the modernist journal *Others*. *Lunar Baedeker*, a collection of poems published in 1923, is one of her major poetry collections. Loy explores feminine subjectivity through her poetry.

Dylan Thomas (1914-1953)

As a poet, Dylan Thomas was pioneering in restoring a romantic charm to English poetry. Published in 1934, Thomas' first volume garnered a widespread reputation. Strikingly different from his predecessors, Thomas' poetry went through romantic revivalism. Despite the ostensible similarities, it was quite different from the cautious romanticism of Yeats. Often his poetic world opens a phantasmagoric vision, influenced by a surreal disposition. Thomas's choice of phrases is original. He sees smoke coming from chimneys as if it made tuneful sounds; the grass is so hot that it is as if it were on fire; the sun shines all day long - 'all the sun long'. Words like green are used both literally and non-literally, exploiting connotations of youth, happiness, and innocence. The ending to "Fern Hill" is especially poignant, linking the innocence of youth with an inevitable death while asserting the importance of the self through poetry. Departing from the social commitment of the poets of the thirties, Dylan Thomas thus brings a "Neo-romantic" poetic tradition to British poetry.

Philip Larkin (1922-1985)

Born in 1922, Philip Larkin ushered in a poetic paradigm that was largely anti-romantic. A strong distaste for figurative language marks the poetry of Larkin. However, an influence of Yeats is discernible in his early collection *The North Ship* (1946). *The Less Deceived* (1955) filled with morbid cynicism seems to give Larkin his poetic reputation. What remains unique about Larkin is a juxtaposition between a highly structured yet flexible literary style. The *Whitsun Weddings* (1964) also expresses the deep-rooted pessimism of Larkin's poetic sentiment. The collection comprising 32 poems is ostensibly about a train journey through the vast swathes of the idyllic countryside. Interrupted by the cacophony of the wedding parties, the persona finally meditates on the philosophical meaning of the journey of life where "a sense of falling permeates".

2.7.9. Summing Up

In this unit, we have discussed several topics pertinent to modern British poetry. Besides Edwardian and Georgian poetry and poets of the Thirties, we have also analysed the poems of select modernist poets. The historical and cultural background of the emergence of Modernism was discussed. Modernism which was by far the most influential literary movement of the period unfurls a wide panorama of futility and anarchy. An image of fragmentation with enduring changes in the social and political structures dominates the corpus of modernist poetry. Various forms of social and moral disintegration inform the aesthetic contour of the poetic corpus. As an informed reader now, you can get down to the task of reading the twentieth century British poetry.

2.7.10. Comprehension Exercises

Long Answer Type Questions :

1. Write an Essay on the various aspects of Modernist Poetry.
2. Write a critical note on any two major poets of Modernism.
3. Trace the relationship between Modernist politics and aesthetics.
4. Comment on the relationship between Modernist poetry and the Avant-Garde.
5. Write a critical note on Imagism, Futurism, and Vorticism, evaluating their roles in Modernist poetry.

Medium Answer Type Questions :

1. Write a critical note on Edwardian Poetry.
2. Write a short note on Georgian Poetry
3. How did the poets of the '30s depart from the prevalent Modernist poetic paradigms?
4. Write a critical note on the year 1922 as the culmination of High Modernism.

Short Answer Type Questions

1. Who edited Blast?
2. Name any two major poetic contributions by Ezra Pound.
3. Who coined the term "Movement Literature" ?
4. Who was the editor of *Georgian Poetry*?

2.7.11. Suggested Reading

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Unit 8 □ W. B. Yeats: "Easter 1916" and T.S. Eliot: "Preludes"

Structure

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2.8.1. Objectives

This Unit will introduce you to some aspects of Modernism in general and specifically acquaint you with modernism in English Poetry. It is important to understand such expressions as these terms signify literary concepts and techniques which powerfully characterise Modernist poetry. The key elements of these poems are experimentation, anti-realism, individualism and a stress on the cerebral rather than emotive aspects. Indeed, the poet's vision is all-important, however much it cut him off from society or the scientific concerns of the day. The two poems in this Unit will give you a representative picture of how wide indeed the canvas of Modernism can be.

2.8.2. Introduction

As you know from the earlier Units of this Course in general, and from Unit 4 in particular by now, the term 'modernism' generally covers the creative output of artists and thinkers who saw traditional approaches to the arts, architecture, literature, religion, social organization (and even life itself) as being outdated in the light of the new economic, social and political circumstances of a society that was by now fully industrialised. Not that modernism categorically defied religion or shunned all the beliefs and ideas associated with the Enlightenment; it would be more accurate to view modernism as a tendency to question, and strive for alternatives to the convictions of the preceding age. New ways of sharp, severe and compressed poetic utterance were devised partly because late nineteenth century modes of expression had grown increasingly trite, less precise, more clumsily ornate and partly because these poets felt that western urban civilisation of the early twentieth century with all its bewildering complexities, dislocations and self-destructive violence (as witnessed chiefly in the 1914-18 War) clearly outgrew old form of poetry and demanded both new visions and new techniques. The poetic persona still needed to take a stand or play a role (as the speaker does in 'Preludes'), still needed, as Yeats explained presenting the poet's case, 'like Milton, Shakespeare, Shelley, vast sentiments, generalizations supported by tradition'. In the greatest poems of the period (Yeats's "Among School Children", "The Second Coming", "Easter 1916", Eliot's "The Waste Land", "Marina" and Pound's "Hugh Selwyn Mauberly") the poets achieved, like the old masters, vitality, range and variety as they handled the symbolist imagist techniques and developed a variety of poetic personae with a complete mastery in carefully crafted masterpieces. The past was now to be seen and treated as different from the modern era, and its axioms and undisputed authorities held up for revision and enquiry. In this Unit we shall discuss two poems- one by Yeats and one by Eliot.

Yeats is hailed both as a modernist and a romantic. He started his literary career as a romantic poet and gradually evolved into a modernist poet. When Yeats began publishing poetry in the 1880s, his poems had a lyrical sense, romantic style, and they focused primarily on love, longing and loss - all infused with the spirit of Irish myths. His early writing follows the footsteps of romantic verse, utilising conventional rhyme schemes, lyrical metric patterns, and poetic structures. Although it lacks the serious note of his later writings, his early poetry is still sophisticated and popular. He then gradually evolved as a modernist poet. Now, there are several factors which contributed to his poetic evolution: firstly, his interest in mysticism and the occult urged him to explore spiritually and philosophically complex subjects. Yeats' frustrated romantic relationship with Maud Gonne dashed his hopes, this defeat in love made his poetry

became cynical. Thus, for Yeats, changes and developments in the private domain primarily played an important part in signalling his evolution as a modernist poet.

Moreover, his concern with Irish subjects evolved as he became more and more involved in nationalist political causes. Yeats therefore shifted his focus from myth and folklore to contemporary Irish politics. He united the personal, political and mystical concerns in an intense and visionary artistic whole. Finally, Yeats was a witness to the changing face of literary culture in the early twentieth century. As a result, he picked up some of the styles and conventions of the modernist poets. One such is the apocalyptic or catastrophic vision, which is common among all modernists. The modernists experimented with verse forms, the breakdown of the traditional form, the dislocation of that progression and aggressively engaged with contemporary politics, challenged poetic conventions and the literary tradition at large. The use of disparate images in modernist poetry builds up an emotional pattern which replaces the form of a traditional poem. The discontinuous syntax gives such a poem the look of a jigsaw puzzle. These influences caused his poetry to become darker, edgier, and more philosophical. His poetry changed its course, there is a shift in style and tone over the course of his long poetic career.

T.S Eliot's short poems show an incremental development of the poet's modernist thought. "Prufrock," as "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" is more commonly called, was published in June 1915 in Poetry; "Preludes," "Rhapsody on a Windy Night" in Blast in July 1915, and "Portrait of a Lady" in Others in September 1915. When he was in London Ezra Pound introduced him to a literary group which included Wyndham Lewis, H.D., Richard Aldington, Harriet Weaves, and Ford Maddox Ford. Further he became acquainted with the 'Bloomsbury group'. The avant-garde artists, grouped, and set out to 'make it new' in accordance with Pound's prescription. This period, significantly known as the 'modernist' period, saw the break-up of the old patterns. This new poetry is anti-representational, anti-narrative, disjunctive, discontinuous and choppy. Its counterparts are cubist painting and cinematic montage. Eliot was never officially an Imagist, but his poetry is a distillation of imagism. Deliberate discontinuance of the linear narration of any discussion or paraphrase after matter is a distinctive feature of Modernist art. In Eliot's poetry we hear an individual speaking, the whole man speaking and then a century speaking.

2.8.3. W. B. Yeats (1865-1939) - A Bio-Brief

William Butler Yeats was born on 13 June, 1865 at 'Georgeville,' Sandymour Avenue, Dublin. His father, John Butler Yeats, was a lawyer by training and an artist by profession. He was a

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

In 1885, Yeats met John O'Leary, a Fenian leader of native Catholic stock who, for Yeats, embodied the spirit of "indomitable Irishry." While the family were settled at Bedford Park, Yeats met Maud Gonne, said to be one of the most beautiful women of her time in Ireland, and fell in love with her. She was fiercely devoted to the cause of Irish liberation and inspired by her; Yeats wrote his play *The Countess Cathleen*. Meanwhile, Yeats's esoteric and literary interests continued unabated and he became a member of Madame Blavatsky's Theosophical Society. Later he became initiated into the 'Order of the Golden Dawn.' In 1891, Yeats became a member of The Rhymers' Club and met Ernest Dowson, Lionel Johnson and others. Earlier, Yeats had made the acquaintance of William Morris, George Bernard Shaw, and Oscar Wilde, leading literary figures of the late nineteenth-century. In 1893, Yeats brought out an edition of *The Works of William Blake* in collaboration with Edwin Ellis. He shared rooms with Arthur Symonds in 'Woburn Building', who introduced him to the works of French symbolist poets. Yeats's love for Maud Gonne, his involvement in Irish politics and his interest in occult studies occupied him simultaneously. Yeats established the Irish Literary Society in England and the National Literary Society in Dublin with John O'Leary as President. Yeats's meeting with Lady Gregory in 1896 is of particular importance in his literary career. His visits to her home at Coole Park offered him the opportunity to delve deep into the folk-culture of Ireland and form ideas about establishing an Irish Theatre. His meeting with John Middleton Synge proved to be extremely propitious for both. Yeats urged Synge to visit Aran Islands to learn about Irish peasant life. In 1902, Yeats became President of Irish National Dramatic Society, and the famous Abbey Theatre at Dublin was established in 1904. Maud

Gonne, who consistently refused Yeats's repeated proposals of marriage, married Major John MacBride in 1903. After the Easter Rising in 1916 Maud Gonne's husband was executed and Yeats once again renewed his proposal of marriage which she again refused. With her permission, he proposed to her daughter Iseult Gonne, who also refused. In 1917, Yeats got married to George Hyde-Lees and set up house at Ballylee Tower. His wife's power of automatic writing spurred him on to compose *A Vision* which contains his 'system' of arranging history in terms of 'gyres' (conceived as inter-penetrating double cones), where, after every two thousand years, subjective and objective phases alternate. It places human personality according to the twenty-eight phases of the moon, representing different stages of subjectivity and objectivity.

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

Yeats has left a record of his life, describing it in "What comes oftenest into my memory," which he wrote in parts over several years and which is collectively called *Autobiographies*. Yeats's letters are also important documents of his literary career and highlight his concern with the politics, literature and philosophy of his time. He is the most representative Anglo-Irish poet, who is also the link between Romantic and Modern Poetry. *The Celtic Twilight*, projecting the cause of Irish Cultural Revival is a product of his early years while *A Vision* is that of his late years. The distinctive quality of Yeats's achievement lies in his assimilation of diverse attitudes, ideas and poetic modes which mark the transition between nineteenth and early twentieth-century poetry. He would claim to be the "last Romantic" and yet be as modern as Ezra Pound exhorted him to be. All his life he sought for that "unity of being" whereby he could resolve the dichotomies of private and public experiences, emotion and intellect, youth and age, the material and the spiritual worlds, through symbols, masks and images. And when he felt he could, perhaps, no longer call forth his images and symbols, he would turn to "where all the ladders start, /In the foul rag-and-bone shop of the heart."

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

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

2.8.4. The Text: “Easter: 1916”

Easter, 1916

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

That woman's days were spent
In ignorant good-will,
Her nights in argument
Until her voice grew shrill.
What voice more sweet than hers
When, young and beautiful,
She rode to harriers?
This man had kept a school

And rode our wingèd horse;
This other his helper and friend
Was coming into his force;
He might have won fame in the end,
So sensitive his nature seemed,
So daring and sweet his thought.
This other man I had dreamed
A drunken, vainglorious lout.
He had done most bitter wrong
To some who are near my heart,
Yet I number him in the song;
He, too, has resigned his part
In the casual comedy;
He, too, has been changed in his turn,
Transformed utterly:
A terrible beauty is born.

Hearts with one purpose alone
Through summer and winter seem
Enchanted to a stone
To trouble the living stream.
The horse that comes from the road,
The rider, the birds that range
From cloud to tumbling cloud,
Minute by minute they change;
A shadow of cloud on the stream
Changes minute by minute;
A horse-hoof slides on the brim,
And a horse plashes within it;
The long-legged moor-hens dive,
And hens to moor-cocks call;
Minute by minute they live:
The stone's in the midst of all.

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

2.8.5. Critical Analysis of the Poem

"Easter 1916" was composed in September 1916 when the poet was staying in France with Maud Gonne. It was first circulated privately and was later printed in the *New Statesman* in 1920. Finally, it was published in the volume of poems entitled *Michael Robartes and the Dancer*. The poem has a clearly political background and represents an important phase in Yeats's poetic consciousness. It was written in response to the Easter Rising in Dublin in 1916. The rebellion was organised by the Irish Republican Brotherhood in protest against the failure of the English Government in solving the problem of Home Rule in Ireland. In April,

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

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

In his poem, "September 1913", Yeats had bemoaned that: "Romantic Ireland's dead and gone/ It's with O'Leary in the grave." But, now in 1916, Yeats feels that "tragic dignity has returned to Ireland". This is a recurrent theme in the poems which follow "Easter, 1916"- namely, "Sixteen Dead Men", "The Rose Tree" and "On a Political Prisoner". The poet was filled with a sense of tragedy and in a letter to Lady Gregory dated 11 May, 1916, he wrote:

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

Later, in the same letter, he continues:

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

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

Stanza 1 : Yeats outlines his relationship with the men executed after the Rising. They were "vivid faces" for him. Before the Rising, they were ordinary people, with whom he exchanged

"polite, meaningless words". Sometimes he even derived fun by relating "a mocking tale" or making "a gibe" at them at the club, "being certain" that they and he lived in the same valueless, empty world where "motley is worn". But the Easter Rising brought about a transformation - "All changed, changed utterly." And the most striking discovery about the Rising for the poet was that "a terrible beauty is born". It is "terrible" because the rebels knew that death was sure if they failed. The "beauty" lay in the courting of the sacrifice, in the spirit of patriotism. It is a "terrible beauty" because the beauty of their sacrifice is mingled with their knowledge of imminent death.'

L. 1: "them" - the revolutionaries

L. 4: "eighteenth-century houses" - typical Dublin houses built of granite.

L.12: "club" - an Art Club in Dublin of which Yeats was a member.

L.14: "Motley" - a fool's or clown's dress.

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

Yeats next mentions Pearse - "this man had kept a school." Pearse was the founder of St. Enda's school for Boys at Rathfarnham. He was the Commandant general and President of the Provisional Government in Easter Week, during the Rising. He was said to have stated that "blood must be shed in every generation." After Pearse, Yeats mentions Thomas MacDonagh as "this other, his helper and friend". MacDonagh was a Professor of Literature at the University College, Dublin. He was also a poet and dramatist and "might have won fame in the end". "This other man" whom Yeats had "dreamed" of as 'a drunken, vainglorious lout' refers to John MacBride, Maud Gonne's husband. Yeats had a poor opinion of him and felt that "he had done most bitter wrong" to someone who was "near" the poet's heart, referring to Maud Gonne. MacBride had allegedly ill-treated her and they were separated. Yet, after the Rising,

MacBride becomes a heroic figure and Yeats "numbers" him "in the song". He, too, has moved beyond the "casual comedy" of mundane, everyday life and "has been changed in his turn, /Transformed utterly."

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

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

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

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

L. 31: This other man"-Major John MacBride (1865 -1916).

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

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

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

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

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

Stanza 4 : Here Yeats wonders whether the sacrifice was necessary after all. He is trying to seek justification for the Easter Rising and analyse his own response to it. Yeats begins with a reference to Maud Gonne whose too long a sacrifice" had made "a stone of the heart." Her long service to the revolutionary cause had made her indifferent to the other aspects of life. Yeats, wonders if that is enough for fulfilment. But "that is Heaven's part," that is beyond human count. The ordinary man's part is to recall the names of those who have sacrificed their lives for such causes "to murmur name upon name,/ As a mother names her child." The tender image of a mother and child indicates Yeats's personal feeling of sorrow for those who died after the Rising- "when sleep at last has come/On limbs that had run wild." For the

revolutionaries, it is not "night fall" but death, synonymous with "sleep". And Yeats asks if it was "needless death, after all" because England might yet have kept "faith regarding its promise of Home-Rule in Ireland. But the revolutionaries did not think so and were prepared to sacrifice their lives for Ireland and "we know their dream; enough /To know they dreamed and are dead." There is yet some doubt in Yeats's mind about the justification of the Rising and he wonders if an "excess of love", had not blurred their reason, "bewildered them till they died". But the sacrifice has been made and Yeats ends his poem with a reiteration of his admiration for those men who sacrificed their lives for their nation - MacDonagh, MacBride, Connolly and Pearse. They will be remembered whenever and wherever "green is worn", referring to the revolutionary songs of the time, green being the colour of shamrocks, the national emblem of Ireland. And, out of the sacrifice of so many valued lives, "a terrible beauty is born."

2.8.6. Thomas Stearns Eliot- A Brief-Bio

2.8.6.1. The Early Days

Eliot was born in 1865, in St. Louis, Missouri (U.S.A.) in a conservative household of entrepreneurs, devoted to the tenets of Christianity called Unitarianism. The family was dominated by the patriarchal figure of his grandfather, William Greenleaf Eliot. His father, Henry Ware Eliot and mother, Charlotte Champes Eliot were guided by the spirit of the senior Mr. Eliot but were not as severe in their dedication to the Unitarian faith. Eliot's grandfather and the other pioneers of the European settlers in America preferred a creed in which there was no conflict between man's material and spiritual pursuits and in fact, the Unitarians often justified pure material intentions as aspects of duty and responsibility to the community. While the uneasy alliance between the craving for material gain and the desire for spiritual welfare was suited to the early days of the opening up of the New World, as time progressed, the ethos tended to generate an attitude of decadence, which disturbed the young Eliot. He was not a stranger to the subtleties of human sensibilities because Charlotte Eliot was something of a poet herself and under her influence her young son knew there was more to life than justifying pure materialism as communal duty. In his days as a student in the Milton Academy and later as a young undergraduate at the Department of Philosophy in Harvard, he came across contemporary society in the affluent as well as impoverished sections of contemporary Boston and noted that everywhere men and women simply went through the motions of life without any vital emotional and spiritual responses to the act of living.

The times in which Eliot was growing up saw the world being increasingly guided by the physical sciences instead of the biological sciences, and inert matter was assuming great

importance. Age old institutions like the Church and traditional value systems based on belief were being seriously challenged by emphatic importance on science and technology. If unprecedented advances in science and technology weakened the position of supremacy of the human mind over matter, the World War I drove the proverbial final nail in the coffin of man's dwindling self-esteem.

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

2.8.6.2. The European Influence

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

2.8.6.3. Reaction against Georgian Poetry: Eliot, Hulme, and Pound

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

Eliot's contention that poetry could refrain from indulging in sentimental rendition so that it could entail an "escape" from personality is fundamentally in agreement with T.E. Hulme's argument that human progression is governed by "discontinuity" as opposed to the humanistic belief in continuity, which rules out any attempt at self-analysis and self-criticism. The suggestive, unfocussed content of Georgian poetry certainly, called for a change even on purely aesthetic grounds. But the need became an intense demand for a spiritual revolution as well because the creative impulse coincided with the urge of the 20th century to probe the causes of its emotional disturbance.

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

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

Pound's prescription is similar to the efforts of the Imagist school of poetry, which dominated English and American poetry in the early part of the 20th century. Its main exponent Ezra Pound developed an aesthetic creed upon the philosophy of T.E. Hulme. Hulme felt that the

only way of presenting the perception of the splintered consciousness or "discontinuity" was to fashion images with precision as if they were chiselled out of alabaster. Eliot's Laforgian imagery taken from all walks of life, economic and sensual in character, drew admiration from Ezra Pound across the Atlantic and he announced that the young American had "modernized" himself on his own.

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

2.8.7. Text: "Preludes"

Preludes

I

The winter evening settles down
With smell of steaks in passageways.

Six o' clock.

The burnt-out ends of smoky days.

And now a gusty shower wraps

The grimy scraps

Of withered leaves about your feet

And newspapers from vacant lots;

The showers beat

On broken blinds and chimney-pots, And at the corner of the street
A lonely cab-horse steams and stamps.

And then the lighting of the lamps.

II

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

III

You tossed a blanket from the bed,
You lay upon your back, and waited;
You dozed, and watched the night revealing
The thousand sordid images
Of which your soul was constituted;
They flickered against the ceiling.
And when all the world came back
And the light crept up between the shutters
And you heard the sparrows in the gutters,
You had such a vision of the street
As the street hardly understands;

Sitting along the bed's edge, where
You curled the papers from your hair,
Or clasped the yellow soles of feet
In the palms of both soiled hands.

IV

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

2.8.8. Critical Analysis of the Poem

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

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

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

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

Through these images the reader is made aware of the spiritual inertia in squalid, urban scenes. Further, the repetitive actions are undertaken by dismembered limbs, and they convey the impression that human beings are no longer capable of original feeling and thought; they are no longer individuals but simply automations that are extensions of the materialism all around them. In the second "Prelude" Eliot selects the word "masquerade", probably digging it out from the recesses of his scholarship on Elizabethan drama, and uses its implications to add on to the impression of spiritual impoverishment, already in place. In the elaborate Elizabethan pantomimes called "masquerades" the participants wore grotesque masks and this form of entertainment always emphasized the elements of "exaggeration" and "caricature". Eliot sees the daily activity of earning a livelihood and generally surviving in the modern times as pantomimic gestures- that is, they are acts of pretence like the exaggerated actions of the Elizabethan masques, being made mindlessly, without consciousness.

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

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

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

2.8.9. Summing Up

Both the poems we have discussed in this unit are examples of deviation from the norm, or from usual reader expectations, both are ruthless in their rejection of the past, and are iconoclastic in nature. The world is seen through the artist's inner feelings and mental states. The themes and vantage points are chosen to question the conventional use of myth and

unconscious forces rather than motivations of conventional plot. The poems are open-ended and offer scope for fresh interpretations.

2.8.10. Comprehension Questions

Long Answer-type Questions

- a) Analyse Yeats's response to the Easter Rising of 1916, as revealed in the poem, "Easter, 1916."
- b) Imagery is carefully employed in "Preludes" to achieve precise effects. Elaborate.
- c) Analyse the theme of the "Preludes"?
- d) In a good poem the title often initiates you into the text. What does the title of "Preludes" signify?

Medium Answer-type Questions

- a) Why does Yeats question whether "it was needless death after all?"
- b) What does the "Stone" signify in the poem "Easter 1916"?
- c) Can you pick out words and phrases used in "Preludes" which suggest (a) squalor, (b) dinginess, (c) monotony. (d) stagnation? Comment on how they create a proper environment in the poem.
- d) What picture of the urban space do you get in "Preludes"?

2.8.11. Suggested Reading

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Unit 9 □ W.H. Auden's “On This Island” & Louis MacNeice’s “Prayer before Birth”

Structure

2.9.1. Objectives

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2.9.4.1. Central Idea

2.9.4.2. A Critical Analysis

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2.9.5. Louis MacNeice and Twentieth Century Literature: Nature of his Writings

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2.9.7.1. Central Idea

2.9.7.2. Literary Context and Setting

2.9.7.3. Themes of the Poem

2.9.7.4. Poetic Devices, Form, Meter, Rhyme Scheme

2.9.8. Comprehension Questions

2.9.9. Suggested Reading

2.9.1. Objectives

In this Unit we are going to study two twentieth-century lyrics. A lyric is usually regarded as an expression of a private mood, feeling or state of mind. The word "lyric" comes etymologically from the Greek musical instrument "Lyra" (lyre or harp) and signifies something meant to be sung to the lyre. Since music is associated with emotion, inevitably lyric poetry is emotional poetry. It is also subjective. In this Unit you will notice that the poets, unlike, say, the Elizabethan lyric poets, have combined private feelings with the momentous public themes and events of

the twentieth century like anxieties about World Wars. You should also note in both the poems, experiments in poetic forms and craftsmanship, the use of free verse, the rhythm of colloquial speech even in traditional stanza forms, the expressive sensuous sound symbolism in language (alliteration, consonant clusters, pun, rhyme, etc.), subtle shifts and variations in tone, and evocative but complex imagery. These will help you to identify some of the most important traits that characterise twentieth century lyric poetry.

2.9.2. Introduction: A Short Note on Auden Generation (The Poets of Thirties/ Pink Poets/ Oxford Poets)

The Auden Generation refers to a group of British and Irish poets active during the 1930s, named after their most prominent member, W.H. Auden. This group included poets such as Stephen Spender, Cecil Day-Lewis, and Louis MacNeice. They were characterized by their political engagement, left-leaning ideologies, and responses to the turbulent socio-political landscape of the time, including the Great Depression, the rise of totalitarian regimes, and the Spanish Civil War. Their poetry often blended personal themes with social commentary and was marked by modernist influences, innovative language, and an awareness of contemporary philosophical and psychoanalytic thought. They are also called 'The Poets of Thirties', sometimes called the 'Pink Poets' due to their association with socialism and progressive ideas, focused on themes of societal change, inequality, and the potential for revolution. Their works reflected a commitment to addressing social and political injustices, seeking to inspire change and solidarity through literature. They were sometimes called 'Oxford Poets' as they emerged from the University of Oxford during that period, contributing to the literary and cultural milieu that surrounded the Auden Group. While the term overlaps with the Auden Generation, it emphasizes the shared academic background and camaraderie among these poets.

Together, these poets left a lasting impact on English literature, shifting the focus of poetry from romanticized individualism to collective concerns about society, history, and political responsibility:

1. Political Engagement and Leftist Ideologies :

The poets of this generation, often called Pink Poets due to their leftist, sometimes socialist leanings, sought to respond to the socio-political challenges of their time. Their poetry voiced concerns about inequality, poverty, and the dangers of authoritarian regimes. They were influenced by Marxist thought, although their commitment varied from individual to individual.

For example, Stephen Spender and Cecil Day-Lewis explored themes of class struggle and social justice.

2. Anti-Fascism and Pacifism :

In reaction to the rise of fascism in Europe, particularly in Germany and Spain, many of these poets opposed totalitarian ideologies. W.H. Auden's poem "Spain" (1937), written during the Spanish Civil War, exemplifies the poets' dedication to anti-fascist causes. Although Auden and others were initially optimistic about the power of collective action, their views sometimes evolved to reflect disillusionment with political solutions.

3. Social Realism and Modernist Influences :

The poets of the 1930s integrated social realism with modernist experimentation, producing works that balanced accessible language with intricate structures and allusions. Their literature moved away from the purely personal and lyrical focus of earlier poets to encompass broader societal issues. For example, Louis MacNeice often combined a personal voice with a critical eye on modern civilization, as seen in works like *Autumn Journal*.

4. Use of Literature as a Vehicle for Change :

These poets viewed literature as a tool for awakening social consciousness and influencing public opinion. Their works frequently addressed themes of collective struggle, calling for unity and resilience. The belief was that poetry could inspire readers to think critically about their circumstances and push for change.

5. Reflection of War and its Impacts :

As the decade progressed and World War II approached, their poetry began to capture the sense of impending doom and the emotional toll of global conflict. The works became more introspective, questioning the effectiveness of political action and exploring themes of moral ambiguity and human frailty. Auden's shift in style from political optimism to a more resigned, introspective tone in later works illustrates this transition.

6. Moral and Existential Questions :

While early works championed social and political causes, later pieces from the poets of this generation began to grapple with deeper existential and philosophical questions. This shift was marked by recognition of human limitations in the face of overwhelming historical forces, leading to a more nuanced and sometimes pessimistic outlook.

The Auden Generation and their contemporaries used literature not only as a means of artistic expression but as a platform for socio-political discourse. Their policies favored leftist politics, anti-fascism, and collective responsibility, while their literature combined accessible language with sophisticated poetic techniques to address the urgent issues of their time.

2.9.3. W.H. Auden: An Introduction

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

During the 1930's Auden, along with Stephen Spender, C.Day Lewis and Louis MacNeice, was determined to engage with the contemporary economic and political landscape. Topicality and social concern, and taking a political stand, usually left-wing, were more central to their works than to the works of poets coming before or after them. A blending of the individual perception and social awareness, of the private and the public, is a distinctive feature of the poets of the thirties. A careful reading of Auden's "On this island" clearly bears this out.

2.9.4. Text: "On This Island"

On This Island

Look, stranger, on this island now
The leaping light for your delight discovers,
Stand stable here
And silent be,
That through the channels of the ear
May wander like a river
The swaying sound of the sea.

Here at the small field's ending pause
Where the chalk wall falls to the foam, and its tall ledges
Oppose the pluck

And knock of the tide,
And the shingle scrambles after the sucking surf,

And the/a gull lodges
A moment on its sheer side.

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

2.9.4.1. Central Idea

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

2.9.4.2. A Critical Analysis

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

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

lines of the poem build up a picture in which potentially discordant elements are apparently reconciled. Here silence and sound, land and water, humanity and nature become interdependent. The sound of the sea suggests some vast violent force, but "the ear" can humanise it. It gets converted into the gentle murmur of a river as it passes 'through the channels of the ear'. (In Auden's poetry rivers are linked to valleys, good society, lit houses, friendship and hospitality, says John Lucas). The gull is also in harmony with the cliff, however short-lived it may be. The man-made and the natural are blended in the image of the ships as floating seeds. The last line also merges summer and autumn (suggested by the "floating seeds"). However, there are also hints that this harmonious picture is to be enjoyed only for the time being. The disharmony is first indicated in stanza 2 through such words as "oppose" "scrambles" "pluck" and "knock". The last stanza is now regarded as prophetic. The poet says that the 'full view' - formed after taking all things in consideration - may have to exist in memory only. For the poet cannot ignore the great economic depression and the ominous international situation during the 1930s. The decade began with the Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1931. Hitler became Chancellor of Germany in 1933, killed his rival colleagues and withdrew from the League of Nations; Japan also did so and attacked China proper. The Spanish Civil War began in 1936. This series of international calamities culminated in Hitler's attack of Poland and the beginning of the Second World War in 1939. Auden was not unaware of the deep current of tension below the apparently peaceful surface which he perceived to be purely temporary. This is suggested by the repetition of the adverb "now" twice (lines 1 and 19). Moreover, the "urgent voluntary errands" has a suggestion of threat, for "urgent and "voluntary" seem to be contradictory and the line implies that soon the ships will be used to perform compulsory, coercive errands; they may be life-giving like seeds now, but soon will be more like bullets. Besides, an awareness of the international situation will make one regard the clouds as an image of the dark ominous future war and unrest.

Thus the mood of the poem, like that of most of Auden's early poetry, has its origin in public history inseparable from a personal state of mind. You may read Matthew Arnold's well-known poem "Dover Beach" and compare and contrast it with "On this Island." Arnold's poem also suggests a harsh note of violent clash and confusion within an apparently calm, fair, sweet, tranquil picture of sea and land. However, Arnold is saddened by the present, and Auden is full of foreboding of the future.

2.9.4.3. Word Notes

Line 1: "Look, stranger": who is this "stranger"?

Is Auden addressing a foreigner? Perhaps not. For a foreigner may not care much for the inward-looking, musing beauty of the vision. Auden may address another Englishman or the reader to look on and perceive the land and the sea in a new light. But more probably, "the address is a self-address", the stranger being Auden himself. He may not have previously looked at contemporary Britain in the way that he "now" does. Besides, he often feels himself alienated from England, particularly from its natural beauty as displayed in an autumnal seascape, as he is often preoccupied with the industrial landscapes of a city like Birmingham where he grew up, with its tramlines and slagheaps and pieces of machinery.

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

Line 8-13 : "ledges": ridges of rock; "shingle": small rounded pebbles lying on sea -shore ; "Scrambles": moves hastily over rough ground

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

2.9.5. Louis MacNeice and Twentieth Century Literature: Nature of his Writings

Louis MacNeice, a significant figure in twentieth-century literature, is best known for his role within the Auden Group, which included poets like W.H. Auden, Stephen Spender, and Cecil Day-Lewis. His work stood out for blending modernist experimentation with a conversational and humanistic voice. Unlike some high modernists such as T.S. Eliot, MacNeice valued clarity and immediacy in his poetry, making it accessible while still tackling complex themes of identity, dislocation, and social upheaval. As a poet deeply shaped by the seismic shifts of the early twentieth century-including industrialization, social upheaval, and the devastating impact of the First World War-MacNeice's work mirrors the hallmarks of Modernism: fragmentation, disillusionment, and introspection. His poetry is a testament to the modernist preoccupation with the individual's inner world and the chaotic external forces that shape it. Writers like T.S. Eliot and Virginia Woolf expressed this fragmentation in their works, employing stream-of-consciousness techniques, non-linear narratives, and symbolic imagery to explore the breakdown of societal norms and the search for meaning in an uncertain world.

One of MacNeice's most celebrated works is *Autumn Journal* (1939), a long poem that captures the anxious mood of Europe in the late 1930s. Through a mixture of personal reflection and political observation, it encapsulates the prelude to World War II, balancing individual concerns with collective ones. This approach made his poetry timely and timeless, resonating with readers who experienced similar anxieties. MacNeice, while distinct in his voice, contributed to this modernist dialogue by infusing his poetry with an acute awareness of contemporary struggles and the fragmented human experience. His work often reflects a tension between the yearning for stability and the recognition of its impossibility in a rapidly changing world. In poems such as "Prayer Before Birth", MacNeice channels the fears and anxieties of modern existence, using stark imagery and an appeal to the divine to underscore the vulnerability of the individual amidst societal chaos. Similarly, "The Sunlight on the Garden", "Bagpipe Music", "Meeting Point", "Snow and Meeting Point" capture moments of paradox, contrasting beauty and harsh reality, demonstrating the modernist fascination with duality and contradiction.

Louis MacNeice's writings from the late 1940s to the early 1960s reflect several key aspects of Modernism, particularly in their thematic complexity and formal experimentation. One notable Modernist trait in his work is thematic fragmentation. In poems like *Autumn Journal* (1939) and *Autumn Sequel* (1954), MacNeice blends personal reflection with political commentary, creating a fragmented narrative that mirrors the disjointed experience of the modern world. His exploration of inner consciousness and shifting perspectives reveals a Modernist focus on subjective realities, reflecting the chaos and uncertainty of the post-war era. Edna Longley in her essay "Louis MacNeice: Aspects of His Aesthetic Theory and Practice" asserts, Aestheticism, and Modernism which partly descends from it, have denied and fragmented what MacNeice values as human wholeness. The speaker significantly prefers fleshly particularities to abstraction, symbolism and pure form. Similarly, in *Modern Poetry* MacNeice advocates a concrete poet responding as a whole to concrete living. One way in which "An Eclogue for Christmas" carries out this agenda is by putting flesh on the contemporary city. MacNeice has not yet received his due for making urban landscapes part of the regular fabric of poetry. (54)

His exploration of global events, such as Indian independence and European disarray, illustrates a broader disillusionment with contemporary society. This aligns with the Modernist sense of alienation, where the optimism of the past gives way to a more critical, disenchanted view of the world. Another defining characteristic of MacNeice's work is his blending of high and low culture, a typical Modernist technique. By weaving together references to classical literature, such as *Goethe's Faust* (1951), with contemporary themes and concerns, MacNeice

creates a dialogue between the past and the present. This fusion suggests that the fragmented cultural landscape of the modern world is reflected in the poetic form, blurring distinctions between high and low art, and reflecting the Modernist impulse to challenge traditional cultural hierarchies. MacNeice's formal experimentation is also a key aspect of his Modernist approach. His use of diverse poetic forms, such as the classical terza rima in *Autumn Sequel*, alongside free verse and more lyrical structures, demonstrates his willingness to break away from traditional forms. This experimentation reflects the Modernist desire to capture the complexity of modern existence, moving away from rigid structures to reflect the fragmented and fluid nature of contemporary life. MacNeice demonstrates in *Modern Poetry: A Personal Essay* (1938), "...in general I myself prefer the more regular kinds of verse because I think that if you are going to poise your phrases at all they will usually need more poise than can be given them by the mere arranging of them in lines" (62).

2.9.6. About the Poem

Louis MacNeice's "Prayer Before Birth", written in 1943 and published in his 1944 collection *Springboard*, stands as a poignant testament to the anxieties of an era scarred by World War II. At the time, MacNeice was contributing to the British war effort through his work at the BBC, crafting radio plays that aimed to sustain public morale. Though not overtly political, MacNeice's poetry often resonated with deep social consciousness, infused with an accessible, emotive language that reflected his left-leaning stance as part of the Auden Group—a cadre of writers including W.H. Auden and Stephen Spender, known for their engagement with the social upheavals of their time. In "Prayer Before Birth", the voice of an unborn child becomes a vessel for expressing profound dread, evoking humanity's helplessness in the face of violence and moral disintegration. The poem reverberates with echoes of contemporary poems like Wilfred Owen's "Anthem for Doomed Youth" and "Strange Meeting", W.H. Auden's "September 1, 1939", Siegfried Sassoon's "Suicide in the Trenches", Diane di Prima's "Song for Baby-O, Unborn", William Blake's "London", Philip Larkin's "This Be the Verse", and Claude McKay's "If We Must Die" which expose the harrowing truths of combat. Yet, MacNeice's vision transcends the immediate conflict to confront deeper anxieties about modernity itself: the rise of mass production, the dehumanizing effects of technology, and the erosion of individuality in an increasingly industrialized world. This vision aligns with broader cultural critiques, such as Charlie Chaplin's 1936 film *Modern Times*, and evokes the haunting cries of innocence tainted by experience reminiscent of William Blake. "Prayer Before Birth" unfolds the wartime lament and enduring reflection on the fragility of humanity in a world poised between progress and ruin.

This emerges as a searing meditation on the loss of innocence and the pervasive darkness of human society. Set against a backdrop of unprecedented global conflict, the poem embodies the fear, disillusionment, and moral decay that marked this era. Critic like Edna Longley in the book *Louis MacNeice: A Study* (1988) examines, through the voice of an unborn child, MacNeice crafts a poignant plea for protection, evoking the helplessness of individuals caught in the machinery of violence and oppression. The poem's rhythmic, incantatory structure echoes the tone of a prayer, juxtaposing the sanctity of new life with a world marred by brutality and dehumanization. The imagery of violence, betrayal, and control underscores the poet's deep anxiety over a society that seems to strip away humanity and autonomy. In a world scarred by war's atrocities and the loss of ethical bearings, "Prayer Before Birth" transcends its immediate context, becoming a timeless invocation for compassion, conscience, and the safeguarding of innocence amidst human frailty.

In "Prayer Before Birth", memory and time are intricately woven into the fabric of the poem's exploration of human existence. The unborn child's prayer, though situated in the present moment, is steeped in the collective memory of human suffering, violence, and corruption. Time is presented as both an impending force³ and a series of unalterable steps toward a world that is feared and anticipated. The speaker is caught in a liminal space, suspended between the innocence of pre-birth and the terrifying prospect of birth into a world already shaped by history's cruelties. The poem's anxiety about time is not just about the future but also about the indelible marks of past violence-echoing a world shaped by war, oppression, and societal decay. The child's prayer is a plea for protection from the weight of time that will bring them into a world where memory of past horrors threatens to overwhelm individual identity. Thus, memory becomes a burden, an inherited trauma, and time a force that erodes innocence and freedom, setting the stage for the inevitable loss of purity as one enters the world. In this sense, MacNeice's treatment of memory and time reflects a sense of cyclical dread: the past, present, and future are all interconnected by humanity's capacity for violence and suffering, making the unborn child's plea both timeless and urgent.

2.9.7. Text: "Prayer before Birth"

Prayer before Birth

I am not yet born; O hear me.
Let not the bloodsucking bat or the rat or the stoat or the
club-footed ghoul come near me.

I am not yet born, console me.
I fear that the human race may with tall walls wall me,
with strong drugs dope me, with wise lies lure me,
on black racks rack me, in blood-baths roll me.

I am not yet born; provide me
With water to dandle me, grass to grow for me, trees to talk
to me, sky to sing to me, birds and a white light
in the back of my mind to guide me.

I am not yet born; forgive me
For the sins that in me the world shall commit, my words
when they speak to me, my thoughts when they think me,
my treason engendered by traitors beyond me,
my life when they murder by means of my
hands, my death when they live me.

I am not yet born; rehearse me
In the parts I must play and the cues I must take when
old men lecture me, bureaucrats hector me, mountains
frown at me, lovers laugh at me, the white
waves call me to folly and the desert calls
me to doom and the beggar refuses
my gift and my children curse me.

I am not yet born; O hear me,
Let not the man who is beast or who thinks he is God
come near me.

I am not yet born; O fill me
With strength against those who would freeze my
humanity, would dragoon me into a lethal automaton,
would make me a cog in a machine, a thing with
one face, a thing, and against all those
who would dissipate my entirety, would
blow me like thistledown hither and
thither or hither and thither
like water held in the

hands would spill me.

Let them not make me a stone and let them not spill me.
Otherwise kill me.

2.9.7.1. Central Idea

"Prayer Before Birth" by Louis MacNeice is a powerful and evocative poem that embodies the anxieties and fears associated with bringing new life into a world marred by violence, corruption, and dehumanization. Written during World War II, the poem reflects MacNeice's deep concern for the future and the impact of human cruelty on innocence. The poem is structured as a dramatic monologue, where an unborn child speaks to a higher power, pleading for protection against the evils it will face upon entering the world. Each stanza outlines a series of fears and horrors, escalating in intensity as the poem progresses. The unborn child anticipates being subjected to manipulation, betrayal, and subjugation by oppressive forces. The child fears for losing its individuality and being turned into an instrument for malevolent purposes. The child, not yet exposed to existence, pleads for divine guardianship against the grotesque forces it envisions: bloodsucking bats, vermin, and spectral beings with twisted limbs. These vivid images are symbolic of the evils lurking in humanity's shadow—a reminder of the malevolence that even the most innocent must confront.

The child begs for solace, envisioning a fate where it might be caged, drugged, deceived, tortured, and soaked in the bloodshed of others. Such imagery not only reflects the poet's concern with the violence of wartime society but underscores the dehumanization that results from unchecked power and moral decay. Amidst these pleas, there is a fragile yearning for beauty and integrity—the wish for pure water, whispering grasses, communicative trees, and birds that sing under boundless skies. These natural elements stand as counterpoints to human cruelty, embodying an uncorrupted world that nurtures rather than devours. They represent hope, a fleeting sense of rightness that might guide the child through the labyrinth of existence. Yet, the unborn child's plea is not only for comfort but for absolution in advance—an acknowledgment that the forces of the world may erode its moral compass and compel unspeakable acts. The poem's voice anticipates being made a puppet, forced to betray, to speak and think in monstrous ways, and to commit violence at the behest of others. It seeks forgiveness for the inevitable compromises and losses of self that a harsh world will extract.

MacNeice sharpens the tone when the child demands instruction for survival: how to act when faced with the dogmatic dictates of the powerful, the seductions of reckless abandon, or the unrelenting scorn of others. The poem's crescendo arrives as the child resists the idea of

becoming a mere cog, stripped of individuality and reduced to a machine for killing or a lifeless object devoid of will. The image of the child's identity scattered like thistle down-or spilt, irreversible-suggests the ultimate fear: obliteration of self. The final entreaty is haunting in its simplicity. Should the world be unable to promise humanity, freedom, and integrity, the child wishes for the mercy of nonexistence? This stark conclusion compels readers to reflect on the moral responsibilities of a society that so easily compromises innocence. "Prayer Before Birth", then, is not just an articulation of individual dread but an indictment of a world that so often fails to protect its own. It is MacNeice's call to conscience-an appeal for an end to violence, oppression, and the annihilation of the human spirit.

MacNeice masterfully uses repetition, anaphora, and vivid imagery to emphasize the child's desperate cries. Phrases such as "I am not yet born; forgive me" and "I am not yet born; console me" reveal the child's vulnerability and its hope for divine intervention. The poet's diction is deliberate, blending stark and grotesque images like "bloodsucking bat," "club-footed ghoul," and "tall walls wall me" to evoke a sense of claustrophobia and impending doom.

The central themes of the poem include the loss of innocence, the dehumanizing nature of war and authoritarianism, and the longing for freedom and compassion. The poem serves as a critique of the modern world, where humanity is often reduced to mere pawns in larger, destructive schemes. MacNeice's plea is ultimately a call for ethical responsibility and the preservation of human dignity in the face of overwhelming darkness. Overall, "Prayer Before Birth" is a poignant reflection on the fears of a world that has lost its moral compass and the innate human yearning for safety, autonomy, and hope. The poem resonates as a timeless meditation on the sanctity of life and the inherent desire for a world that nurtures rather than destroys.

2.9.7.2. Literary Context and Setting

Written during World War II, the poem reflects MacNeice's deep unease with the contemporary world, marked by widespread violence, totalitarian regimes, and the erosion of individual freedoms. The historical context of the 1940s, with its pervasive fear and chaos, informs the poem's urgent tone and the child's desperate plea for protection. MacNeice, part of the generation disillusioned by the war and its aftermath, channels these anxieties into a poetic critique that transcends its time, resonating with universal themes of innocence under siege and the moral cost of human conflict. Each stanza deepens the child's appeal, evolving from fears of tangible threats to the more insidious forms of oppression and control. The child begs for solace, envisioning a fate where it might be caged, drugged, deceived, tortured, and soaked in the bloodshed of others. Such imagery not only reflects the poet's concern with the

violence of wartime society but underscores the dehumanization that results from unchecked power and moral decay.

Amidst these pleas, there is a fragile yearning for beauty and integrity-the wish for pure water, whispering grasses, communicative trees, and birds that sing under boundless skies. These natural elements stand as counterpoints to human cruelty, embodying an uncorrupted world that nurtures rather than devours. They represent hope, a fleeting sense of rightness that might guide the child through the labyrinth of existence. Yet, the unborn child's plea is not only for comfort but for absolution in advance-an acknowledgment that the forces of the world may erode its moral compass and compel unspeakable acts. The poem's voice anticipates being made a puppet, forced to betray, to speak and think in monstrous ways, and to commit violence at the behest of others. It seeks forgiveness for the inevitable compromises and losses of self that a harsh world will extract.

MacNeice sharpens the tone when the child demands instruction for survival: how to act when faced with the dogmatic dictates of the powerful, the seductions of reckless abandon, or the unrelenting scorn of others. The poem's crescendo arrives as the child resists the idea of becoming a mere cog, stripped of individuality and reduced to a machine for killing or a lifeless object devoid of will. The image of the child's identity scattered like thistle down-or spilt, irreversible-suggests the ultimate fear: obliteration of self. The setting of the poem is an imagined, dystopian world that reflects MacNeice's perception of society's potential for brutality. Though not tied to a specific geographic location, the imagery evokes an environment where innocence is constantly threatened by the specter of war and moral disintegration. This setting, symbolic and abstract, mirrors the internal and external turmoil of humanity.

The final entreaty is haunting in its simplicity. Should the world be unable to promise humanity, freedom, and integrity, the child wishes for the mercy of nonexistence? This stark conclusion compels readers to reflect on the moral responsibilities of a society that so easily compromises innocence. "Prayer Before Birth", then, is not just an articulation of individual dread but an indictment of a world that so often fails to protect its own. It is MacNeice's call to conscience-an appeal for an end to violence, oppression, and the annihilation of the human spirit.

2.9.7.3. Themes of the Poem

1. Innocence vs. Corruption : The poem underscores the vulnerability of innocence in a world filled with violence, oppression, and moral decay. The unborn child's desperate plea reflects a fear of being corrupted by the dark forces that dominate society.

2. **The Loss of Individuality** : MacNeice warns of the dehumanizing power of totalitarianism and social conformity. The unborn child's fear of becoming a "cog" or a "machine for killing" speaks to the loss of personal identity and autonomy.

3. **Moral Responsibility and Guilt** : The poem acknowledges the inevitable moral compromises forced upon individuals by external pressures. The unborn child's request for forgiveness for future actions highlights the burden of guilt imposed by a corrupt world.

4. **The Search for Guidance and Redemption** : The child's plea for direction and forgiveness suggests a universal desire for moral clarity and the hope for redemption despite the world's flaws.

5. **The Threat of Dehumanization** : The recurring fear of being reduced to an object or an unfeeling entity reflects MacNeice's concern with how modern society strips individuals of empathy and humanity.

The final entreaty is haunting in its simplicity. Should the world be unable to promise humanity, freedom, and integrity, the child wishes for the mercy of nonexistence? This stark conclusion compels readers to reflect on the moral responsibilities of a society that so easily compromises innocence. "Prayer Before Birth", then, is not just an articulation of individual dread but an indictment of a world that so often fails to protect its own. It is MacNeice's call to conscience—an appeal for an end to violence, oppression, and the annihilation of the human spirit.

Symbols, Allegory and Motifs

➤ Symbols

1. **Vampire bats, rats, and stoats** : These creatures symbolize the predatory and malignant forces in society that threaten innocence. The use of animals associated with fear and disease amplifies the perceived danger and corruption present in the world.

2. **Natural elements (water, grass, trees, birds, sky)** : These are symbols of purity, freedom, and moral grounding. They represent an idyllic, untainted world that the unborn child yearns for but fears will be out of reach.

3. **Thistle-down**: This symbol represents fragility and the ease with which innocence and identity can be scattered or lost. It evokes the vulnerability of an individual in the face of overwhelming external forces.

4. **Stone** : Symbolizes the potential for emotional numbness and dehumanization. The unborn child fears becoming hardened stripped of empathy and humanity.

➤ Allegory

The entire poem can be read as an allegory for the human condition under the threat of violence, authoritarian control, and moral decay. The unborn child's voice represents the universal struggle for survival, integrity, and humanity amidst a world prone to destructive behavior and systemic oppression. The child's pleas embody a deeper, collective prayer for a future where life is not marred by inhumanity and suffering.

➤ Motifs

1. **Violence and Oppression :** The recurrent imagery of torture, imprisonment, and massacre underscores a motif of human cruelty. These motifs reflect the wartime context and the poet's critique of power structures that perpetuate violence.
2. **Nature vs. Human Corruption :** The motif of nature as a symbol of purity is juxtaposed against the human capacity for destruction. The child's longing for the natural world signifies a yearning for innocence and moral clarity amid pervasive corruption.
3. **Fear of Loss of Self :** The motif of becoming an unfeeling "stone" or being reduced to a "machine for killing" reinforces the central concern of dehumanization and loss of individuality.

"Prayer Before Birth", then, is not just an articulation of individual dread but an indictment of a world that so often fails to protect its own. It is MacNeice's call to conscience—an appeal for an end to violence, oppression, and the annihilation of the human spirit.

2.9.7.4. Poetic Devices, Form, Meter, Rhyme Scheme

➤ Poetic Devices :

1. **Personification :** The unborn child, serving as the speaker, is personified with the ability to express fears and desires.
2. **Repetition :** The phrase "I am not yet born" is repeated at the start of each stanza, reinforcing the child's pleas and emphasizing the sense of vulnerability.
3. **Imagery :** The poem is rich with vivid and often dark imagery, such as "bloodsucking bat" and "tall walls wall me," which create a menacing atmosphere.
4. **Alliteration :** Phrases like "strong drugs dope me" and "wise lies lure me" create a rhythmic effect and emphasize the disturbing content.
5. **Metaphor :** The poem uses metaphors to convey existential threats and societal oppression, like "tall walls" symbolising confinement.

6. **Anaphora** : The repetition of "I am not yet born" at the beginning of many lines emphasizes the central plea of the speaker.

7. **Enjambment** : The use of enjambment throughout the poem enhances the flow and conveys the urgency and continuity of the speaker's thoughts.

8. **Irony** : The unborn child is already aware of the corruption and horrors of the world, highlighting the bitter irony of innocence that knows too much.

➤ Form and Structure

1. **Dramatic Monologue** : Told from the perspective of an unborn child, creating a unique voice filled with desperation.

2. **Eight Stanzas** : Irregular stanza lengths but consistent use of a refrain ("I am not yet born") in all but the last stanza.

3. **Hypnotic Quality** : Achieved through repetition and refrain, creating a sense of urgency and chant-like cadence.

4. **Parallelism** : Gives a rhythmic structure and supports the emotional intensity, making some lines feel metered even in free verse.

➤ Meter

Free Verse : The poem doesn't follow a consistent meter

Rhythmic Moments : Parallel structures like "with tall walls wall me, / with strong drugs dope me..." add a pulse that feels confined and tense.

Galloping Rhythm : Particularly in stanzas with rapid, cascading imagery that mimic the speaker's spiraling fears.

➤ Rhyme Scheme

Unconventional Scheme : The first and last lines of each stanza rhyme, binding the stanzas with a subtle musicality.

Identical Rhyme : The repetition of words like "spill me" in the final stanza emphasizes the speaker's plea for agency or death.

Cadence of Prayer : The rhyming scheme reinforces the solemn, pleading tone, akin to traditional prayer.

2.9.8. Comprehension Questions

Long Answer Type Questions :

1. How does Auden make something like a nature poem informed with historical concerns in "On this Island"?
2. Make an analysis of the imagery in "On this Island."
3. Analyse the theme of innocence and corruption in "Prayer Before Birth." How does MacNeice use the perspective of an unborn child to highlight these themes?
4. Discuss how does MacNeice use poetic devices to create a sense of urgency and foreboding in "Prayer Before Birth"?
5. Examine the significance of structure and form in "Prayer Before Birth." How does the free verse style and varied stanza length contribute to the poem's impact?
6. 4. How does MacNeice explore the theme of dehumanization in "Prayer Before Birth"? Provide examples from the text to support your response.
7. In what ways does "Prayer Before Birth" reflect existential anxieties of the mid-20th century? Consider the historical context in your response.
8. How does MacNeice's use of language in "Prayer Before Birth" convey the helplessness and vulnerability of the speaker?
9. Evaluate the effectiveness of MacNeice's portrayal of hope and despair in "Prayer Before Birth" How does the ending contribute to the poem's overall message?

Medium Length Answer Type Questions :

1. Describe the physical setting in Auden's the poem.
2. Briefly analyse how Auden combines opposite ideas in his poem.
3. How does Louis MacNeice use the perspective of an unborn child to explore themes of innocence and corruption in "Prayer Before Birth"?
4. How does MacNeice use repetition and parallelism to create a sense of urgency in "Prayer Before Birth"?
5. Analyse the use of imagery in "Prayer Before Birth" and its contribution to the poem's theme.
6. What role does the structure and form play in reinforcing the themes of "Prayer Before Birth"?

Short Answer type Questions:

1. Whom does Auden address as "stranger"?
2. Bring out the significance of the repetition of the word "now" in lines 1 and 19 in Auden's poem.
3. What does the stranger see "at the small field's ending" in Auden's poem?
4. Why does the poem use the perspective of an unborn child?
5. How does MacNeice create a sense of urgency in the poem?
6. What imagery does MacNeice use to depict the world as dangerous?

2.9.9. Suggested Reading

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Unit 10 □ Rupert Brooke: “The Soldier” & Wilfred Owen: “Strange Meeting”

Structure

- 2.10.1. Objectives**
- 2.10.2. Introduction: Rupert Brooke, Wilfred Owen and War Poetry**
- 2.10.3. Rupert Brooke and the Sonnet**
- 2.10.4. "The Soldier": Text**
- 2.10.5. "The Soldier": Glossary and Annotations**
- 2.10.6. "The Soldier": Critical Understanding**
- 2.10.7. "The Soldier": Title and Theme**
- 2.10.8. "The Soldier": Structure and Style**
- 2.10.9. "Strange Meeting"**
- 2.10.10. "Strange Meeting": Glossary and Annotations**
- 2.10.11. Strange Meeting: Critical Understanding**
- 2.10.12. "Strange Meeting": Title and Theme**
- 2.10.13. "Strange Meeting": Structure and Style**
- 2.10.14. Summing Up**
- 2.10.15. Comprehension Exercises**
- 2.10.16. Suggested Reading**

2.10.1. Objectives

This Unit seeks to introduce students to the genre of war poetry, by taking up two poets who showed diametrically opposed views about the First World War, to which they were integrally related. This Unit will

- introduce you to Rupert Brooke, a poet writing during the First World War, and one of the earliest twentieth-century writers to earn a name for himself, as a war poet (a description that could apply to anyone writing in verse about war, but which is, even now, associated greatly with those writing during World War I and II);

- consider how he used the sonnet, a verse form with a rich literary history, to write about war;
- examine in detail what is perhaps his most famous war poem, the sonnet "The Soldier";
- introduce you to Wilfred Owen, one of the most famous, and perhaps the finest, of poets writing during the First World War;
- survey in brief his war poetry which in terms of theme, treatment and style constitutes a corpus of some of the most important creative responses to the destructive horrors of war;
- examine in detail "Strange Meeting", considered to be one of his most representative and complex poems.

2.10.2. Introduction: Rupert Brooke, Wilfred Owen and War Poetry

Rupert Chawner Brooke (1887-1915) was an Englishman who has been described as a "Georgian" poet, writing as he did in an era ruled by George V. He was one of the literary figures to feature in the five-volume verse anthology *Georgian Poetry* (1912-1922). He also had associations with the Bloomsbury group of intellectuals that included Virginia Woolf. Brooke was in his time something of a literary. It is possible that his pre-war poetry, with its dreamy romanticism, would not by itself have ensured Brooke's place in later anthologies.

But then came the First World War, and like many of his age and class, Brooke volunteered to enlist. He joined the Royal Navy in 1914, but did not get to see much action: in April 1915, two days before the Gallipoli campaign, he died at the age of 28, of sepsis from an infected mosquito bite. His posthumous elevation to the level of national hero was largely on account of the series of five war sonnets written and published as *1914*, which reflect the innocence and idealism with which many Englishmen joined the First World War. These attributes, combined with the patriotic willingness to sacrifice the self for the country, characterised Rupert Brooke as a war poet, and constituted one of the two polarities between which World War I poetry ranged. At the other polarity would be those writers who, often as a direct result of having actually been in battle, saw the horrors of war and the inadequacy of conventional views glorifying war. These writers are perhaps best represented by Wilfred Owen, who will be studied later in this unit.

Like Rupert Brooke, Wilfred Edward Salter Owen (1893-1918) is a much anthologised English war poet who fought for his country and died young. But the differences between the two are perhaps more significant than their points of similarity.

Unlike Brooke, who was a published poet even before enlisting, Owen had only a few poems published in his lifetime. He wrote little of importance till he joined the war in 1915. Whereas Brooke did not actually see much action, Owen was a soldier for more than three years, was decorated for bravery, and eventually died in action a week before World War I ended. He is now almost exclusively remembered for the poems that were largely shaped by his experience of the horrors of war. These affected him as both a person and a poet, turning him from a shy, sensitive introvert into a battle-scarred warrior who could respond as the situation demanded, yet was deeply disturbed by what war did to people in mind and body. His poetic technique also changed, turning his verse from something faintly romantic and sensuous to a vehicle that stylistically and powerfully echoed the discord of a world at war all around him.

Perhaps the most noteworthy aspect of Owen's war poetry is his preoccupation with what he calls "the pity of war". This phrase occurs in the poem you are about to study in detail, but is also found in the lines of a preface that he had drafted for a volume of poems he planned to publish: "My subject is war, and the pity of war."

The word "pity" here conveys a sensitivity to the agony and anguish of those who fought in war, but goes beyond, seeing all the suffering and destruction as a tragic waste of humanity. Such an attitude was in sharp contrast to the idealistic glorification of war that characterized much of war poetry, at least during the initial stages of World War I. (An example of such a view might, for example, emerge from your reading of Brooke's *The Soldier*. And an example of what might be seen as Owen's rejoinder to simplistic praises of the glories of war would be his poem *Dulce et Decorum Est*.)

2.10.3. Rupert Brooke and the Sonnet

Brooke's *1914* (which contains "The Soldier," the poem you are about to study in detail) is a series of five sonnets. Accordingly, this section will at first take a brief look at the sonnet form. With its 14 lines, sectional divisions and limited rhymes, the sonnet as a verse form is quite easy to identify. It has also been a poetic vehicle with which many English poets have experimented, from the sixteenth century onwards. Elsewhere in your study material you have also studied the characteristic features of the sonnet, and will remember that the most common variants are the Italian (or Petrarchan) form, with its octave-sestet division and five rhymes,

and the English (or Shakespearean) kind, with three quatrains and a concluding couplet, and seven rhymes.

What makes a study of Rupert Brooke's war sonnets interesting is that he occasionally experiments with the verse structure. A poem might, for example, simultaneously display characteristics of both the Italian and the English sonnet forms. At the same time, his choice of war as a subject is also a kind of extension of the scope of the sonnet, though we have seen different ways in which other English poets from Shakespeare onwards have done the same.

In this connection, you might look up another sonnet by Rupert Brooke, though this does not concern war. It is titled Sonnet Reversed. Does the title suggest anything to you about what the poem could be like? You can find the poem online here:

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems-and-poets/poems/detail/43715>

2.10.4. “The Soldier”: Text

And now let us take a close look at the poem "The Soldier." The text has been taken from *The Poetry of the First World War: 'Never Such Innocence'* edited by Martin Stephen, London, Everyman, 1993, page 54.

The Soldier

If I should die, think only this of me:

That there's some corner of a foreign field
That is for ever England. There shall be
In that rich earth a richer dust concealed;
A dust whom England bore, shaped, made aware,
Gave, once, her flowers to love, her ways to roam;
A body of England's, breathing English air,
Washed by the rivers, blest by the suns of home.

And think, this heart, all evil shed away,
A pulse in the eternal mind, no less
Gives somewhere back the thoughts by England given;
Her sights and sounds; dreams happy as her day;
And laughter, learnt of friends, and gentleness,
In hearts at peace, under an English heaven.

2.10.5. “The Soldier”: Glossary and Annotations

corner of a foreign field : The soldier-speaker imagines that he might die in a foreign country, and refers to his grave in the land where he might lie buried. Incidentally, Brooke died in April 1915, and was buried in Skyros, a Greek island, and hence literally a "foreign field".

England : a space occupied by an Englishman's mortal remains, and in that sense English space. (This is an example of the figure of speech known as **synecdoche**.)

In that rich earth a richer dust concealed : When the buried soldier's body has decomposed, and turned to soil, it mixes with the dust of the foreign country. Being a loyal Englishman, the speaker believes the dust that his body has turned into, has enriched the dust of the foreign country. (The phrase “**richer dust**” may be considered an example of **euphemism** as well as **hyperbole**, both figures of speech.)

bore : past tense of "bear", in the sense of "give birth to"

body : the focus in this section is on the physical person, just as the next section deals with his spirit

blest : a variant of "blessed", here meaning "given special favour"

shed away: cast off or discarded

a pulse... Gives somewhere back : when the dead soldier's body has disintegrated, his innermost essence returns to the Divine Being and exists as a "pulse" or beat that retains its Englishness, having brought along all the pleasant experiences of an English life.

dreams happy as her day : England is seen as an ideal place; where days are pleasant, as are its people's thoughts and dreams. (The phrase contains an example of a simile.)

2.10.6. “The Soldier” : Critical Understanding

The poem seems to be an utterance of a soldier who imagines meeting his death in battle, away from home. He does not, however, express sadness or fear at the possibility that he might die. He rather considers it worthwhile, since he will be sacrificing his life for the sake of his country. What gives this poem its distinctive quality is the speaker's insistence that his national identity will be preserved even after he is dead. This is the idea that is developed in the first section of the poem. Thus, the grave in which the soldier's corpse lies buried, eventually to turn into dust, will be a space that represents England, containing as it does English remains,

even if it is in a foreign land. As if to emphasise this Englishness, the speaker conjures up an image of the soldier before his death: a physical presence growing up in English conditions which seem both elemental and idyllic. Air, water and the fiery sunlight all nurture and develop the Englishman; with the elements so mixed in him that (rather as Shakespeare's Mark Anthony in the play *Julius Caesar* said about Brutus) Nature might point to the soldier as a perfect specimen of an ideal man. Or to put it perhaps more accurately, a perfect specimen of an ideal Englishman.

The second part of the poem carries the idea a step further. Whereas earlier the focus had been on the Englishman's corporeal or physical identity, the later section deals with his inner essence, or what is at the "heart" or spiritual core of a person. This innermost essence, according to the speaker's belief, will be united after death, with what he calls "the eternal mind", and others might refer to as God, or a supreme and immortal Divine Being. The idea here seems to be that, after death, an individual's spirit merges with that of the Divine Being. However, even in such a situation, the speaker's Englishness will be asserted. Death is seen as a process whereby all negative qualities are "shed away" or overcome, and what remains is only the good and imperishable. To the speaker, this implies all the factors that have nurtured his English existence, so that what his spirit "gives... back" or surrenders to the Divine Being are memories of experiences under "an English heaven".

2.10.7. "The Soldier": Title and Theme

Most anthologies reprint this poem simply as "The Soldier." However, according to The First World War Poetry Digital Archive, this poem initially was titled "The Recruit," and was published in a January 1915 edition of the periodical *New Numbers*. It was the fifth in a series of war sonnets published under the general title 1914, which of course is the year in which World War I broke out. Accordingly, the poem may be also referred to as "1914: The Soldier." This version of the title indicates that it was composed during the first year of the World War I, and might in fact be a useful pointer that the soldier-speaker of the sonnet is more likely to be a fresh recruit than a war-weary veteran. It might also account for the youthful idealism of the lines. Such idealism (and its supporters) would, as the war dragged on, come in for increasing criticism.

The theme, as stated by the soldier-speaker, seems to be that for a loyal Englishman (or warrior), even death is an opportunity to assert his patriotism, since wherever he dies, the area occupied by his dead body will effectively be English space. The repeated mention of Englishness, the references to burial and death in a foreign land, all serve to locate the speaker

in a specific time and space, but overall the sentiment may be seen as a recasting of what was once considered an acceptable sentiment concerning death in battle: it is worthwhile to die for one's country. (Or, in the words of the Roman poet Horace, "*Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori*." You might want to find out what exactly these words mean in English, and which English poet has used the first four words of the quote as a title for one of his poems.)

2.10.8. "The Soldier": Structure and Style

This poem is structured as a sonnet and, as has been mentioned, was part of a sequence of sonnets concerning war, published in 1914. The theme of the poem is that the soldier-speaker's English identity and character will be preserved even after death. Notice how the two-part division of the Italian sonnet form is used by Brooke to focus separately on the external body (in the octave) and the internal being (in the sestet). Interestingly, however, the rhyme scheme of the octave is not typical of the Italian variant, but is more suggestive of its English/Shakespearean counterpart.

A tendency to experiment with divergent impulses may be noted in the language of the poem as well. For a poem that belongs to the early twentieth century, a word such as "blest" recreates an archaic, idyllic, almost Biblical effect, which might appear out of place in a poem about war. And Brooke's choice of *given-heaven* rhymes might seem less than perfect in terms of matching vowel sound, and closer to the para-rhymes of Owen, as you will see when you study the latter's versification in the next section/unit. However, the degree to which Brooke experiments is inconsiderable when compared to the techniques used by Owen.

Activities

1. Refer to what has been said about the sonnet form, here and elsewhere in your reading material, to determine the answers to the following questions:
 - a) How many rhymes does the octave contain?
 - b) What is the rhyme scheme of the octave?
 - c) Is this usual for a sonnet using an octave-sestet division?
 - d) How many rhymes are there in this sonnet?
2. Given below are a few points concerning what this section has covered. Included is *one observation that is NOT true*. Identify the incorrect one.
 - a) Rupert Brooke's war poetry, in general as well as in this poem, reflects an innocence and idealism

- b) "The Soldier" is from a collection of three sonnets published under the general title 1914.
- c) Despite its title, the poem makes no actual mention of war
- d) "The Soldier" is about a protagonist for whom even death is an opportunity to assert his patriotism.
- e) The poem is a sonnet with an octave-sestet division.

Key to Activity No.1.

- 1. Four
- 2. ababcbcd
- 3. No; the usual rhyme scheme for the octave would be abbaabba
- 4. Seven

Answer to Activity No. 2.

b) "The Soldier" is from a collection of three sonnets published under the general title *1914*". The poem is one of a sequence of five sonnets, not three.

2.10.9. "Strange Meeting": Text

Let us now take a close look at the poem "Strange Meeting," which was composed probably in the last year of Owen's life, and published after his death. The text of the poem is taken from *The Norton Anthology of Poetry, Third Edition* (1983) page 1035. The words/phrases in bold are explained in the section that follows the text provided.

Strange Meeting

It seemed that out of battle I escaped
Down some profound dull tunnel, long since scooped
Through granites which titanic wars had groined.

Yet also there encumbered sleepers groaned,
Too fast in thought or death to be bestirred.
Then, as I probed them, one sprang up, and stared
With piteous recognition in fixed eyes,
Lifting distressful hands, as if to bless.
And by his smile, I knew that sullen hall, -

By his dead smile I knew we stood in Hell.

With a thousand fears that vision's face was grained;
Yet no blood reached there from the upper ground,
And no guns thumped, or down the flues made moan."
"Strange friend," I said, "here is no cause to mourn."
"None," said that other, "save the undone years,
The hopelessness. Whatever hope is yours,
Was my life also; I went hunting wild
After the wildest beauty in the world,
Which lies not calm in eyes, or braided hair,
But mocks the steady running of the hour,
And if it grieves, grieves richlier than here.
For by my glee might many men have laughed,
And of my weeping something had been left,
Which must die now. I mean the truth untold,
The pity of war, the pity war distilled.
Now men will go content with what we spoiled.
Or, discontent, boil bloody, and be spilled.
They will be swift with swiftness of the tigress.
None will break ranks, though nations trek from progress.
Courage was mine, and I had mystery;
Wisdom was mine, and I had mastery:
To miss the march of this retreating world
Into vain citadels that are not walled.
Then, when much blood had clogged their chariot-wheels,
I would go up and wash them from sweet wells,
Even with truths that lie too deep for taint.
I would have poured my spirit without stint
But not through wounds; not on the cess of war.
Foreheads of men have bled where no wounds were.
"I am the enemy
you killed, my friend.
I knew you in this dark: for so you frowned
Yesterday through me as you jabbed and killed.
I parried; but my hands were loath and cold.
Let us sleep now. . . ."

2.10.10. “Strange Meeting” : Glossary and Annotations

profound : an inspired choice of word, this suggests both "deep" and "significant". The reader immediately registers that there is something particularly significant about this tunnel descent

granites : very hard rocks

titanic : great in terms of scale; the reference may be to the world war as well as to all great wars in history

groined : hollowed out

encumbered : burdened, by the uniforms and equipment the soldiers wear, but also maybe under the weight of traumatic experiences

fast : a word suggesting deeply occupied, or taken up by

bestirred : roused or awakened

probed : explored, examined

grained : marked

flues : airshafts

Strange friend : There appears to be an oxymoron here, friends are obviously "familiar" rather than "strange" people, but this phrase indicates a major paradox addressed by the poem. War divides people into enemy camps; people who might otherwise be not just friends, but brothers or twins in terms of nature/temperament

save the undone years : except the years taken away or reduced by death

braided hair : hair tied in plaits; a physical attribute that represents tame beauty, along with the eyes mentioned earlier

richlier than here : more earnestly than is possible here

The pity of war : Owen's famous phrase is, by his own admission, the subject of his poetry. The pity lies in the fact that war provides occasions for the display of man's inhumanity to man: which hurts both those who die as a result, and those who kill and live with the responsibility and the guilt

distilled : left in its purest, undiluted form

trek : move away

vain citadels : proud cities, or in a broader sense, aggressive countries

too deep for taint : so well-entrenched that it cannot be falsified

stint : limit or limitation

cess : the word originally refers to a tax; here it might be used in the associated sense of "burden" or "curse"

Foreheads of men have bled where no wounds were : in other words, these men have suffered, not physical pain from a wound, but mental trauma

I am the enemy you killed, my friend : the central paradox in the poem. How can an enemy be a friend? The answer obviously is that narrow political enmity comes in the way of broader, more universal, human ties

through me as you jabbed : an example of inversion, a figure of speech where the usual grammatical order or words is reversed. The normal order would be "as you jabbed (that is, thrust with your bayonet) through me"

parried : blocked or defended

loath : unwilling, possibly because the soldier is weary of fighting and killing

2.10.11. "Strange Meeting" : Critical Understanding

The poem begins with a narrator who is probably a soldier, since he tells us that he escaped "out of battle". Note however that this is preceded by "It seemed..."; so this not a real retreat but a dream vision, or one imagined. Throughout the poem, the atmosphere is dreamlike and inconsistent, now lacking detail and logic, now coming sharply into focus. Note also that the soldier-narrator's movement involves a descent, suggesting both a psychological journey into the depths of the subconscious and also a journey into some underworld or hell.

The narrator travels along a dark tunnel which has been carved out by the ravages of war, yet paradoxically offers protection from the destruction currently raging overhead. He comes across clusters of soldiers who are either unaware or inanimate. He examines them closely, and one of them jumps up, and with an expression of pity and distress seems to recognize the narrator. This, as we learn later, is because the narrator has killed him in battle the day before.

The speaker so far is surprised to note that the other soldier has a face lined with pain, for he assumes that this place, far removed from the war raging elsewhere, should have no cause for sorrow. The other soldier responds, and with his words the narrator seems to disappear from the poem, never to return, for he neither speaks again nor makes his presence felt.

The dead soldier says his sorrow is on account of death taking away his chances to lead a full life, to love and feel, and more importantly, to inspire others with hope and ideals. His laughter might have taught other people to laugh, and similarly his tears could have moved others to sorrow. His own sorrow has been generated by his experience of "the pity of war": the realization that killing in action connects a slayer and his victim, who do not know one another, yet who might be so similar as to be friends. Though the dead soldier has realised this truth, he cannot communicate this to other men as he is no longer alive. So some soldiers continue to count the supposed gains of victory, while others prepare to retaliate. Either way, people die, and nations who trigger destruction continue to regress. Owen presents here a powerful image of chariot wheels clogged by the blood of the slain, as the dead soldier laments that he might have brought relief and shared the truth about war, had he been alive. The dead soldier now reveals that he has been killed in battle, only the day before, by the poet-narrator.

The poem ends on a disquieting note, without a sense of proper closure. What happens to the narrator? Why are the words of the other soldier left unfinished, as indicated by the ellipsis? And when the soldier says "Let us sleep now..." what kind of sleep is indicated: the sleep of death? Or a more literal sleep? Either way, there is no guarantee that this slumber is restful. Remember, this soldier seemed asleep when the narrator first came upon him, yet he suddenly sprang up to address the narrator and to warn him of the tragic waste of war. Perhaps this is the lasting impression the poet intended to leave us with. This would be in consonance with Owen's declaration in another part of that draft of a preface: that all a poet can do is to warn people.

2.10.12. "Strange Meeting": Title and Theme

The title of the poem echoes a line from a poem by Shelley, who (along with Keats) was a major literary influence, at least in the early part of Owen's poetic career. Shelley's *The Revolt of Islam* contains the line: "Gone forth whom no strange meeting did befall." and Owen's choice of title for the poem we are studying is an exact replication of the phrase "strange meeting". The word "strange" here is a hint that the meeting or encounter described in the poem is not perhaps as realistic as it is metaphorical. In fact, some critics feel it might be an experience in a dream (or nightmare); others think that it is about a psychological journey, within a speaker's mind.

Even in terms of theme, Owen may have been influenced by Shelley, who claimed *The Revolt of Islam* was an expression of what he called the "precariousness" of his life, and that

it was animated by feelings similar to those communicated by a dying man. There is a sense of the same in Owen's poem, which depicts a meeting with an enemy soldier who in a larger sense, as a fellow human being, is a friend, yet has been killed out of compulsions that disregard the bonds of human brotherhood. The poem is thus clearly an exploration of "the pity of war".

2.10.13. "Strange Meeting": Structure and Style

In structure, the situation recreated in this poem might remind you of a poem by Siegfried Sassoon (who was a war-poet and a major influence on Owen), titled "The Rear-Guard." There too a soldier travels along a tunnel, while a battle rages overhead, and mistakes a dead soldier for one asleep. But if Owen takes the germ of the idea from Sassoon, his extension of the situation and his treatment give the work a distinctive and unforgettable quality.

Owen impresses with his use of forceful language, and images that challenge rather than colour the reader's imagination, but are undeniably striking. Witness lines such as these:

I would have poured my spirit without stint
But not through wounds; not on the cess of war.

He resorts to alliteration, or the repetition of the same consonants in syllables close together, in constructions such as "might many men" or "boil bloody"; and onomatopoeia, where the sound of the word matches its sense, as in "thumped" and "moan". All this charges the language with vigour and emphasis.

Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of Owen's poem is a technical virtuosity that was startling in its time and went on to influence profoundly the work of many who followed him. He discarded conventional patterns of rhythm and rhyme, with their associations of regularity and harmony, as inappropriate devices by which to express the chaos of a world torn apart by war; and in their place he popularised alternative devices. These include para-rhyme, where pairs of words have the same (or similar) consonants but different vowel sounds; either over single syllables, such as in *laughed/left*, or more, as in *mystery-mastery*. This creates a sense of discordance to ears used to full rhyme. Owen also used internal rhyme and assonance, which involve the repetition of vowel sounds within sentences but not at the ends of lines, as in "knew you". All these create unfamiliar auditory patterns that counter the expectation of familiar cadences and rhythms.

Activities

1. Which of the following statements is not true?

- a. Wilfred Owen's earlier verse was more romantic and sensuous than his war poetry.
 - b. The experience of the realities of war changed Owen as a person as well as a poet.
 - c. The poem "Strange Meeting" was written soon after World War I began
 - d. The poet's major concern is with "the pity of war".
2. Elsewhere in your study material there are discussions that focus on the sonnet as a verse form, examining how it blossomed in England during the Renaissance and evolved in later centuries. An interesting point to note about the sonnet is that, during the First World War (as well as at other times), this form was adapted and used to write about war. We have already seen that Rupert Brooke himself wrote a series of sonnets on the subject. It might be rewarding for you look for other examples of poets composing war sonnets in English. Wilfred Owen, the other war poet you have studied in detail, is a name that springs readily to mind in this connection. Here is a link to a handful of sonnets (and sonneteers) of the First World War: <http://www.sonnets.org/wwi.htm>
 3. Wilfred Owen died in 1918, at the age of 25. A number of poets in English literature have died young, their lives and careers cut short by mortality. If John Keats is perhaps the most famous of such terminated talents, Thomas Chatterton, is a lesser-known example, though he died even younger.

It is sobering to note how many English poets lost their lives in a world war, while still in their twenties. You might prepare a list of your own, and go through a poem or two by each poet you identify. Would the following make it to your list? Keith Douglas, Julian Grenfell, Sidney Keyes, Ewart A. Mackintosh, Isaac Rosenberg, Charles H. Sorley. Decide why (or why not). Were they all casualties of the First World War?

4. In this connection you may wish to look up a poem by Archibald MacLeish beginning "The young dead soldiers do not speak..." which was written by an American poet during the Second World War, but which may refer to all young lives lost while fighting in any war. Here is a link to the poem:

<https://www.poemhunter.com/poem/the-young-dead-soldiers-do-not-speak>

(Ans to Activity No. 1: (c) "The poem "Strange Meeting" was written soon after World War I began." The poem was in fact written towards the end of the war.)

2.10.14. Summing Up

This unit has examined two important poems on war - one written by Rupert Brooke ("The Soldier") and the other by Wilfred Owen ("Strange Meeting"). You must have noticed that although the poets reflected on war, their attitudes to it were quite different. While Brooke's poem embodies a nationalistic spirit and finds in war a scope for upholding it, Owen's poem views war as responsible for unnecessary violence and unethical killings. This unit also considers the genre to which the poems belong, their stylistic aspects and the structural devices employed by the poets. Now you will be better equipped to read and appreciate the two poems.

2.10.15. Comprehension Questions

Long Answer Type Questions

1. What picture of a patriotic soldier emerges from your reading of Rupert Brooke's sonnet? Is this depiction, in your opinion, likely to match a portrayal of a modern-day soldier? Explain.
2. Consider how Rupert Brooke uses the sonnet form to develop his sentiments in "The Soldier", and examine whether he strictly follows existing traditions, or adapts them to suit his own purposes.
3. It has been suggested that Brooke's skillful use of language makes dying for one's country sound like a great privilege. With reference to the text, do you think this claim is justified?
4. Show how Owen communicates "the pity of war" in his poem "Strange Meeting."
5. Examine how Owen uses language and technique to great effect in his recreation of the horrors of war.
6. How far would you agree with the view that Owen's response to war is anti-romantic?

Medium Length Answer Type Questions

1. "...[T]hink only this of me..." Discuss, with close textual reference, what the soldier, in the octave of the sonnet, would like others to think.
2. What does the protagonist in "The Soldier" have to say about "this heart"?
3. The speaker in Brooke's sonnet is an Englishman. Examine how the poem asserts the soldier's Englishness.

4. Recreate after the speaker in "Strange Meeting" his nightmarish descent, right up to the time he speaks to his "strange friend".
5. Which sections of this poem suggest that the two soldiers, though on opposing sides, might essentially be the same kind of person?
6. What is para-rhyme? Examine a few occurrences of para-rhyme in this poem and suggest what Owen achieves by his use of these.

Short Answer Type Questions

1. Examine the rhyme scheme used by Brooke in "The Soldier". What is the metrical pattern used here?
2. Explain what the poet means by: "...there's some corner of a foreign field/ That is forever England."
3. Identify three figures of speech in the poem and explain any two of them.
4. Briefly explain the pattern of rhyme and rhythm in the poem.
5. Identify three figures of speech in the poem and explain any two of them.
6. How would you explain the phrase "the pity of war" in your own words?

2.10.16. Suggested Reading

- Hibberd, Dominic. *Wilfred Owen: A New Biography*. Phoenix (Orion), 2003.
- Lehmann, John. Rupert Brooke: *His Life and His Legend*. Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1980.
- Roberts, David, ed. *Out in the Dark: Poetry of the First World War*. Saxon Books, 2013.
- Rogers, Timothy. Rupert Brooke: *A Reappraisal and Selection*. Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1971.
- Silkin, Jon. *Out of Battle: The Poetry of the Great War*. 2nd Ed. Palgrave Macmillan, 1998.
- Stallworthy, Jon. *Wilfred Owen*. OUP, 1974.
- Stallworthy, Jon, ed. *The New Oxford Book of War Poetry*. 2nd Ed. Oxford University Press, 2014.
- Stephen, Martin, ed. *Poems of the First World War: 'Never Such Innocence'*. Everyman, 1993.
- Ward, Candace, ed. *World War One British Poets: Brooke, Owen, Sassoon, Rosenberg and Others*. Dover Publication, 1997.

Module - 3
Modern British Literature : Prose

Unit 11 □ Modern British Fiction: An Introduction

Structure

- 3.11.1. Objectives**
- 3.11.2. Introduction**
- 3.11.3. Historical Background**
- 3.11.4. Major British Novelists**
- 3.11.5. Other Novelists**
- 3.11.6. Campus Novelists**
- 3.11.7. Angry Young Novelists**
- 3.11.8. Summing Up**
- 3.11.9. Comprehension Exercises**
- 3.11.10. Suggested Readings**

3.11.1. Objectives

This Unit will try to

- develop an understanding of the historical, social and intellectual context of the modern literary fiction in Britain
- to provide a literary survey of the age to familiarise the learners with the writers of this period and their works
- to take up a detailed study of select writers of this age and their important works
- finally, to ensure that the learners understand the themes, preoccupations, modes of execution and theoretical perspectives of the fictional works of this period

3.11.2. Introduction

Modernism in British literature began in the last decades of the nineteenth century and continued to inform the aesthetics, sensibility, philosophy, form, and structure of the literary output of much of the twentieth century. In this Unit, we will specifically deal with the fictional works written mainly during the first half of the twentieth century, and study some of the major writers

and their works. It is also important to note here that while this era became synonymous with leading modernists such as **Henry James (1843-1916)**, **Joseph Conrad (1857-1924)**, **E.M. Forster (1879-1970)**, **Virginia Woolf (1882-1941)**, **James Joyce (1882-1941)**, and **D.H. Lawrence (1885-1930)** were indeed central figures in literary modernism. It's true that other popular novelists of the time, like **Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936)**, **H.G. Wells (1866-1946)**, **John Galsworthy (1867-1933)**, **Arnold Bennett (1867-1931)**, and **G.K. Chesterton (1874-1936)**, didn't strictly adhere to modernist conventions.

How were the writers of this period different from those that came before them? What kind of lasting impact did they leave on subsequent generations of writers? These are some of the questions that the learners will be able to answer at the end of this unit.

3.11.3. Historical Background

The seismic shift that modernism brought about in the literature of the period reflected larger changes in the social, intellectual, moral and psychological lives of the people. As the calm stability of the Victorian age drew to a close, the public grappled with crisis of faith brought about by various factors, namely, emergence of Darwinian theories of evolution, the re-thinking of economic and societal structures in the wake of socio-economic theories of John Stuart Mill (1806-1873) and Karl Marx (1818-1883), the explorations of the subconscious by Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), further development of science and technology, and rise of the feminist movements. In the world of political events, the violence and destruction of World War I further hurtled the public towards a sense of confusion and rootlessness. In the absence of guiding forces of either religion or trusted political leadership, the sense of being set adrift in a meaningless world became the prevalent mood of the day. Figures of authority were questioned, and the omniscient authorial voice of the Victorian novel was no exception to this. As fiction moved from the certainty of the Victorian age towards the inevitable confusion of modernism, the themes, preoccupations, structures, syntaxes, the basic foundations of what was thought to constitute a novel, began to shift. Virginia Woolf, in her 1925 essay "Modern Fiction", rejected the notion of constraints of plot, structure and chronology that convention dictated writers of fiction must follow:

...if a writer were a free man and not a slave, if he could write what he chose, not what he must, if he could base his work upon his own feeling and not upon convention, there would be no plot, no comedy, no tragedy, no love interest or catastrophe in the accepted style, and perhaps not a single button sewn on as the Bond Street tailors would have it. Life is not a series of gig lamps symmetrically

arranged; life is a luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning to the end. (160)

In her strident rejection of the established form of fiction, Woolf was echoing the sentiments of the major figures associated with Modern fiction - Henry James declared the coming of a new "self-consciousness" to the art of fiction. His brother, William James popularised the term "stream of consciousness" in his *The Principles of Psychology* (1893) where he spoke of "consciousness as an uninterrupted 'flow': a 'river' or a 'stream' are the metaphors by which it is most naturally described. In talking of it hereafter, let's call it the stream of thought, consciousness, or subjective life" (239). This "interior monologue" or "stream of consciousness" - whatever one may choose to call it -expressed itself in the pages of modern fiction and necessitated structural, linguistic, syntactical or typographical innovations, as evidenced in its extreme form in the works of James Joyce.

Activity for Learners :

- Enumerate, in a tabular form, the major ways in which the works of Modern fiction writers differed from those of the Victorian ones.
- Consult relevant sources to gather information about Charles Darwin, John Stuart Mill and Karl Marx.
- Go back to the unit on "Modern, Modernity and Modernism" (Module 2 Unit 4), and write down a short note on how the meanings of these terms differ.

3.11.4. Major British Novelists

Henry James : Born in an affluent, intellectually inclined American family, Henry James (1843 -1916) found the fertile soil for his creativity in the rich cultural heritage of England and continental Europe. A cosmopolitan by upbringing and temperament, his works encompass both the continent of his birth and that of his adoption. His career as a novelist has been divided into three phases by literary historians. In his first phase, he explored what he called the "international situation" -the interaction and interplay between the cultures of Europe and America through depiction of American characters who travel to Europe. Some of the important works of this phase are *Roderick Hudson* (1875), *The American* (1877), *The Europeans* (1878) and *Portrait of a Lady* (1881), the last being his crowning achievement of this period.

The second phase of his career saw him turn towards more complex social problems beyond the restricted scope of his earlier phase, and was marked by the disillusionment that

lack of commercial success brought about in him. *The Bostonians* (1886), *The Princess Casamassima* (1886) and *The Tragic Muse* (1890) are significant works from this period when he also tried his hand at writing plays, though with little success.

However, his experience in writing plays gave him a strong foothold in the third phase when his novels grew more and more dialogue oriented. In his highly technical works of this period, such as, *The Awkward Age* (1899), *The Wings of the Dove* (1902), *The Ambassadors* (1903), *The Golden Bowl* (1904), we find him concentrating intensely on particular social or psychological aspects rather than retaining the more spread-out ambits of his earlier novels.

- **Joseph Conrad** : Josef Teodor Konrad Nalecz Korzenioski (1857-1924), later simplified to Joseph Conrad, was a Polish who learnt French in his childhood and English much later in life. He spent his youth working as a sailor, gathering experiences of exotic locations and inscrutable men, all of which provided the raw material for his works. The expatriate sailor-turned-novelist drew vivid pictures of darkly beautiful, yet mysterious and thrilling landscapes which mirrored the darkness, guilt and confusion resident in man. His first two novels *Almayer's Folly* (1895) and *An Outcast of the Islands* (1896), set against the context of Dutch-Malayan history, came at a time when exploration of exotic unknown parts in fiction and non-fiction was taking a hold on the readers' imagination. *The Nigger of the "Narcissus"* (1897) was his next important work which was followed by his greatest shorter novels, *Heart of Darkness* (1899) and *Typhoon* (1902). He continued with themes of betrayal and shame, and their psychological impacts on man through works like *Lord Jim* (1900), *Nostromo* (1904), *The Secret Agent* (1907), *Under Western Eyes* (1911), *Chance* (1913), *Victory* (1915) and *The Shadow Line* (1919), while also experimenting with newer narrative techniques.
- **E.M. Forster** : E.M. Forster (1879-1970) was a member of the Bloomsbury Group, an association of like-minded intellectuals, philosophers, writers and artists of the early twentieth century of which Virginia Woolf was also a part. The group considered itself to be the vanguard of literary, philosophical and cultural sensibility of the day. Forster's novels juxtapose different social and cultural classes to analyse similarities, differences and inherent hypocrisies or prejudices, while exploring the inner lives of characters. *Where Angels Fear to Tread* (1905) and *Room with a View* (1908) draw largely from Forster's experiences of living in Italy. Much like Henry James, Forster continued exploring the "international situation" through *Howard's End*

(1910), which depicts German and English cultural exchange through the story of two families from the two different cultures. His *The Longest Journey* (1907) was largely autobiographical. *A Passage to India* (1924), one of his most successful works, draws from his experiences of visiting India. The novel is exceptional in the sense that it departs from an exoticised portrayal of India, which was common in the works of English writers of the day, and is sympathetic to the Indian point of view as it explores racial tensions and dilemmas against the backdrop of an unjust colonial rule. *Maurice*, originally written in 1913 -14 though published posthumously in 1971, was Forster's ode to homosexual love.

- **Virginia Woolf :** In the true spirit of modernism, Virginia Woolf (1882 -1941) sought to express through her fiction not stories or plots or objective impressions, but rather the subjective experience of the mind of an individual as it concentrates on a particular moment of a particular day, life being a conglomeration of many such moments of epiphany put together. With the feminist movement on the rise in the early twentieth century, Woolf argued for the need of establishing a canon of forgotten or ignored female writers, and centralised the feminine vision in her own works. Her fiction flows with a poetic aesthetic along "stream of consciousness", going back and forth in time and conveying images as it imprints upon the mind.

The Voyage Out (1915) was her first novel. It was followed by *Jacob's Room* (1922). *Mrs Dalloway* (1925), *To the Lighthouse* (1927) and *The Waves* (1931). These works form the core of her life's work and are her seminal contributions to modernism. *Mrs. Dalloway* explores the consciousness of a hostess over a period of seventeen hours in London as she prepares to throw a party later that day - her memory travels back and forth through time, picking up on a point in the present to travel back to a point in the past. Her consciousness runs parallel to that of Septimus Warren Smith, a shell-shocked veteran of the War, though the two never meet. The day concludes with Mrs. Dalloway hearing of Smith's suicide at her party and feeling a kindred soul in him despite never having met him. *To the Lighthouse*, similarly, fixates on two points of times, an evening and a morning set ten years apart, with Mrs Ramsay's character being based on Woolf's own mother. Her experimentation with stream of consciousness found its culmination in *The Waves*, which explores inter-weaving consciousness through individual soliloquies of six characters. *Orlando* (1928) was Woolf's experimentation with androgyny and was inspired by her relationship with Vita Sackville -West. *The Years* (1936) was less experimental in nature, as was her final novel *Between the Acts* (1941), published before her death through suicide in 1941.

- **James Joyce :** James Joyce (1882 -1941), the towering figure of modernism, was born in Dublin, Ireland, and spent his adult life in a self-imposed exile in Trieste, Zurich, Rome and Paris. However, it was in the particularity of Dublin that he continued to see the universality of life and it was Dublin that greatly informed his novelistic vision. Joyce's upbringing in a Roman Catholic financially insecure Irish family led the way to a wandering adulthood and though he returned to Dublin on a few occasions after he left for continental Europe, his fiction lays out the topography of the city with startling accuracy. Joyce found initial recognition from his collection of short stories called *Dubliners* (1914). His first novel *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916) developed from a manuscript he had named *Stephen Hero*. Through the protagonist Stephen Daedalus, who serves as an alter ego for the writer himself and recurs in his next novel as well, Joyce traces his own childhood, youth, relationship with his father and religion, and growth of his artistic self. The entire novel is perceived through the consciousness of Daedalus and experiments with narrative techniques that are more fully explored in his later works.

Ulysses (1922) lies at the heart of Joyce's artistic output and explores a single day, 16th June, 1904, through the consciousnesses of Stephen Dedalus, the young writer-intellectual, Leopold Bloom, an advertising agent of Jewish birth and Molly Bloom, his wife. The novel parallels Homer's epic of the same name - while Leopold Bloom represents the figure of Ulysses, Dedalus represents that of Telemachus and Molly Bloom, Penelope. For Joyce, the Homeric Ulysses stood for a complete man - wise, courageous, adventurous, resourceful, a son, a father, and a husband. The wanderings of the Jewish Bloom and of Joyce himself find echoes in the figure of Ulysses, the symbol for eternal wandering. Joyce makes use of typographical innovations and neologisms to convey the streams of thought of the characters - there are pages which run without punctuations and capitalisations to convey the uninterrupted flow of thoughts.

As difficult a read as *Ulysses* is, his next work *Finnegan's Wake* (1939), is even more so, to the extent that it eludes a coherent plot summary, a fact that marks it as the perfect culmination of the modernist sensibility and approach towards writing fiction. In it, Joyce explores the limits of techniques and narrative modes, throwing it open to multiple, ambiguous interpretations.

- **D.H. Lawrence :** Born in a mining town to a miner father and a forceful educated mother, David Herbert Lawrence (1885 -1930) rose beyond the limitations of his birth to become one of most important writers of the age. Another exponent of modernism to have spent most of life in a self-imposed exile, Lawrence's works

faced censorship and ban at home on charges of obscenity. His works explored neuroses, the subconscious and psychosis, at a time when Freud's psychoanalysis was also gaining ground. His frank portrayal of sexuality, especially women's sexuality, led to him being accused of pornography by many critics of his time. He began his career as a novelist with *The White Peacock* (1911) and *The Trespasser* (1912). His next work, *Sons and Lovers* (1913) was a thinly veiled autobiography that delved into Oedipal strains of his own relationship with his mother, while serving as a "Condition of England" novel with its portrayal of the author's lived experience of growing up in a working-class family of a dreary mining town. He continued with the theme of an apocalyptic chaotic world and eventual individual regeneration through *The Rainbow* (1915) and its sequel, *Women in Love* (1920). The sheer force of his personality continued to stamp his works like *The Lost Girl* (1920), *Aaron's Rod* (1922), *Kangaroo* (1923), *The Boy in the Bush* (1924), *The Plumed Serpent* (1926) and *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1928).

Activities for Learners :

- Try to analyse why so many of the modern novelists chose to live in "self-imposed exiles." What societal constraints do you think they were battling?
- Read the essay "Modern Fiction" by Virginia Woolf. Place the novels we have discussed here in the context of the essay.
- Prepare a list of novelists discussed so far in this Unit. Maintain the chronological order of the appearance of the novelists.
- Prepare a list of the novelists of the first half of the twentieth century not discussed at all in this unit.

3.11.5. Other Novelists

- ❖ **George Orwell** : Socialist by political inclination and patriotically British, George Orwell (1903-1950), was essentially a political writer who sought to transform his political observations into art. His most important fictions *Animal Farm* (1945) and *Nineteen Eighty-four* (1949) are critiques of dictatorial regimes, while his first work, *Burmese Days* (1934) draws from his experiences of working as a police officer in Burma. Some of his other works are *A Clergyman's Daughter* (1935), *Keep the Aspidistra Flying* (1936) and *Coming Up for Air* (1939).

- ❖ William Golding: William Golding's (1911-1993) *The Lord of the Flies* (1954) is his most important work, and it belongs to the late modern period. It uses the adventure story framework of a group of resourceful boys stranded in a deserted island to convey the post-war realisation of how far into evil man is capable of going. Some of his other works are *The Inheritors* (1955), *Pincher Martin* (1956), *Free Fall* (1959), *The Spire* (1964), *The Pyramid* (1967), *Rites of Passage* (1980), *Close Quarters* (1987) and *Fire Down Below* (1989).

3.11.6. Campus Novelists

The 1950s saw the emergence of the trend of campus novels - novels written by writers who had first-hand experiences of working and living in university campuses. These novels often used satire and parody to expose class hierarchies and academic corruption. The protagonists were often bumbling, absurd characters attempting to make their way through the academic world. Mary McCarthy's *The Groves of Academe* (1952), Kingsley Amis' *Lucky Jim* (1954), David Lodge's *Changing Places* (1975) are some examples of this genre.

3.11.7. Angry Young Novelists

The 1950s also saw the emergence of the figure of the Angry Young Man in novels and plays, a representative of the educated young man of lower or working-class origins, of the post-war disillusioned generation suffering from lack of opportunities in an intrinsically classist society. John Wain's *Hurry on Down* (1953), Kingsley Amis' *Lucky Jim* (1954), John Braine's *Room at the Top* (1957) and Alan Sillitoe's *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (1958) are some examples of this genre.

3.11.8. Summing Up

This unit has discussed select novelists of the first half of twentieth century. There were some distinct groups of novelists such as Campus Novelists and Angry Young Novelists, but by far the most notable group was that of the Modernist Novelists. Modernist literature sought to bring about a radical change from the earlier forms - the fiction produced emphasised subjectivism and internal consciousness rather than external plot elements. It perceived the post-war human existence as fragmentary and chaotic, all amounting to nothing. The existential crisis that stared human beings in the face was something to be lamented. When modernism gave way to postmodernism, the latter continued along the same themes, but instead of

lamenting the ruin of mankind and emptiness of existence, it took a rather playful and celebratory attitude towards it.

3.11.9. Comprehension Exercises

Long Answer Type Questions :

1. Discuss the main features of the modernist novel with examples from representative texts.
2. Discuss the influence of James Joyce on the British modernist novels.

Medium Length Questions :

1. Write a short note on the literary style of Virginia Woolf.
2. Discuss briefly how D.H. Lawrence's working-class background shaped his fiction.

Short Answer Questions :

1. Name some of Joseph Conrad's works that draw from his experiences as a sailor.
2. What are campus novels? Give some examples.
3. Who are the Angry Young Novelists?

3.11.10. Suggested Readings

Bradbury, Malcolm. *The Modern British Novel*. Penguin Books, 1994.

Ford, Boris, ed. *The Modern Age. Pelican Guide to English Literature*, vol. 7, Penguin Books Ltd., 1961.

James, William. *The Principles of Psychology*. Vol. 1, Henry Holt and Co., 1891, pp. 224-290.

Samuel C. Chew, Richard D. Altick. *Literary History of England*. A.C. Baugh, ed., vol. 4, Routledge, 1989.

Woolf, Virginia. *The Essays of Virginia Woolf: 1925 -1928*. Andrew McNeillie, ed., vol. 4, Harcourt, Inc. 1994, pp. 157 -164.

Unit 12 □ D.H. Lawrence: Sons and Lovers

Structure :

- 3.12.1. Objectives**
- 3.12.2. Introduction**
- 3.12.3. The Novel in the late 19th and early 20th century: An Overview**
- 3.12.4. D.H Lawrence: His Fictional World**
- 3.12.5. Locating Sons and Lovers in the Lawrence Canon**
- 3.12.6. Characters: A Sneak Peek**
- 3.12.7. Chapter-wise Critical Summary**
- 3.12.8. Analysis of Major Characters**
- 3.12.9. Human Relationships in Sons and Lovers**
- 3.12.10. Symbolism**
- 3.12.11. Classifying Sons and Lovers as a Novel**
- 3.12.12. Summing Up**
- 3.12.13. Comprehension Exercises**
- 3.12.14. Suggested Reading**

3.12.1. Objectives

This Unit will try to introduce you to an important twentieth century novel-D.H. Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers* (1913). It is considered to be a 'modernist' text that focusses on problematic issues such as love and sexuality. It will analyse the theme and issues of the novel, analyse characters, and explore its stylistic aspects. You will have a better understanding of the novel if you go through this unit attentively.

3.12.2. Introduction

Published in 1913, *Sons and Lovers* is D.H. Lawrence's third novel, and one of the landmark novels of the twentieth century. In the forty odd years between the publication of Thomas Hardy's *Far from the Madding Crowd* (1874) and *Sons and Lovers*, the English novel

developed in certain major respects. It would not be enough to only point out that Hardy was a Victorian novelist while Lawrence was modern. While that is true, what we also need to remember is that there are some striking continuities that we may detect between Hardy and Lawrence and again, there are certain aspects in which Lawrence brings something fresh and new to the English novel. Both Hardy and Lawrence are concerned with the 'undefinable', the 'unanalysable' and the 'unresolved'. However, changes in attitudes, in society, in science, in beliefs in these forty years brought about many innovations in the form and content of novels.

Sons and Lovers is an intense and emotionally charged account of the coming of age of the novel's hero Paul Morel, drawing heavily from Lawrence's own experiences. Apart from being a vivid rendering of personal relationships, *Sons and Lovers* is also famous for its depiction of working-class life in the mining town of Bestwood, Nottinghamshire, a thinly disguised portrait of Lawrence's own hometown Eastwood. Like many of Lawrence's other writings, this novel too depicts the abject conditions of the small mines of Nottinghamshire and is informed by Lawrence's denunciation of industrialisation and his nostalgia for an older pre-industrial England. In the following pages, we will try to explore the various facets of Lawrence's first major novel and attempt to arrive at a better understanding of the text in its various aspects as a bildungsroman, a family chronicle, and a psychological examination of love and sexuality.

3.12.3. The Novel in the late 19th and early 20th century: An Overview

As you know, despite the popularity of poetry, it was the novel which was the most dominant form of literary production in the Victorian Age. Novels were the chief source of entertainment for the burgeoning middle class of England. It is interesting to note here that during the Victorian Era, the population of England more than doubled, from 14 million to 32 million.

For this ever growing population, many different varieties of novels were written during the Victorian Age, for instance the novel of manners by William Makepeace Thackeray, the humanitarian and reformist novels of Charles Dickens, novels relating to social problems by Elizabeth Gaskell, romantic and Gothic novels by the Bronte sisters, novels exploring the genre of nonsense by Lewis Carroll, adventure novels by Robert Louis Stevenson, crime novels by Arthur Conan Doyle, the bildungsroman and exotic novels by Rudyard Kipling and Oscar Wilde and so on. A detailed study and analysis of these writers is important to understand the breadth and variety of the Victorian novel but is beyond the scope of this brief account.

While the early and mid-Victorian novels are characterised by a dominant sense of moral and social ethic and an identification of the authors as observers of the particular age to which they belonged, the late nineteenth century is characterised by movements like realism, naturalism and aestheticism. The influence of certain major nineteenth century thinkers like Charles Darwin (1809-1882), Karl Marx (1818- 1883), and Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), as we have seen in the earlier modules, led to sweeping social and intellectual changes and laid the foundation of the modern age. The powerful ideas of these thinkers led to a questioning of several social, economic and religious beliefs that had hitherto been entrenched in the Victorian mindset.

The Victorian era also witnessed some significant improvements in technology. The Industrial Revolution changed in a big way how people lived, worked, and travelled. These improvements in technology provided a number of unprecedented opportunities to the English people but they also led to a major upheaval in terms of how people lived and dealt with the world around them. This change was complicated further by the growth of the working classes. The growth of industrialism led to the creation of spectacular wealth but it also created an unbridgeable schism between the haves and the have-nots. These transitions from a predominantly pastoral lifestyle to one dominated by the urban milieu of the city, coupled with the changing dynamics between different social classes became one of the chief concerns of many writers including Lawrence.

With regard to the novel, the last decades of the nineteenth century are dominated by Thomas Hardy. Hardy was a Victorian realist whose important novels include *Far from the Madding Crowd* (1874), *The Return of the Native* (1878), *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886), *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1891) and *Jude the Obscure* (1895/6). All his novels were set in the fictional region of Wessex and explored the themes of fate and suffering. He was a trenchant critic of many Victorian social institutions. In one of Hardy's most controversial novels, *Jude the Obscure*, the author provides a dramatic depiction of the stranglehold that the outdated divorce laws can have on people. In the same novel Hardy also criticizes the exclusivity of university admission norms and their discrimination on the basis of class.

With relation to Lawrence, the important point to remember about Hardy is the fact that he is often considered to be Lawrence's spiritual father and many of the tendencies he explored in his novels find full maturation in Lawrence's works.

3.12.4. D.H Lawrence : His Fictional World

Novelist, poet, playwright, critic, painter and travel writer, David Herbert Lawrence rose from very humble origins to become one of the most influential as well as controversial literary

figures of the twentieth century. Lawrence was born on September 11, 1885, in the small mining town of Eastwood in Nottinghamshire, the fourth child of his parents. His father, Arthur John Lawrence, worked as a coal miner in one of the many small mines that dotted the Nottinghamshire landscape, whereas his mother, Lydia Lawrence née Beardsall belonged originally to the middle class and was a former school teacher. When her fortunes fell after her marriage, she began supplementing her husband's income by working from home as a lace maker. It is from his intellectual and ambitious mother that Lawrence inherited his love for books as well as his desire to rise above his working-class origins. As a child, he was a shy, reserved boy, a misfit among his social peers, but was academically good enough to be first boy in the history of Eastwood to win a County Council scholarship to the Nottingham High School. Thus we may bear in mind, as Raymond Williams points out that the important thing to remember about Lawrence's social responses to industrialization was that he was not merely a witness to it as a child, but someone who was caught in its processes, and it was no small miracle that he was able to break out of its shackles and fashion a literary career for himself, though it might have seemed obvious enough in retrospect.

Lawrence began working as a clerk for a surgical goods manufacturer in 1901, but quit soon after, following his brother Ernest's sudden death due to a skin disease. This was followed by his stint as a student teacher at the British School in Eastwood. It was here that he met a young woman named Jessie Chambers, a farmer's daughter who became his close friend and intellectual companion, and who was controversially portrayed as Miriam in *Sons and Lovers*. Jesse encouraged Lawrence to pursue writing seriously and submitted a collection of his poems to Ford Madox Ford, who subsequently published them in the *English Review* in 1909. In 1911, Lawrence's first novel *The White Peacock* was published, a year after his mother's death. By this time Lawrence had passed out from Nottingham University College and was writing frequently. In 1912 he met Frieda von Richthofen, the wife of his professor Ernest Weekly, and fell in love with her. Frieda left her husband and three children, and they eloped to Bavaria and then to Austria, Germany and Italy. They were married on July 13, 1914.

He published his first play, *The Daughter-in-Law*, in 1912. A year later, he published his first volume of poetry: *Love Poems and Others*. In 1912, Lawrence's second novel *The Trespassers* also appeared, and then in 1913, his first major novel, the heavily autobiographical *Sons and Lovers* was published. Lawrence was very confident about this third novel of his, about which he asserted in a letter to his publisher Edward Garnett, "It is a great tragedy, and I tell you I've written a great book. It's the tragedy of thousands of young men in England

Read my novel -it's a great novel. If you can't see the development - which is slow like growth - I can." (Letters I, pp.476-77).

Lawrence continued to write furiously, and in 1914 was published his critically acclaimed collection of short stories entitled *The Prussian Officer*. His fourth novel, *The Rainbow* was published in 1915, describing the experiences of two sisters growing up in the north of England. The character of Ursula Brangwen was partly based on Lawrence's teaching colleague in Nottingham, Louis Burrows, with whom he was briefly engaged. The novel explicitly dealt with sex and was banned on the charges of alleged obscenity. These were trying times for Lawrence as about a thousand copies of his novel were burnt on a magisterial order and his paintings were also confiscated from an art gallery. This was also a time when Lawrence and his wife were unable to obtain passports as Frieda was not only German but also a cousin of the famous "Red Baron" Von Richthofen, and was thus viewed with great suspicion. They were suspected to be spies for the Germans and were expelled from Cornwall in 1917. The Lawrences were not permitted to emigrate until 1919, after which they travelled many parts of the world. Still, in spite of such hardships, Lawrence published four volumes of poetry during this period -*Amores* (1916), *Look! We Have Come Through!* (1919), *New Poems* (1918) and *Bay: A Book of Poems* (1919).

In 1920 was published his next major novel, *Women in Love*, considered to be a sequel to *The Rainbow*. This novel additionally grapples with the theme of homosexuality too, and it is around this time that Lawrence is alleged to have had a homosexual liaison with a Cornish farmer named William Henry Hocking. In a letter written during 1913, he writes, "I should like to know why nearly every man that approaches greatness tends to homosexuality, whether he admits it or not ..." He goes on to recollect, "I believe the nearest I've come to perfect love was with a young coal-miner when I was about 16."

In the 1920s Lawrence and Frieda travelled extensively around Europe, New Mexico, and Mexico in a period he later described as his "savage pilgrimage". He continued writing prolifically, but it is only with *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1928), his last major novel, again heavily censored and censured for its erotic subject matter, that he approached the fame and reputation of his acclaimed earlier novels.

Following various bouts of illnesses including malaria, Lawrence died of tuberculosis on March 2, 1930, in Vence, France.

3.12.5. Locating *Sons and Lovers* in the Lawrence canon

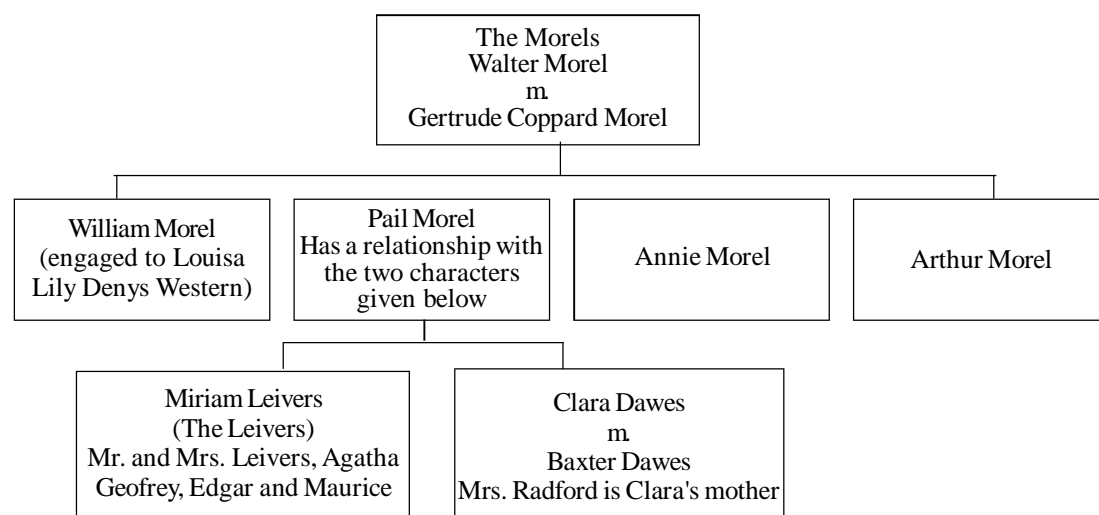
Sons and Lovers (1913) is Lawrence's first major novel. Initially titled *Paul Morel*, it is a deeply autobiographical novel that traces the unhappy marriage of Paul's parents, the "warm

and hearty, but unstable" Walter Morel, and the "clever, ironical, delicately moulded" Gertrude. (*Letters* I.190), and the effect it has on the children, particularly on Paul. As he grows up, he is inevitably and unconsciously drawn towards his mother and, simultaneously, develops a hatred for his father. This close bond with his mother gradually assumes Oedipal overtones and stunts Paul's emotional response towards other women in his life, thus leaving him unable to have fulfilling relationships with them, though he does attempt to break free from his mother's emotional prison.

The actual process of writing the novel proved to be difficult and full of interruptions for Lawrence. He began working on it in September 1910, coinciding with the closing stages of his mother's illness, only to discontinue it. In March 1911, still grieving his mother's death, he resumed a new draft which was also abandoned. He tried yet again in November 1911, and it was almost a year later, in late autumn 1912, when, after having met Frieda, and after extensive revisions suggested by his editor Edward Garnett, he finally finished the novel and changed the title from *Paul Morel* to the more meaningful *Sons and Lovers*. The deeply personal and disturbing nature of his work was evident to him and he wrote to Garnett, "It's the tragedy of thousands of young men in England," (*Letters* i. 476).

Sons and Lovers marks a culmination of Lawrence's early phase as a novelist and along with *The Rainbow* (1915) and *Women in Love* (1921), it remains one of his mostly highly regarded works. In terms of his style, this is a novel where we find a coalescing of the realistic narration of the traditional novel with the nuanced approach of the modern psychological novel.

3.12.6 Characters : A Sneak Peek



3.12.7. Chapter-wise Critical Summary

Book -I: Chapter - 1: The Early Married Life of the Morels

Chapter-1 introduces the Morels - Walter and Gertrude, and their two children William and Anne. Gertrude is pregnant with her third child. We also get a glimpse of an unhappy marriage. Gertrude had married beneath her, and the stark differences between her and Walter are now beginning to crack open their relationship. Walter is spirited and physical, while Gertrude reserved, puritanical and intellectual. This chapter also gives the book its sense of place - Bestwood, a little Nottinghamshire town that is a thinly veiled representation of Lawrence's own native village of Eastwood. The opening lines - "'The Bottoms' succeeded to 'Hell Row'" - create the ambience of a domestic and pre-industrial mining town. The strong maternal bond that William has with Gertrude is highlighted when he is proud and happy that his attractive mother accompanies him to the wakes, but when she leaves, though he still stays back, somehow he doesn't feel as happy anymore. Later he brings two egg cups that he won as prize, as a gift for her. The chapter ends with a violent quarrel between the Morels that crystallizes their mutual hatred.

Chapter - 2: The Birth of Paul, and Another Battle

There is a two-directional contradictory movement in this chapter. The marital discord between the Morels reaches a crescendo, with growing quarrels between them on the one hand, and on the other hand, this chapter depicts the birth of the Morels' third child Paul, who will later of course, become the protagonist of the story. Things come to such a pass between Gertrude and Walter Morel that they both develop a hard bitterness against each other and their relationship reaches a point of no-return. While Walter is clearly the aggressor, and the one who causes so much trouble for his wife, in terms of their spirit however, Gertrude emerges far stronger than her husband. Once when she had left home with her children in exasperation as Walter had kicked William, Gertrude looks at Paul's innocent baby face and realizes, "in some far inner lace of her soul, that she and her husband were guilty." And so, she pledged "With all her force, with all her soul she would make up to it for having brought it into the world unloved."

Chapter - 3: The Casting Off of Morel - The Taking on of William

Morel suffers from an inflammation of his brain due to which he is incapacitated, and for a while, he is unable to go to the mines. During this financially strained period of his convalescence however, Mrs. Morel slowly begins to realise that she can fend for herself even when Morel, the breadwinner of the house, is bedridden and incapacitated. This leads to a subtle and

gradual shift in their equation. Thus while the frequent and violent quarrels between them abates substantially, it also means that Gertrude begins to love Walter lesser and lesser. This growing distance between them is coterminous with their first born William growing up into a competent and strong young lad. There is a crucial occasion in the chapter when Gertrude puts her foot down and does not let Walter thrash William on the basis of complaints from a neighbour. This casting off of Walter Morel both in the sense that she no longer felt dependent on him and also her growing fondness and preference for William to fill up her life provides the title of this chapter. But crucially the chapter ends with William having got a job in London and his impending departure from Bestwood. Mrs. Morel's intense and almost passionate dependence upon her elder son foreshadows her relationship with Paul later in the novel. Also, their fourth child Arthur is born.

Chapter - 4: The Young Life of Paul

The heavily autobiographical portrait of Paul Morel emerges in this chapter. It is a picture of an overly sensitive, artistic boy who has trouble fitting into the coarse environment of Bestwood. He shares an intense bond with his mother, and the oedipal overtones of this relationship are very clearly delineated from this chapter onwards. He is initially dependent upon his sister Annie, which in a way, foreshadows his dependence upon his mother later in the novel. In fact, this childhood portrait of Paul is significant in its anticipation of many of his traits that will become apparent later on. In a curious incident, Paul accidentally breaks Annie's doll. Instead of being apologetic to Annie, Paul becomes strangely destructive and proposes to burn the broken doll as a sacrificial rite. In a way, Paul will continue to hate those whom he hurts. There is an instance in this chapter where Paul goes to collect his father's salary from the mining company's office but recoils from the masculine physicality of the interaction there. With the money coming in from William at least in these early days, the Morels move out from the Bottoms to a pleasanter house on top of a hill. William arrives from London, laden with gifts, but the domestic harmony is short lived. Quarrels between the Morels continue and at one point William threatens to beat up his father if he touches his mother again. Though this flashpoint is diffused by Gertrude, yet Lawrence succeeds in showing different dimensions of the same event, in that she may seek to control this father-son rivalry for some kind of emotional fulfilment or compensation. Walter Morel realises his increasing isolation within the family but he reacts perversely by becoming even more coarse than before.

Chapter - 5: Paul Launches into Life

Walter Morel injures his foot and is hospitalized. With him away, the house seems to be a haven of exceptional peace and harmony for Gertrude and the children. Presently, Paul is

fourteen and his mother asks him to search for a job in the advertisements in the local newspapers. Paul and his mother go to Nottingham for a job interview at the office of a surgical appliances manufacturer. Throughout this chapter, there are references to Paul's extreme shyness and oversensitivity. The journey to Nottingham with his mother is satisfying and happy, though there are minor problems. Lawrence hints at the amorous overtones in their relationship. As Mrs. Morel takes money out of her purse, Paul watches her carefully, and the narrator describes how "his heart contracted with pain of love for her". Again, on the train, "he was sensible all the time of having her opposite him. Suddenly their eyes met, and she smiled to him - a rare, intimate smile, beautiful with brightness and love. Then each looked out of the window." And again, even more directly, they "walked down Station Street, feeling the excitement of lovers having an adventure together." Meanwhile, Paul gets the job and begins working as a "Spiral" - someone who was required to translate French letters of orders and requisitions into English. Though he is very shy to begin with, after a while, he gets along fine and enjoys himself at work, though the long hours and unsanitary working conditions make him sick and pale.

Chapter - 6: Death in the Family

William brings Lily Weston home but it is an unsuccessful trip, as nobody really likes her, nor does she feel comfortable with them. Due to the presence of Lily, there is a change in the equation between William and Mrs. Morel - the latter now relying more on Paul, and feeling more and more distant from William. She seems unable to forgive or accept the presence of another girl in his life. Later, Mrs. Morel proposes to visit Wiley Farm, where the Leivers Live Like Paul, Miriam too is shy and sensitive, but she will bring out a complicated response in Paul later on. William and Lily come back for a second trip to Bestwood, and though William still plans to marry her, there are cracks in their relationship. William prophetically predicts that if he were to die, she would not waste too much time remembering him. Later in October, when William comes home again, alone, his health begins to deteriorate. Within days of his return to London, a telegram reaches Mrs. Morel informing her of William's failing health. He dies suddenly of pneumonia and a skin infection called erysipelas. For the first few months, Mrs. Morel is in a state of shock after such a sudden bereavement and seems to withdraw from life, but when Paul too, falls ill with pneumonia, she is jolted back to life. She nurses him back to health and from now onwards, her life is rooted in Paul.

Book -II: Chapter - 7: Lad-And-Girl Love

This chapter also marks the beginning of Book - II of the novel, a phase where Paul will come into his own and rightfully become the 'hero' of the book. With William's death he becomes

the centre of Mrs. Morel's life. At the same time, he becomes closer to Miriam and her mother, Mrs. Leivers. The resultant tension in Paul's characterization where he is pulled in different directions becomes the central focus of the novel, and it is for us to witness what choices Paul makes from here on. Miriam's sexual inhibitions are also explored in this chapter repeatedly. Once when she takes Paul to the family swing, though he soars in freedom, she finds it impossible to let go and surrender herself into Paul's hands. Although Paul will feel inspired by Miriam and also attracted by her, it is this inhibition which will mar their relationship in course of time. Her natural intensity towards most things around her will stifle Paul, and also scare Mrs. Morel that if she does not stop Miriam's growing closeness with Paul, she will not only "suck a man's soul out till he has none of his own left" but also, more importantly, usurp her position in his life. During their trip to the Mablethorpe Cottage by the seaside, both Gertrude and Annie scorn her. On their walk back to the cottage, Paul is filled with desire for Miriam, but he senses something in her that prevents him from kissing her or expressing his feelings for her in any way. Thus, while he feels intensely attracted to her, he is also repelled by her and craves to go back to his jolly family that brings out his normal happy self.

Chapter - 8: Strife in Love

Clara Dawes is introduced briefly in this chapter. Paul runs into her and Miriam and is immediately struck by her beauty. Miriam notices his attraction for the older and stronger Clara, but later, Paul evasively criticizes her for being badly dressed. As the title of the chapter suggests, the tension in the Paul-Miriam relationship heightens in this chapter. They are both drawn to each other but are held back by a strange and strong kind of inhibition and are unable to be physically intimate. In Paul's case it is the fierce jealousy and possessiveness of his mother that renders him unable to break free from it. On the evening when Miriam comes to visit him, though Paul forgets the bread in the oven because he was busy flirting with the earthy Beatrice, yet it is Miriam who is blamed for his carelessness by Mrs. Morel. In one of the most overtly oedipal scenes of the novel, Mrs. Morel accuses him of being obsessed with Miriam. Paul pleads by claiming that he only likes to talk to Miriam but does not love her. They embrace closely and Paul passionately kisses Mrs. Morel on her throat, and she kisses him back. Walter Morel enters and sneers at their closeness, and father and son are about to come to blows, which is prevented only by Mrs. Morel's suspiciously timely fit of fainting. This chapter also shows Lawrence's warmth and respect towards the common miners and their activities in the reckoning scene, where Walter Morel and the other miners of his stall divide the money among themselves with utmost honesty despite being poor and needy.

Chapter - 9: Defeat of Miriam

Yet another sequence of events resulting in the same unconsummated passion between Paul and Miriam is recorded in this chapter. Lawrence is possibly trying to show how, whatever might be the reasons, this relationship is doomed. Paul torments Miriam by telling her that they should not meet too often but then the very next week he proposes marriage to Miriam. But she refuses, sensing that he is doing so only under duress, because he is concerned that it may not be socially acceptable to be spending so much time together without marrying each other. This chapter marks the beginning of the end of the Paul-Miriam relationship. In an effort to test Paul, Miriam tempts him by getting him to meet the attractive Clara, because she believes at heart, that Paul's need for her is greater than such temptations. But their relationship flourishes before her very eyes as they meet frequently at Willey Farm, after Clara's initial haughtiness and Paul's resultant discomfort. After this Paul withdraws from Miriam even more. This chapter also presents Annie's marriage with Leonard and Arthur's courtship of Beatrice Wyld. After Annie's marriage, the Morels are very lonely, leading Paul to feel even more responsible for his mother's happiness and emotional well being.

Chapter - 10: Clara

Paul wins the first prize in the prestigious winter exhibition held at the Nottingham Castle. Mrs. Morel is overjoyed and deems it to be as much her success as Paul's. Mr. Morel too is happy and awed by Paul's success but his feeling of being an outsider in his own family will be compounded after this event, as Mrs. Morel will pull out all stops to push Paul upwards into the middle class. Paul however idealistically believes that it is the working class which has the vital life force and human warmth. Meanwhile Arthur marries Beatrice Wyld after she becomes pregnant. One day Paul visits Clara at her mother, Mrs. Radford's house, and is shocked to learn that Clara is a menial lace weaver. He encounters Clara's vulnerability for the first time and that opens another dimension in their relationship. He insists on helping her get her supervisory job back at Jordan's. But though she becomes closer to Paul, the other shop girls resent her and cut her out of their plans of gifting Paul a box of paints. Clara feels hurt that she did not even know that it was Paul's birthday and later sends him a book of poetry. Paul is deeply moved by the gift, more so because he knows she has gone beyond her means to buy it. Later on one of their walks, Clara confides in Paul about the story of her marriage but Paul sympathises with her husband Baxter as much as he does with Clara. Clara too, on the other hand, tells Paul that Miriam desires him but it is he who never approached her directly for a relationship, and kept her in a limbo of platonic idealism.

Chapter - 11: The Test on Miriam

This is a chapter that brings the sexual incompatibility of Paul and Miriam to the fore. With the advent of spring, Paul is back to Miriam. On a stormy evening, when Paul and Miriam are together, he loves the dark as he feels the individual is dissolved into an eternal being. But Miriam hates it and fears that the damp and cold will make Paul feel sick. Later when they are alone together in Miriam's grandmother's cottage, Paul is transfixed by Miriam's beauty. They play man and wife with gay abandon, but on each occasion of their love making, Miriam feels as if she should offer her body as an act of sacrifice or duty to Paul because he wants her, and not because she feels any desire herself. Just like Paul, she too is deeply affected by her mother and is reacting as a result of her sexually repressive indoctrination. After this, though Paul feels he should be loyal to Miriam, and that he belongs to her in some way, he sees her less frequently. In a significant and symbolic moment, Paul goes out into the garden and is intoxicated by the smell of the white lilies but he is somehow unable to touch them, analogous to his relationship with Miriam. But he plucks one of the purple irises without much thought and promptly returns indoors and announces to his mother that he is leaving Miriam. They exchange bitter words between them, each feeling utterly let down by the turn of events.

Chapter - 12: Passion

Financially and artistically, Paul is prospering. Emotionally, after leaving Miriam, he goes straight to Clara. Once they go on an outing to the river Trent. Though the narrator does not explicitly describe it, they make love, signaled by the fact that Clara's carnation corsage is crushed. However, despite his relationship with Clara, he still visits Willey Farm, as he feels himself to be a part of their family. Very insensitively, Paul discusses his affair with Miriam without caring how she might be feeling after having an affair with him so recently. They discuss various relationships

- Paul believes that unlike Baxter Dawes, he knows how to awaken passion in Clara. When Miriam tries to reason that they may be incompatible just as his own parents were, Paul again flares up and says that even if for a short while, there was passion in his parents' marriage. Later, Clara comes to visit the Morels. Strangely, Mrs. Morel is cordial with Clara, possibly because she does not mind allowing her son's physical needs as long as she controls him emotionally. Suddenly, Miriam also drops in at the Morels'. Both Mrs. Morel and Clara are critical of her, but Paul guiltily tries to be nice to her. A few days after this incident, Paul and Clara are late in returning from the theatre and decide to spend that night at Mrs. Radford's place where Paul watches a naked Clara and shares intense moments of intimacy with her.

Chapter - 13: Baxter Dawes

Paul runs into Baxter Dawes in a pub and the two almost come to blows. The simmering tension continues at work too, where Baxter ends up assaulting Mr. Jordan, who was trying to save Paul. But when Paul is called as a witness in court, he upsets Mr. Jordan by saying that his rivalry with Baxter is due to Clara. After being initially upset with him, Clara falls even more strongly in love with Paul. But Paul now begins to drift apart from Clara, telling his mother that all women were out to claim his soul. While Clara looks for permanence and commitment in the relationship, Paul's needs are more specifically sexual. Paul encounters Baxter twice more in the chapter and during the latter he is knocked unconscious by Baxter. When Paul regains consciousness, ironically he feels a strange kind of wonderment, almost akin to his feelings after lovemaking. While Paul convalesces with a broken shoulder, both Miriam and Clara visit him, but he seems indifferent to both. After a few days, Paul goes on a vacation with his friend, but when he returns he finds his mother seriously ill with a possibly cancerous tumour in her stomach. Paul is terrified about what the future holds for him.

Chapter - 14: The Release

Paul visits Baxter in a hospital in Sheffield where he is recovering from typhoid. Despite their bitter and violent past, the two men share a deep unspoken bond. While Baxter sympathizes with Paul about his mother's illness, Paul can feel Baxter's sorrow on losing Clara. Later when Paul tells Clara about the ailing Baxter, she is ridden by guilt and accuses him of never having loved her as much as Baxter did. Meanwhile Mrs. Morel is dying a slow painful death with stomach cancer, though she is contented with Paul's success. Paul though, is deeply distressed to witness his mother's terminal illness from such close quarters. There is a fluidity in the equations shared by the main characters at this point. While Mrs. Morel lay dying, Baxter was recuperating. Clara was getting closer to her former husband and moving away from Paul, and finally, Baxter and Paul were becoming close friends. As the months pass, Mrs. Morel's condition deteriorates rapidly until she only seems to be a pair of large eyes. Unable to bear witnessing her pain anymore, Paul, along with Annie, crush all the morphine pills at home and give it to Mrs. Morel. With Mrs. Morel's death, not only is the anchor of Paul's life gone but also his strongest controlling factor. Paul finally breaks up with Clara, who vows to build a better future with Baxter.

Chapter - 15: Derelict

After his mother's death and his break with Clara, there is nothing really left for Paul at home, or at work. The Morel household breaks up, Walter Morel leaves to stay with a friendly

family in Bestwood while Paul drifts to Nottingham and takes lodgings there. A depressed Paul analyses that only art or marriage and children can bring him back to a certain degree of normalcy. But he is unable to paint anymore and wonders if there is anyone who would be right for him as a partner in marriage. One day he meets Miriam at church. Though they are old friends and Miriam had been a spiritual anchor for him in the past, he knows now that they are not suited for each other. Miriam still believes that Paul belongs to her and will eventually come back to her but Paul goes away. As Paul walks down in the dark night he is aware of his existence as a miniscule part of a much larger whole. While his tiny presence may not matter much, yet he does exist. Paul remembers his mother and calls out for her but he knows that she has diffused into nothingness now. In an ambiguous movement, Paul quickly turns away from the darkness and heads towards the "faintly humming, glowing town, quickly". This ending may be read either as one of hope, or of despair, depending upon our assessment of Paul's character.

5.15.8. Analysis of Major Characters

Paul Morel

Paul is the third of the Morel children in *Sons and Lovers*, and an autobiographical portrait of Lawrence himself. In many ways the chief focus of the novel is the coming of age of Paul Morel, and it has often been alternately described as a bildungsroman or a kunstlerroman. As a child the sensitive Paul has difficulty assimilating with the rough and tumble of the masculine world of the Bestwood collieries. At home, he is deeply affected by the marital discord between his parents. This leads him to form a strange mixture of sympathy, love and dependence upon his stern, disciplinarian mother Gertrude Morel. But this bond is so very overpowering a presence in Paul's life that he is unable to sustain independent relationships with other women towards whom he is attracted. It is through Paul that his mother seeks to realise her dream of moving socially upward. Although he begins as a shy child, he gains social confidence as he grows up, particularly after he begins working in an office. This new found confidence, coupled with his growing interest in art, leads him on for intellectual stimulation and company to Miriam Leivers and her mother Mrs. Leivers. But his mother strongly disapproves of his relationship with Miriam, whom she feels threatened by. Faced with a choice, Paul unceremoniously rejects the emotional and spiritual Miriam and falls back upon his mother. With Clara too, Paul shares a predominantly sexual bond. The oedipal theme of the novel is one of its central strands, and one that defines Paul's character. He feels for his mother as one might feel for a lover, and this streak in him incapacitates him from forging fresh linkages. His

relationship with his father is fraught with bitterness and hatred. Paul squarely blames him for his mother's misery, and even implores her on occasion not to share the same bed with him. It is only after his mother's death that he finds himself bereft of her anchoring presence in his life. Whether he chooses to drown in his sorrow for his mother or whether he moves on to explore a new life has been left open to interpretation.

Gertrude Morel

Married to Walter Morel, Gertrude Morel is the mother of the five Morel children. She is intensely attracted to Walter in her youth and marries him for passion. But within months of her marriage, she is contemptuously informed by Walter's mother that he has lied to her and he neither owns the house they live in, nor makes as much money as he has given her to believe. The marriage soon spirals downwards into a mess and Walter turns into an abusive alcoholic. Things come to a pass when in a fit of rage, Walter throws a heavy wooden drawer at his wife which causes a deep gash in her forehead. He immediately sobers and tries to make amends but it is too late by then. Gertrude walks out of her home and though she has no option but to come back the next morning, the night spent outside her home has been epiphanic in that she realises that she should live for her children. Looking at the infant Paul, she realises that it is her duty to look after him and care for him even if she has grave differences with her husband. After this Gertrude gradually and irretrievably withdraws from her husband and devotes all her energies to the upbringing of her children, particularly her two sons William and Paul. She pins all her hopes initially on William, who grows up to be a strapping, handsome young man with all the social vitality and love for dancing of his father. But when he moves away to London, marries and then shockingly dies, Mrs. Morel slowly turns all her energies and affections to Paul. She lives her dreams through Paul and there are several instances throughout the novel that she treats him like a lover. So when he is attracted to Miriam, Mrs. Morel strongly disapproves. Lawrence has interestingly chosen the name Gertrude as it echoes the name of Hamlet's mother, thus once again, suggesting the same erotic overtones as existed between Hamlet and his mother.

Walter Morel

Walter Morel comes across as a strong but contradictory character who is alternately brutal and tender with his family. Lawrence's description of the young Walter Morel is of an instinctual and unrestrained handsome man, to whom the reserved Gertrude is irresistibly attracted. Gertrude describes him as a man whose "flame of life" "flowed from off his flesh like the flame from a candle". This is the Walter Morel who, as a sensuous young

man, is ready and so pleasant with everybody. But as the marriage becomes more embittered, Walter turns increasingly brutal and anti social, resorting to violence, abuse and alcoholism. Consequently, his sons, particularly Paul, is wary and resentful of him and treats him as an outsider. There are instances of Morel's tenderness towards his family as he potters around the house doing odd jobs. During such times, his children gather around him warmly and these are occasional instances of domestic harmony that the novel is peppered with. One of the keys to Morel's character is his attitude towards authority, which he found hateful. Thus whenever Morel is left unfettered, it is his natural tender self that is seen. On the other hand, whenever he feels compelled by any kind of authoritarian or controlling figure, he explodes into bitterness and violence. Many of his arguments with Gertrude also take this trajectory. Thus, Lawrence's attitude towards Walter Morel's character is ambiguous. While the narrative makes it quite clear that Walter Morel is extremely abusive and brutal, yet it also suggests that there are redeeming shades to his nature, and that his violence often stems from his inability to handle dominating behaviour rather than any innate cruelty.

William Morel

William, the eldest of the Morels, is Mrs. Morel's first son and lover. As William grows up, Gertrude first pins all her hopes on him. Strikingly similar to his father, William is handsome, athletic, hardworking and social. He works initially as a clerk in the Bestwood Co-operative Society office, but later moves to Nottingham, and then to London, with a lucrative job at a lawyer's office. In London, William gets engaged to the pretty but shallow Lily. Though he soon realizes his folly, yet he feels obliged to marry her as he is obligated to honour his commitment. This trait in William sets him as a foil to Paul, who will prove himself to be a non conformist, unaffected by social conventions. At such a juncture of William's life, he suddenly falls ill, and mysteriously dies of pneumonia and the rare disease erysipelas. It is under such circumstances that a shocked and bereaved Mrs. Morel turns all her attention towards her second son Paul, who now takes William's position in her life.

Miriam Leivers

In a certain sense, *Sons and Lovers* may be said to be an exploration of Paul Morel's relationship with three women who play pivotal roles in his life. The first of these women is of course Gertrude Morel, Paul's mother. The second woman whom Paul encounters and who has a lasting influence on his life is Miriam Leivers. Miriam is the first young woman Paul is attracted to. She is a shy, sensitive and romantic girl, who lives in the

neighbouring Wiley Farm. She is attracted by Paul's intellectual and his artistic talent, which she steadfastly encourages. Paul too feels inspired by Miriam's interest in his art and it leads him to be more confident about his abilities. She is also the first person who causes Paul to move away from his mother. This expectedly causes a great deal of resentment in Gertrude Morel, who feels challenged in her emotional control over Paul, for which she never forgives Miriam. There are obvious repercussions on the Paul-Miriam relationship. Mrs. Morel is openly jealous of Miriam and satirically observes that Miriam seems to want to absorb all of Paul for herself and finds it abnormal. Paul too, almost reflecting his mother's constant resentment of Miriam, feels stifled by her intense spirituality and her emotional over-dependence on him. After being interminably confused about Miriam eventually Paul rejects her with a cruelly worded letter where he describes her as a mystic nun, whom he is spiritually aligned to, but with whom he cannot ever be capable of physical intimacy.

Clara Dawes

Towards the close of the Miriam episode, Paul begins to turn towards Clara Dawes. This coincides with Mrs. Morel's realisation after Paul's rift with Miriam that it will not be possible for her to hold on to her son's affections exclusively. Clara, Baxter Dawes's estranged wife and a member of the Suffragette movement, she is Lawrence's portrayal of the New Woman. Frankly sensual, forthright and a woman of this world, Clara is diametrically opposed to Miriam. It is due to Clara's influence that Paul is able to shake off his own physical awkwardness. But even with her, Paul is unable to give himself completely, and he confesses as much to his mother when he says that he would never be able to do so completely as long as she was alive. When his mother dies, he realises that has never learnt to live without her, and so, in a sense, he has never learnt to live. The relationship with Clara too inevitably ends. As the feminist critic Kate Millet has pointed out, Lawrence seems to use the women in this novel as instruments to show Paul's growth as a character, and he seems to discard them arbitrarily. If Miriam helped Paul delve into his spiritual and artistic capabilities, Clara freed him from his physical and sexual hesitation. But having served this purpose, Paul seems unable to forge a full-fledged relationship with her, or with any other woman. In the end, unable to find the commitment she desires from Paul, Clara goes back to her husband, Baxter, with whom she pledges to build a strong relationship.

Annie Morel

Paul's older sister. When their mother lies dying toward the end of the novel, she and Paul decide to give her an overdose of morphine.

Arthur Morel

Paul's younger brother and the youngest of the Morel sons. He is handsome but immature. He recklessly joins the army only to leave it soon.

Louisa Lily Denys Western

Lily is the vain and materialistic girlfriend of William Morel. She comes to visit the Morels and stays with them for a while, but her arrogance puts William off. After his death, she soon forgets about him and moves on with her life.

3.12.9. Human Relationships in Sons and Lovers

Like all of Lawrence's other novels, *Sons and Lovers* too, is essentially a novel of human relationships. From the unhappy marriage of the Morels to the oedipal overtones of the Paul-Gertrude relationship and Paul's resultant inability to successfully handle relationships with other women in his life, the central focus of the novel rests in the minute explication of these personal relationships among its characters. In order to understand the dynamics of the various human relationships that are portrayed in the novel, you must keep in mind some of Lawrence's basic ideas about relationships. For Lawrence a new form of human consciousness could only be achieved on the basis of authentic human relationships. To that end, he had radically different views from the conventional mores of his times. He was a strident critic of traditional Victorian moral and ethical values

Lawrence's depiction of relationships is informed by his understanding of sexuality, religion and philosophy. Drawing his beliefs from his readings of Schopenhauer, William James, Friedrich Nietzsche, Charles Darwin, Herbert Spencer and Ernst Haeckel, Lawrence saw a fundamental duality between flesh and spirit, and he believed that human relationships are hampered by social and religious strictures. In 1915, Lawrence published a volume of six essays entitled *The Crown*, that encapsulated his philosophical ideas about human nature and relationships. For Lawrence human life is split between a conscious rational essence and an unconscious, biological (natural) existence. Lawrence placed his trust on instinct as the fundamental governing principle of all human relationships and emphasized on the importance of sexual relationship as an important means towards an authentic union between man and woman. It is through a fulfilling sexual relationship, according to Lawrence, that man may attain a sense of human dignity. Thus a fulfilling physical relationship can lead to a sense of self-actualisation and act as a solution against the dehumanising and impersonal modern civilization.

In *Sons and Lovers*, Lawrence not only tackles a Freudian oedipal relationship between Paul and his mother, he also portrays Paul's relationships with Miriam and Clara, on the corresponding planes of spirit and flesh. In his frank treatment of sexuality in man-woman relationships, he was undoubtedly influenced by Thomas Hardy, who broke new ground in Victorian fiction with his articulation of sexuality and the unconscious. While Hardy still employed indirect and veiled narrative strategies, Lawrence took this legacy forward and was much more forthright and direct in his depiction of sexual relationships in many of his novels, including *Sons and Lovers*. In doing so, Lawrence rejected the doctrines of the traditional Christian religion and may be said to be one of the precursors to the sexual revolution of the twentieth century.

3.12.10. *Symbolism in Sons and Lovers*

A symbol may be defined as a literary device that contains several layers of meaning, often concealed at first sight, and is representative of several other aspects, concepts or traits than those that are visible in the literal translation alone. Symbol is using an object or action that means something more than its literal meaning. As a novelist, Lawrence is known for his deft handling of symbols that imbue his stories with a more complex and deeper meaning, as we may note in this novel too.

In the first chapter, when William proudly gifts his mother the two blue egg cups that he has won in the fair, it is a symbol of his reverential love for his mother and his anxious need to please her. Mrs. Morel is indeed very happy with the delicate egg cups. This is followed soon after by a drunken Walter Morel coming home with a gingerbread for his wife, but it of course leaves her unaffected, thus depicting Morel's inadequacy in pleasing his wife.

Once the Morels move to Scargill Street, the ash-tree beside their house stands for the sinister and dark aspects of life. It is symbolic of the dark, mysterious forces of nature which are the foreboders of tragedy in human-life. It is symbolic of the disharmony that exists between the husband and wife in the Morel family. Although Mrs. Morel is very fond of the ash tree, the children are terrified of it. The persistent bickering of the parents becomes a terror for the children, who lying awake upstairs are unable to coherently apprehend as to what would happen ultimately. The tree becomes a symbol of the inner terror of children who strike and moan inwardly. It also prophesies the future doom which is to beset the Morel family.

The Swing at Willey Farm is symbolic of the vacillating relationship between Paul and Miriam. The forward and backward movement of the swing stands for the moments of their emotional and spiritual union only to be followed by their inability to hold on to each other for

a very long time. While Paul enjoys swinging with abandon, Miriam is unable to let go of herself, which seems to suggest a degree of frigidity that Paul will later accuse her of. Miriam's inability to relax is also suggested when she is afraid to feed the hens in Wiley Farm although Paul assures her that it will not hurt her.

Natural images and symbols abound in the novel. One evening, when Paul and Miriam are on a walk together, they witness a large orange moon behind them. Both Paul and Miriam are aroused by the sight of the moon. But though Miriam is also deeply affected, still Paul fails to get across to her. Thus the orange moon becomes a symbol of aroused passion in Paul. Mrs. Morel too once witnesses a "blinding August moon" when she is locked out of the house by Walter just before the birth of Paul. Mrs. Morel feels herself melting away in the moon light along with the child. Later when she is allowed into the house again, she smiles seeing her face smeared with the pollen dust of lilies. The yellow dust is symbolic of Nature's benediction for both Gertrude and the unborn Paul and it also suggests their oneness with the natural order of things.

One of the major symbols in this novel is the ubiquitous use of flowers. Often, they are used to prefigure events that will occur very soon after the appearance of the flower. For example, a black flower is described before the death of William, clearly symbolising the death and grief that is about to enter into the Morel family. In the same way, red and white flowers are described usually before romantic moments of physical union. Another important flower symbol occurs in the scene where Clara, Paul and Miriam are walking together in a field with its many "clusters of strong flowers" which they begin to pick. Paul chooses his flowers scientifically and objectively. He has a spontaneous and direct contact with the flowers. Miriam picks the flowers reverentially yet she seems to suck out the life from them. Her bunches thus lack elegance. But Clara does not pick them at all, boldly declaring that flowers are not to be picked at all because it kills them.

3.12.11. Classifying *Sons and Lovers* as a Novel

As a Psychological Novel

One of the dominant impressions we form of *Sons and Lovers* is that it is a typical example of both psychological as well as autobiographical fiction. Paul's Oedipal relationship with his mother forms the core of the novel around which the rest of the story is fleshed out. The term 'Oedipus Complex' derives from Sigmund Freud's theory that the child, especially the male child, is sexually attracted to his mother, but represses this strong emotion. This repression, however, is never complete and finds expression later in

life. In *Sons and Lovers*, we find Paul being enamoured of his mother Gertrude, as one would be of a lover. In keeping with the autobiographical note in Lawrence's fiction, this relationship is modelled on Lawrence's own experiences. In 'A *Personal Record*', Jessie Chambers, upon whom the character of Miriam is based, quotes Lawrence as having said about his mother, "I've loved her like a lover. That's why I could never love you". This is in fact corroborated by Lawrence's own letter to his publisher and friend, Edward Garnett, where he often wrote about this strong bond with his mother. It is in fact so overpowering an affinity that he is unable to form wholesome, fulfilling relationships with any other women. As a child, Paul is deeply in awe and admiration of his mother. Even when he grows up and feels attracted towards other women, he is in constant need of his mother's approval. His relationship with Miriam is thwarted chiefly because he does not get this approval. It is different in the case of Clara, since it is chiefly a physical relationship more than anything else. When Mrs. Morel dies, Paul is left unmoored, and finds himself at a crossroads. The open ending of the novel has been variously interpreted in term of either a negation or an affirmation. We might choose to read it as the latter as one of the strands of the novel has been to trace Paul's emotional crisis stemming from his complicated relationship with Gertrude Morel, and her death provides him with an opportunity to break free of her psychological stranglehold and redefine his own selfhood and identity. The last lines are positive and affirmative: "His fists were shut, his mouth set fast. He would not take that direction, to the *darkness*, to follow her. He walked towards the faintly humming, *glowing* town, *quickly*" (emphasis added)

These last lines clearly spell out a message of growth, hope and moving ahead for Paul.

As a Bildungsroman

Bildungsroman is a German word which means "novel of education" or "novel of formation." *Sons and Lovers* has been considered to be a classic example of this genre in the twentieth century.

Some characteristics of a typical specimen of this genre are the following:

- the growing child in these novels is often orphaned or fatherless - if not literally, then metaphorically
- the journey from the home is often a journey away from provinciality
- money or financial independence are important factors

- many protagonists are tested not only by their new surroundings, or by money, but also by love - many times a pure love is contrasted to a destructive/unhealthy one
- the central obstacle in many such novels is contained within the protagonist himself
- most protagonists experience some sort of epiphany, where a moment of clarity helps them break through their delusions and changes them, either spiritually or in terms of their conduct, or both
- the ending is often ambiguous, ambivalent, or lacks decisive closure
- many Victorian bildungsroman were considered at least partly autobiographical (<http://web.stanford.edu/~steener/su02/english132/Bildungsroman.htm>)

Of course, some novels of this genre follow these parameters more faithfully than others. Essentially, a *bildungsroman* is a "novel of formation" or "education" which follows the development of the protagonist's mind and character in the passage from childhood through various experiences (usually involving an spiritual crisis) into maturity and the recognition of his/her role in the world. Considered in the light of these parameters, it is clear that the journey of Paul Morel from childhood to maturity follows this trajectory of the bildungsroman.

Paul's struggles are manifold- social, economic, emotional and spiritual. Egged on by his mother, he aspires to break out of the mining town of Bestwood and has no intention of following his father's footsteps in his mining profession. Apart from his school, Paul learns from various sources. He is tutored in French and German by the local minister, Mr. Heaton; coached in composition by his brother William; encouraged in his art by his mother; and self-taught when it comes to literature. But the path to the fulfilment of his desire to become an artist and to seriously earn from it is not easy. He begins by working in a dingy Nottingham firm translating French letters into English, but finds satisfaction in painting. In this he finds ardent support and inspiration from Miriam, with whom he shares his knowledge of and enthusiasm for art and literature. The novel progressively shows Paul's growth and success as an artist and this leads Paul to take himself more seriously in his painting.

In its core, a bildungsroman consists of a quest for identity. The novel portrays three central relationships in Paul's life - with his mother, with Miriam Leivers and with Clara Dawes. While his mother functions as his emotional anchor, it is with Miriam that he discovers companionship and the pleasure of interacting with someone his own age. But

his relationship with Miriam was doomed from the moment his mother became hostile about it. When he meets Clara, he sheds his earlier physical hesitation and achieves sexual consummation for the first time. Each of these relationships takes him further in his spiritual growth. *Sons and Lovers* has been criticised for focussing on Paul's character at the cost of all these other characters, but we may remember here that it is inherent in the format of the bildungsroman to have characters other than the protagonist in 'instrumental' rather than 'independent' functions.

In his essay 'Sons and Lovers as Bildungsroman', critic Richard D. Beards comments that there are "four distinct trials which the Bildungsroman protagonist must traditionally master - vocation, mating, religion and identity". He defines these as the four axes through which the protagonist matures. Paul has a distinct sense of religion. He explains the nature of his religious belief in an argument with Miriam: "It's not religious to be religious. ... I reckon a crow is religious when it sails across the sky. But it only does it because it feels itself carried to where it's going, not because it thinks it's being eternal'. The crow's lack of consciousness, its utter passivity - "it feels itself carried to where it's going" - corresponds to Paul's (and Lawrence's) sense of the religious as opposed to Miriam's.

Finally, as the novel concludes, though it is left open ended, yet we may discern that Paul has worked through various emotional and spiritual crises, and that the distant twinkling lights of the city are symbolic of the way ahead for him.

As a Working Class Novel

Lawrence's novels provide a rare insider's view of working class life in the English Midlands. The backdrop of the pre-industrial small colliery town of Bestwood is portrayed with extraordinary attention to historical and geographical detail, as this was the kind of mining community Lawrence himself grew up in. In fact, *Sons and Lovers* has often been regarded as the first working class novel in English.

The novel opens with a very evocative description of the Bottoms, where the Morels live. Although Walter Morel works as a coal miner, his wife Gertrude aspires to break out of this world and dreams that her sons will carve a better future for themselves away from the mines. Having come from the genteel middle class herself, Gertrude has never been able to adjust to her altered conditions, and after the first flush of marriage got over, she has always felt alienated by her surroundings. Walter Morel, on the other hand, stands as a representative of the working classes, embodying many of their characteristic features, such as a robust spontaneity, warmth and physical energy. Lawrence vividly

portrays minute details of the typical routine of a miner - there are descriptions of the dire working conditions inside the pits, the food that Morel takes along with him, and of the utter exhaustion he feels after a day's work. He also accounts for the finances of the coal miners - how money was divided within the family, scenes of collecting money at the company office, dividing of the pay among the four butties and of the compensation he receives when he is injured. We may therefore find an accurate description of life in a turn of the century coal mining town that Bestwood was.

Considering the very different backgrounds to which the Morels belong, the outlines of a class battle are drawn within the Morel household and every confrontation between Walter and Gertrude is inevitably also tinged and complicated by this consciousness of mutual difference. Gertrude places all her hopes first on William, and then when he dies, on her second son Paul, and she considers her ambition for her sons as also a kind of vindication for her lifelong struggle in a bitter marriage.

The plot of this novel may thus be seen as operating on a dual plane - one tracing the web of relationships centred around Paul, and the other presenting a faithful portrait of working class life in the Midlands, and of the way some young men strive to break out of their life in the collieries. In the Morel family, William is the first to do so, when he secures a well paying job in London and becomes something of a gentleman. After his death, Paul charts his own trajectory as an artist and the novel concludes with him standing at the crossroads of his small town past and a possible and indeed, probable future in the city.

3.12.12 Summing Up

- Sons and Lovers occupies a unique position in D.H. Lawrence's work as it has variously been considered to be the last of his early novels or the first of his mature works.
- The novel deals with many themes that were considered radical in its time, celebrated most of all for its handling of the oedipal relationship between Paul and Gertrude Morel. This attachment takes on such pathological proportions that it affects all his other relationships with women of his own age, and even as the novel ends, Paul knows that he has not been able to break out of this bond that has alienated him and left him incapable of all other relationships
- The novel may also be considered a bildungsroman as it depicts the coming-of-age of Paul Morel, tracing his journey from his birth upto his adulthood, when he is ready to step into the wider world.

- One of the aspects of the novel that has unfailingly been pointed out by all critics is the autobiographical nature of the novel. Most of the characters have equivalents in Lawrence's own life, with Paul Morel being a faithful self portrait of Lawrence himself.
- But what one must remember is that although Paul acts as the narratorial mouthpiece and though the narrator seems to speak from Paul's point of view, there is enough evidence in the action of the novel that complicates and undercuts this privileging of Paul's point of view. One such instance that is often cited is Paul's rejection of Miriam. Though he cruelly breaks off all ties with her saying that she is too spiritual for him, Clara sets him right and points out that Miriam was like any other woman, and it was Paul who failed to take the relationship forward. Also, although Paul is completely sympathetic towards his mother and the narrative too depicts the domestic abuse meted out to Gertrude, there are enough instances in the story that present the predicament of Walter Morel, who finds himself isolated in his own house by a cold and reserved spouse who does not understand him and of whom he is plainly afraid.
- Thus, both the Morels are alternately agents and victims of abuse. It is this nuanced and layered tonality the novel has that allows for multiple perspectives to coexist in the same narrative. The more we discover these nuances in the novel, the more enhanced our pleasure in reading this text becomes.

3.12.13 Comprehension Exercises

Long Answer Type Questions

1. How can we see *Sons and Lovers* as a working-class novel? Discuss.
2. Does *Sons and Lovers* deal with the Oedipus Complex? Justify your opinion with a close reading of the text.
3. Consider *Sons and Lovers* as a Bildungsroman.
4. Write a note on the women characters of *Sons and Lovers*.
5. Discuss *Sons and Lovers* as an autobiographical novel.
6. Comment on *Sons and Lovers* as a novel about human relationships.
7. Write a note on the inter relationship of class and sexuality in *Sons and Lovers*.
8. Write a note on Lawrence's use of symbols in *Sons and Lovers*.

Medium Length Answer Type Questions

6. Write a note on the character of Miriam Leivers.
7. Was the Paul-Clara relationship based on love or passion? Discuss.
8. Would you say Gertrude Morel was a good mother? Discuss.
9. Write a note on the character of Paul Morel in *Sons and Lovers*.
10. Why do you think the Morel marriage was so unhappy? Who was more to blame? Discuss.
11. Was Walter Morel a bad man? Give your opinion and substantiate it with examples.
12. Describe Paul's relationship with his mother.
13. Write a short note on the character of William Morel.

Short Answer Type Questions

1. What was Gertrude unaware of about Walter? Do you think she was sorry she had married him? Why?
2. Why do you think Morel cuts off William's hair? Why does that upset Gertrude so much?
3. Why was Gertrude opposed to William marrying Lily Western? Was she jealous or actually concerned about her son's future life?
4. Would you say Paul was cruel to Miriam? Give instances.
5. Why did Mrs. Morel not approve of the relationship between Paul and Miriam?
6. Describe the death of Gertrude Morel.

3.12.14 Suggested Reading

Primary Text :

Sons and Lovers, Worldview Critical Editions. Ed. Ashok Celly

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<http://web.stanford.edu/~steener/su02/english132/Bildungsroman>.

Unit 13 □ Virginia Woolf : Mrs Dalloway

Structure

- 3.13.1. Objectives**
- 3.13.2. Introduction**
- 3.13.3. Critical Summary**
- 3.13.4. Themes and Issues**
 - 3.13.4.1. The First World War**
 - 3.13.4.2. The Medical Profession**
 - 3.13.4.3. The Life and Death of the Soul**
 - 3.13.4.4. The Theme of Love**
 - 3.13.4.5. The Theme of Madness**
 - 3.13.4.6. The Social Critique**
- 3.13.5. Virginia Woolf's Art of Characterisation**
 - 5.13.5.1 Clarissa Dalloway**
 - 5.13.5.2. Septimus Warren Smith**
- 3.13.6. Mrs Dalloway as a Feminist Text**
- 3.13.7. Use of Imagery**
- 3.13.8. Mrs Dalloway as a Modernist text and its Narrative Technique**
- 3.13.9. Summing up**
- 3.13.10. Comprehension Exercises**
- 3.13.11. Suggested Reading**

3.13.1. Objectives

In this Unit, we shall focus on Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925). It is one of the most well-known British modernist literary works. This Unit will

- provide a critical summary of the novel;
- discuss the main themes of the novel

- analyse the central characters of the novel;
- analyse the critical issues raised by the novel.

3.13.2. Introduction

Virginia Woolf was born as (subsequently referred to as 'Woolf') Adeline Virginia Stephen in Lewes, United Kingdom on 25 January, 1882. Her father was the famous English thinker and writer Leslie Stephen. Both of her parents came from upper-middle-class families. In 1912 at the age of thirty, she married Leonard Woolf, a thinker and writer of repute at the time. The marriage was marked by mutual understanding and affection. Her major works include *Jacob's Room* (1922), *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925), *To the Lighthouse* (1927) *Orlando* (1928), and *The Waves* (1932). In non-fictional works such as *The Common Reader* (1925) and *A Room of One's Own* (1939), she comments on social and literary issues. She passed away in 1941.

Woolf's adolescence was blighted by a number of traumatic events. Her mother Julia died in 1895. Shortly after this, her half-sister Stella died; and then in 1904 and 1906 occurred the deaths of her father and her brother Thoby respectively. After such incidents, the Stephens moved to 46 Gordon Square, Bloomsbury. It was here that the famous Bloomsbury group was formed. At first, it consisted almost entirely of her brother's friends from Cambridge. However, as the group expanded many famous artists and thinkers became involved, including John Maynard Keynes, the economist; Lytton Strachey, the author of *Eminent Victorians*; and Clive Bell, the painter. Later, the novelist E. M. Forster and the poet T. S. Eliot became associated with it. At the center of the group's thought was a commitment to innovation and experimentalism and a determination to shake off the influence of the Victorians.

During the early years of her involvement with the group, Woolf read widely English and European literature and gradually began to establish her own voice as an author. She began work on a novel in 1906, but it was never finished, and it was not until 1915 that her first novel, *The Voyage Out*, was published. In 1915 the Woolfs moved from central London to Hogarth House in Paradise Road, Richmond, on the outskirts of London. The famous Hogarth Press was set up here in 1917. It allowed them to promote new and unconventional literary works, and it was the Hogarth Press that first published T. S. Eliot's important volume *Poems* in 1919 and then in 1922 "The Waste Land." She had now complete control over the publication of her own novels. Apart from *Night and Day* (1919), all her books were published with the Hogarth imprint.

In 1922 Virginia Woolf began to work on the portrait of a shallow and superficial society hostess called Mrs Dalloway, who had made a brief appearance in her first novel, *The Voyage Out* (1915). At least part of the revival of interest in the character came about because of the death in October 1922 of Kitty Maxse, whom Virginia had used as her model. The original portrait had been rather unsympathetic and external, but in the intervening years Woolf's response had changed. Woolf wrote the short story "Mrs Dalloway in Bond Street" in August 1922. A prefatory to the novel. It was ultimately published in 1925.

3.13.3 Critical Summary

Mrs. Dalloway is not a novel that chronicles the life story of Clarissa Dalloway. It is a collage, a mosaic portrait; it pieces together bits of Mrs. Dalloway's past and bits of her present in a single day—a Wednesday in mid-June, 1923. Although *Mrs Dalloway* is a rather forbidding novel when approached for the first time, the plot is, in fact, extremely straightforward. Mrs Clarissa Dalloway, the middle-aged, convalescent wife of Richard Dalloway, a Member of Parliament, is to hold an important party on a June night in 1923. One thread of the novel follows her thoughts and actions as she moves through the day making her preparations. The reader is also asked to see her from other people's points of view. This telling of a story from multiple perspectives is a noteworthy modernist technique. The most complex response comes from Peter Walsh, newly returned from India (then part of the British Empire) to arrange his marriage to Daisy, currently the wife of a Major who was serving in the British army in India. Peter is deeply critical of the way Clarissa has given herself over entirely to her husband and to high society; and yet as someone who never quite recovered from loving her and being rejected, he retains an affectionate and indulgent attitude towards her. A stark contrast to the lives, concerns and pretension of those who inhabit the upper-middle, governing class is provided by the story of Septimus Smith, a self-educated war veteran, and his Italian wife Lucrezia (mostly called Rezia in the novel). The events of their day are paralleled with those of Clarissa and her circle, but it is not until the evening that the two worlds truly overlap when Sir William Bradshaw, a physician, talks to Richard Dalloway about the suicide of Septimus, who is one of his patients. Although England has largely recovered from the horror of the First World War (1914-18), Septimus remains vulnerable to the violent memories which lead to frequent nervous breakdowns.

Rezia, unable to communicate with her husband, takes him to see Sir William, a specialist in nervous diseases. However, Sir William is mechanical in approach and is rather myopic in his treatment. He often makes matters worse for Septimus as his concerns, mostly well-meaning concerns like those of his colleague Dr Holmes, are seen as a threat by Septimus.

Later in the day Dr Holmes calls on the Smiths at their lodgings in Bloomsbury, with the intention of having Septimus taken to a mental home. Septimus, worried that everyone is trying to pry into his privacy, throws himself out of the window to his death. The novel ends with Mrs Dalloway's party. The news of Septimus's death breaks in upon Clarissa's gaiety. But even though she is disturbed, she decides not to let her own feelings subdue the mood of her guests. By the end, her old friend Peter Walsh sees her in a new way, though she still remains an enigma.

3.13.4. Themes and Issues

Some of the central issues Woolf raises in the novel guides the reader's responses to the characters. Firstly, the novel shows that all experience is subjective: each of the characters perceives life in a different way because each one has specific experiences. Secondly, the reader is constantly asked to attend to ideas about human personality being fluid rather than fixed. Woolf takes up this last idea and combines it with an examination of the view that the inner self of each of us is constantly changed and moulded by moods or new experiences.

3.13.4.1. The First World War

The twentieth century experience is shaped by the historical event of the First World War. It reconfigured existing values -in life and literature. After the end of the First World War in 1918 the world had radically changed. It was a divided world. Europe which was highly industrialized followed capitalism as its chosen economic path. The countries in the continent had colonies in South America, Africa, Asia, and the Far East, but all on a sudden their political power and clout declined. Particularly, England lost its sheen and was faced with the challenge of managing its colonies in the new situation. This rings true in some parts of *Mrs Dalloway*.

War had various effects on the common people. In the context of the War, the war-veteran Septimus Warren Smith in the novel turns into a symbol of the devastation of modern-day war violence. That is where the First World War becomes an integral theme of this novel. We are given the following picture of the War that affected Septimus's mind superficially, first in an ordinary sense, and later in a fearsome way:

For, now that it was all over, truce signed, and the dead buried, he had, especially in the evening, these sudden thunderclaps of fear. He could not feel. As he opened the door of the room where the Italian girls sat making hats, he could see them; could hear them; they were rubbing wires among coloured beads in saucers;

they were turning buckram shapes this way and that; the table was all strewn with feathers, spangles, silks, ribbons; scissors were rapping on the table; but something failed him; he could not feel. Still, scissors rapping, girls laughing, hats being made protected him; he was assured of safety; he had a refuge.

The effect of war on Septimus's mind is debilitating. It is devastating to him as well as to his readers. When he looks at an ordinary scene in the marketplace, "something fails him" and he cannot feel. It anticipates a deep malady forming in him. After marrying Lucrezia, they plan to have a child. But something has gone wrong with his physical impulse, and he cannot attain arousal, it stuns and destroys all kinds of creative impulses, even as there is no medical reason for the problem:

So there was no excuse; nothing whatever the matter except the sin for human nature had condemned him to death; that he did not feel. He had not cared when Evans was killed; that was worst; but all the other crimes raised their heads and shook their fingers and jeered and sneered over the rail of the bed in the early hours of the morning at the prostrate body which lay realising its degradation.

Death of Evans is disturbing enough. It jolts Septimus completely, making him confront a sense of vacuum. It was the loss of a friend and sweetness of the climate that both had created for each other. They would invent games in the middle of gunshots and smoke, and the killings would move to the background. The ending of the sentence with 'prostrate body which lay realizing its degradation' was a whole new construct of the sense of death pervading that atmosphere. It is Virginia Woolf's creative skills that takes the readers suddenly into the middle of 'degradation.' Septimus feels it crawling into his mind and disturbing his normal perceptions.

3.13.4.2. The Medical Profession

In the novel, we have Doctor Holmes and Doctor Bradshaw providing medical advice and treatment to the needy. The former is a general physician and the latter, a specialist. They are professionally well-trained and can explain the health issues connected with the well-being of citizens. Woolf deploys a sharp satire. She makes it clear that the field of medicine has no serious concern for public health. It is more of a sham than a genuine pursuit to serve the noble cause of providing care. Holmes and Bradshaw pay little attention to the requirements of patients. In treating Septimus, Dr. Holmes has no sympathy for the patient and is casual in his approach. He finds Septimus over-anxious and fails to address his mental condition. He terms Septimus's condition a part of human nature and believes there is nothing wrong with him. Also, he eyes Septimus's wife Lucrezia with interest and is not bothered about the patient's

fear related to the fact that he was hallucinating about Evans. On his part, Septimus does not trust him and has angry outbursts off and on. He does not like Dr. Holmes at all. We are told the following about Septimus by the author-narrator:

Human nature, in short, was on him (Septimus) the repulsive brute, with the blood-red nostrils. Holmes was on him. Dr. Holmes came quite regularly every day. Once you stumble, Septimus wrote on the back of a postcard, human nature is on you. Holmes is on you. Their only chance was to escape, without letting Holmes know; to Italy anywhere, anywhere.

Later, Lucrezia is more worried seeing the condition of Septimus which deteriorates further. His hallucinations about Evans gives Septimus a mix of perspectives which becomes too difficult for him to handle. Lucrezia does not know what to do when she hears him speak the following: "Communication is health, communication is happiness, communication..., he muttered." The author's opinion about the doctors is that they are not serious. Dr Holmes's attitude towards Septimus is cynical. He is clear that being of low economic status, Septimus does not deserve more than he is getting. The doctor's eye is on the patient's pocket. Still worse is the case of Dr. William Bradshaw who is represented in strongly critical terms. Woolf characterises him as follows:

Sir William...had worked very hard. He had won his position by sheer ability (by being the son of a shopkeeper); loved his profession; made a fine figurehead at ceremonies and spoke well all of which had by the time he was knighted given him a heavy look...He could see the first moment they came into the room (the Warren Smiths they were called); he was certain directly he saw the man; it was a case of extreme gravity. It was a case of complete breakdown-- complete physical and nervous breakdown, with every symptom in an advanced stage, he ascertained in two or three minutes (writing answers to questions, murmured discreetly, on a pink card). How long had Dr. Holmes been attending him? Six weeks. Prescribed a little bromide? Said there was nothing the matter? Ah yes (those general practitioners! thought Sir William). It took half his time to undo their blunders. Some were irreparable.

In this extract, Woolf has drawn the reader's attention to Bradshaw's social background that affected his value system. The son of a shopkeeper coming to the medical trade and aiming to rise high in the general esteem is his chosen course. The three traits mentioned by the author - sympathy, tact, and understanding of the human soul - define Bradshaw aptly. These have been acquired by him with hard work and application. For him, the knowledge of medicine

has crystallized into a valuable acquisition called expertise. His language too is affected by his social standing in the profession. It makes him view Septimus and Lucrezia as a social category, 'The Warren Smiths they were called'. The intention of the author is to expose the hollowness of the medical profession and its practitioners who should be responsible for the wellbeing of the masses.

3.13.4.3. The Life and 'the Death of the Soul'

At the centre of *Mrs Dalloway* is a portrait of Clarissa's marriage to Richard. To an outsider like Peter Walsh, it seems that Clarissa has embraced 'the death of the soul.' It appears that she has exchanged her freedom of spirit and her sexuality for the wealth and security which Richard can offer. His thoughts regarding Clarissa at Bourton (Bourton is the place where Clarissa spent her youth) appears to have come true: in his eyes she is 'the perfect hostess' who has lost all depth and is now merely an empty shell. It is because of this that Peter's question during the morning visit has such urgency. He is desperately attempting to get beneath the social veneer: "Tell me," he says, seizing her by the shoulders. "Are you happy, Clarissa? Does Richard-" What he cannot know, however, is that Richard, whom Clarissa, Sally (Clarissa's friend from her days at Bourton) and he had mocked initially at Bourton, acts as a source of strength.

When we see Clarissa from the inside, we recognize that the veneer hides both her insecurity and her complexes. Although Clarissa still cares for Peter, she has had to recognize that he trespasses on her inner self too much: 'with Peter everything had to be shared; everything gone into. And it was intolerable.' What Clarissa appreciates about her marriage is the way that it offers stability and sanity: 'Even now, quite often if Richard had not been there reading *The Times*, so that she could crouch like a bird and gradually revive, send roaring up that immeasurable delight, rubbing stick to stick, one thing with another, she must have perished.' Richard's roses and his solicitousness about her health testify to an affection between the two which allows them to communicate enough to preserve Clarissa's sanity. More importantly, the boundaries between them are clearly defined so that she can retain a sense of self-independence despite having a husband. However, in her lonely reflections on the nature of her marriage she is deeply aware of how much she has missed through her inability to commit herself to him sexually. On the other hand, further involvement would have allowed a rape of the soul. Rape of the soul here would mean the intrusion into her inner self which she never really preferred. She was happy with her relationship with Richard more because it was distant both physically and mentally. The boundaries were as if defined which did not allow incursion.

In choosing to cut herself off from Peter she has sacrificed a vital part of herself. When he comes to visit her, she suddenly has a sense of enormous well-being: "all in a clap it came over her. If I had married him, this gaiety would have been mine all day!" Deep down, she realises that she has surrendered her desire to feel deeply. Instead, a mere sensation - an acute awareness of the world immediately around her - has taken the place of anything more substantial. The point is made obvious through the ornate descriptions of Clarissa's everyday life (her view of the florist's shop). Her extravagance smacks of insincerity. It is because of this that she recognises in moments of honesty that there is really something wrong with her: "There was an emptiness about the heart of life; an attic room." "The purity, the integrity" of her youthful emotion towards Sally Seton proves how much Clarissa has changed: "Then, for that moment, she had seen the illumination; a match burning in a crocus; an inner meaning almost expressed." Her desire for privacy has forced her to 'stifle her soul' - she has snapped off all true communications with others. She has made her choice and now, she must live with it: "It was all over for her. The sheet was stretched and the bed narrow. She had gone up into the tower alone and left them blackberrying in the sun."

3.13.4.4. Theme of Love

Love is a major theme in *Mrs Dalloway*. This emotion captured in the novel looms large in the general scheme of things and affects the characters variedly. It gives people a purpose beyond social or national boundaries. Between Septimus and Lucrezia, love prospers, giving the two lovers stability and commitment. Traumatized by war, Septimus meets Lucrezia in the market in Italy. Soon, the two fall in love and decide to tie the knot. Lucrezia likes Septimus's quiet ways and innocence as well as his penchant for literature. Lucrezia attracts him for her soft charm and industrious nature. She works earnestly for livelihood. Following their marriage, they shift to England and set up home there. Contrary to expectations though, life does not prove to be simple and cozy for them. The antagonist in this scheme of things is Septimus' subconscious state of mind. He thought bad memories was left behind and he could settle down peacefully with his wife. It was based on attraction, urge and inspiration. The simple story of Septimus and Lucrezia soon takes a disturbing turn when the former hallucinates about his comrade-in-arms, Evans, on the war front. Septimus saw him dying in front of him. The incidence of death did not sink in immediately. After marriage with Lucrezia, Septimus hallucinates Evans walking towards him in London. But how would he see the difference between an unreal, hallucinatory image of his friend and the fact that he is really dead. He takes the image as real and this is the onset of madness. He starts hallucinating probably because his emotion of love for Lucrezia gave him a heightened mental state. Love conjures up fantasy and imagination. Lovers cannot distinguish between the real and the imaginary as

easily as normal people would. In the present case, it is not easy to match the real with the imagined in a world that was rocked by death and destruction.

3.13.4.5. Theme of Madness

In many ways, Septimus Smith's story, though seemingly unrelated to Clarissa's, accentuates yet further the theme of the isolation of an individual within society. Once again, Woolf emphasizes the importance of the inner self and the need to retain individuality. The most important similarity lies in Septimus's extreme awareness of his isolation, the 'pit' into which he is conscious that he is descending. The passage in which he reflects that he is 'deserted' exactly parallels Clarissa's panic when she realizes that Richard has gone to lunch with Lady Bruton: 'He has left me; I am alone forever, she thought.' Woolf is drawing attention to his madness as merely a more extreme form of everyone else's sanity. Unlike Clarissa, he has become oblivious to social pressure; he is no longer able to present an external appearance which is at odds with his inner integrity. Because of his war experiences he is unable to see himself as anything except a brute. Consequently, he refuses to adopt the false identity - that of the decorated war hero - which society attempts to force upon him. He is sympathetically portrayed as a victim of society's definition of normality because society refuses to take any of the blame for his illness. Nonetheless, he longs to connect with other people (p. 84): 'Communication is health; communication is happiness. Communication, he muttered.' However, his efforts to communicate always end with him talking to himself because he now lives in a self-enclosed, dream-world. Whereas for Clarissa there is an over whelming sense that she must continue trying to make sense of a meaningless world through the giving of parties, for Septimus the world is suffused with meaning, though he can never quite work out what it is. Thus, the exhilaration which Clarissa gets from everyday events becomes for him a form of torture because the natural world takes on a nightmarish and surreal quality and seems to be about to engulf him: 'But they beckoned; leaves were alive; trees were alive. And the leaves being connected by millions of fibres with his own body, there on the seat, fanned it up and down' In order to preserve his sense of identity Septimus has to cut himself off from the intensity of such a moment: 'But he would not go mad. He would shut his eyes; he would see no more.'

Unfortunately for Septimus, death through suicide is eventually his only means of defeating the forces which threaten his inner sense of himself. For him, as Clarissa recognizes 'Death was defiance. Death was an attempt to communicate ... There was an embrace in death.' And from her point of view, Septimus's true importance lies in the way that he would not allow his soul to be forced by society, symbolised by Sir William Bradshaw and his belief in proportion. He has maintained his independence and his integrity, reasserting control at the last moment.

3.13.4.6. The Social Critique

The criticism of the upper-middle-class social milieu in the novel is mainly carried out by the representation of Clarissa. She is supposedly the epitome of 'civilization,' and yet at the same time Woolf is mocking at the frailty of the values by which her society lives. There is a degree of bitterness in the novel which centres on the idea that Septimus has sacrificed himself willingly during the War in an attempt to defend a society which is indifferent to his fate. Over the years Clarissa's radicalism has disappeared as has her capacity for passion and love. The point is made explicit by the descriptions of her youth at Bourton which provide us with a way of judging the present. At that time, she and Sally 'sat hour after hour, talking in her bedroom at the top of the house, talking about life, how they were to reform the world. They meant to found a society to abolish private property, and actually had a letter written, though not sent out.' In contrast, when Peter visits Clarissa he sees her surrounded by symbols of affluence. He is surprised by her complacent acceptance of private property: 'the inlaid table, the mounted paper-knife, the dolphin and the candlesticks, the chair covers and the old valuable English prints.' And, as we discover later, Peter is uncompromising and unforgiving in his analysis of hypocrisy other than his own: 'The All-judging, the All-merciful might excuse. Peter Walsh had no mercy.' We retain our sympathy for Clarissa throughout - but at the same time we see the validity of Peter's point. After all, despite Clarissa's unease about the way that her life has developed, she remains committed for reasons of self-preservation. However, it was an existence which Woolf deliberately portrays as superficial and consumed by trivialities. Her 'social instinct' triumphs over her capacity for self-knowledge and analysis. Furthermore, the reader often feels that her philosophy of decency towards others as a means of defeating the powers of destruction and chaos is woefully inadequate, particularly because it is so selective. This is established by Clarissa's snobbish attitude towards both Miss Doris Kilman (The tutor of Elizabeth Dalloway, the daughter of Richard and Clarissa. Kilman was in love with Elizabeth, an attraction that Clarissa finds repulsive. Clarissa thinks of Kilman as a monster and also poor, single, overeducated and ugly) and her distant cousin Ellie Henderson, who, in Clarissa's eyes, is insignificant because of her lack of money and social grace. Sally Seton confirms this view of Clarissa when she remarks to Peter that Clarissa has never come to visit her in Manchester because she married a miner's son. It emerges once again in Clarissa's moment of triumph when she escorts the Prime Minister through her party and feels 'that intoxication of the moment, that dilation of the nerves', particularly as part of the delight stems from Clarissa's feeling that others envy her. What she cannot see is that her triumph is empty because the Prime Minister is so ordinary; 'You might have stood him behind a counter and bought biscuits - poor chap, all rigged up in gold lace.'

By showing us these external perspectives, Woolf wants to stress the limitations of both her central character and the class which she represents. During her wanderings round London Clarissa shows a sharp awareness of the 'texture' of experience. Yet her role as a mirror of society succeeds in reflecting the superficially beguiling and attractive aspects of Clarissa's personality. Like the rest of her class, she has failed to perceive that she is an unthinking part of the 'civilization' which victimises people like Septimus. For her the war is over. But the reader is witness to Septimus's continued suffering and cannot help noticing that his death forces the society only into a momentary realisation of its responsibilities. To be fair, when Sir William smugly suggests to Richard Dalloway that there must be some legal provision for people suffering from the delayed effects of shell shock, Clarissa is the only person who seems capable of feeling sympathy for Septimus as a person rather than a faceless member of the society. However, even there Woolf is careful to show us that Clarissa's concern is merely a projection of her own inner worries. We feel that Woolf intends us to see Clarissa's self-absorption (despite her good qualities) as contemptible.

3.13.5. Virginia Woolf's Art of Characterisation

One of the reasons for the extreme complexity of *Mrs Dalloway* lies in the fact that the characters are revealed to us through others. We see what the characters think about each other, but at the same time we have to bear in mind their prejudices. However, Woolf does provide us with some external guidelines by showing how people reveal their own characters through their mannerisms, their eating habits, their obsessions and their behaviour towards others.

3.13.5.1 Clarissa Dalloway

Clarissa Dalloway, one of the major characters of the novel, struggles constantly to balance her internal life with the external world. Her world consists of glittering surfaces, such as fine fashion, parties, and high society, but as she moves through that world she probes beneath those surfaces in search of deeper meaning. Yearning for privacy, Clarissa has a tendency toward introspection that gives her a profound capacity for emotion, which many other characters lack. However, she is always concerned with appearances and keeps herself tightly composed, seldom sharing her feelings with anyone. She uses a constant stream of cordial chatter and activity to keep her soul locked safely away, which can make her seem shallow even to those who know her well.

Constantly overlaying the past and the present, Clarissa strives to reconcile herself to life despite her potent memories. For most of the novel she considers aging and death with

trepidation, even as she performs life-affirming actions, such as buying flowers. Though content, Clarissa never lets go of the doubt she feels about the decisions that have shaped her life, particularly her decision to marry Richard instead of Peter Walsh. She understands that life with Peter would have been difficult, but at the same time she is uneasily aware that she sacrificed passion for the security and tranquility of an upper-class life. At times she wishes for a chance to live life over again. She experiences a moment of clarity and peace when she watches her old neighbor through her window, and by the end of the day she has come to terms with the possibility of death. Like Septimus, Clarissa feels keenly the oppressive forces in life, and she accepts that the life she has is all she'll get. Her will to endure, however, prevails.

3.13.5.2. Septimus Warren Smith

Septimus, a veteran of World War I, suffers from shell shock and is lost within his own mind. He feels guilty even as he despises himself for being made numb by the war. His doctor has ordered Lucrezia, Septimus's wife, to make Septimus notice things outside himself, but Septimus has removed himself from the physical world. Instead, he lives in an internal world, wherein he sees and hears things that aren't really there and he talks to his dead friend Evans. He is sometimes overcome with the beauty in the world, but he also fears that the people in it have no capacity for honesty or kindness. In her introduction to the Modern Library Edition of *Mrs Dalloway* written in 1928, Woolf was explicit: Septimus "is intended to be [Clarissa's] double". Woolf intended for Clarissa to speak the sane truth and Septimus the insane truth, and indeed Septimus's detachment enables him to judge other people more harshly than Clarissa is capable of. The world outside of Septimus is threatening, and the way Septimus sees that world offers little hope. On the surface, Septimus seems quite dissimilar to Clarissa, but he embodies many characteristics that Clarissa shares and thinks in much the same way she does. He could almost be her double in the novel. Septimus and Clarissa both have beak-noses, love Shakespeare, and fear oppression. More important, as Clarissa's double, Septimus offers a contrast between the conscious struggle of a working-class veteran and the blind opulence of the upper class. His troubles call into question the legitimacy of the English society he fought to preserve during the war. Because his thoughts often run parallel to Clarissa's and echo hers in many ways, the thin line between what is considered sanity and insanity gets thinner and thinner. Septimus chooses to escape his problems by killing himself, a dramatic and tragic gesture that ultimately helps Clarissa to accept her own choices, as well as the society in which she lives.

3.13.6. *Mrs Dalloway* as a Feminist Text

Woolf has been sensitive to and concerned with issues relating to women but has never professed herself as a feminist. She has expressed unequivocally the need for women's empowerment through education and economic independence. Women should break free of passivity and assert their distinct identities and personal rights. Woolf resists unqualified feminism; furthermore, in both her criticism and her fiction art takes precedence over ideology. It is significant that right from the beginning, Clarissa seems to dominate the centre stage. Other characters assess her from their own perspectives. Woolf maintains impartiality and avoids gender politics. Clarissa's character attracts and repels at the same time and readers are free to form their own opinions. Clarissa's character is placed against significant male characters of the novel i.e. Septimus Smith, Peter Walsh and Richard Dalloway, and the contrast in their outlook and perspectives is made conspicuous throughout the novel. The psychological crisis being similar for Septimus and Clarissa, their response is different. More than gender difference guiding their thoughts, it was ideals and values which made their responses different.

Woolf is singular in breaking down rules and conventions in her fictional writings. Clarissa is neither rigid nor a modernist rebel trying to break free of existing sterile social rules. Clarissa is modern in outlook but introvert in nature. She cannot bear with the society's excessive preoccupation with the notion of 'proportion'. She feels suffocated by the role imposed on her. Here Woolf touches upon the sensitive issue of a woman experiencing identity crisis within the institution of marriage.

In spite of certain feminist traits in the novel, it cannot be narrowed down to be a manifestation of female grudge against a male-dominated society. There is a sense of isolation, disillusionment and emotional suffocation within but that is not created by patriarchy alone. Woolf also captures other aspects in the novel which are equally responsible for creating this dissatisfaction.

3.13.7. Use of Imagery

Although Clarissa Dalloway is only loosely connected to Septimus Smith through the plot of the novel, the link between them is made absolutely explicit through the images of wave and sea. At the beginning Clarissa leaves home thinking about the morning 'fresh, as if issued to children on a beach' and she takes the 'plunge' into the 'waves of that divine vitality'. Again, after she hears of Septimus's death, she uses the same phrase to show her admiration for retaining his sense of identity by choosing death: "But this young man who had killed himself - had he

plunged holding this treasure?" Life is seen as being like a sea in which there can be joyful immersion at times such as when Clarissa escorts the Prime Minister through her party like 'a creature floating in its element.' And yet at other times the sea of life is threatening because of its unpredictability: ". . . and felt often as she stood hesitating one moment on the threshold of her drawing-room, an exquisite suspense, such as might stay a diver before plunging while the sea darkens and brightens beneath him, and the waves which threaten to break, but only gently split their surface, roll and conceal and encrust as they just turn over the weeds with pearl." Unfortunately, some cannot be saved from drowning, as Clarissa recognises when she contrasts herself with Septimus. Throughout the novel Clarissa feels that it is only the security of her marriage which has kept her from the same fate, and yet as we see with the Bradshaws, marriage may involve one of the partners drowning in the ego of the other.

The sea stands for involvement with other people, a point which is delicately made when Peter Walsh stands watching people setting out for evening parties. The longing for the 'caress' of the sea, which offers them both comfort 'hollowing them in its arched shell', suggests that the sea has a dark side and is also linked (as Clarissa knows all too well) with spiritual death. Septimus makes the connection himself in Regent's Park when he is thinking about his inability to feel. His close involvement with war and Evans's death has left him emotionally drained and estranged from everything around him: "But he himself remained high on his rock, like a drowned sailor on rock. I leant over the edge of the boat and fell down, he thought. I went under the sea. I have been dead, and yet am now alive, but let me rest still, he begged" Later on, he regards his lack of connection with the world as an advantage because his inner sense of himself has not been corrupted. Clarissa's enjoyment of 'ebb and flow' has a great deal to do with her desire to avoid facing the truth about herself.

The many appearances of Shakespeare specifically and poetry in general suggest hopefulness, the possibility of finding comfort in art, and the survival of the soul in *Mrs. Dalloway*. Clarissa quotes Shakespeare's plays many times throughout the day. When she shops for flowers at the beginning of the novel, she reads a few lines from a Shakespeare play, *Cymbeline*, in a book displayed in a shop window. The lines come from a funeral hymn in the play that suggests death should be embraced as a release from the constraints of life. Since Clarissa fears death for much of the novel, these lines suggest that an alternative, hopeful way of addressing the prospect of death exists. Clarissa also identifies with the title character in *Othello*, who loves his wife but kills her out of jealousy, then kills himself when he learns his jealousy was unwarranted. Clarissa shares with *Othello* the sense of having lost a love, especially when she thinks about Sally Seton. Before the war, Septimus appreciated Shakespeare as well, going so far as aspiring to be a poet. He no longer finds comfort in poetry after he

returns. The presence of an appreciation for poetry reveals much about Clarissa and Septimus, just as the absence of such appreciation reveals much about the characters who differ from them, such as Richard Dalloway and Lady Bruton. Richard finds Shakespeare's sonnets indecent, and he compares reading them to listening in at a keyhole. Not surprisingly, Richard himself has a difficult time voicing his emotions. Lady Bruton never reads poetry either, and her demeanor is so rigid and impersonal that she has a reputation of caring more for politics than for people. Traditional English society promotes a suppression of visible emotion, and since Shakespeare and poetry promote a discussion of feeling and emotion, they belong to sensitive people like Clarissa, who are in many ways antiestablishment.

Tree and flower images abound in *Mrs. Dalloway*. The color, variety, and beauty of flowers suggest feeling and emotion, and those characters who are comfortable with flowers, such as Clarissa, have distinctly different personalities than those characters who are not, such as Richard and Lady Bruton. The first time we see Clarissa, a deep thinker, she is on her way to the flower shop, where she will revel in the flowers she sees. Richard and Hugh, more emotionally repressed representatives of the English establishment, offer traditional roses and carnations to Clarissa and Lady Bruton, respectively. Richard handles the bouquet of roses awkwardly, like a weapon. Lady Bruton accepts the flowers with a "grim smile" and lays them stiffly by her plate, also unsure of how to handle them. When she eventually stuffs them into her dress, the femininity and grace of the gesture are rare and unexpected. Trees, with their extensive root systems, suggest the vast reach of the human soul, and Clarissa and Septimus, who both struggle to protect their souls, revere them. Clarissa believes souls survive in trees after death, and Septimus, who has turned his back on patriarchal society, feels that cutting down a tree is the equivalent of committing murder.

Time imparts order to the fluid thoughts, memories, and encounters that make up *Mrs. Dalloway*. Big Ben, a symbol of England and its might, sounds out the hour relentlessly, ensuring that the passage of time, and the awareness of eventual death, is always palpable. Clarissa, Septimus, Peter, and other characters are in the grip of time, and as they age they evaluate how they have spent their lives. Clarissa, in particular, senses the passage of time, and the appearance of Sally and Peter, friends from the past, emphasizes how much time has gone by since Clarissa was young. Once the hour chimes, however, the sound disappears—its "leaden circles dissolved in the air." This expression recurs many times throughout the novel, indicating how ephemeral time is, despite the pomp of Big Ben and despite people's wary obsession with it. "It is time," Rezia says to Septimus as they sit in the park waiting for the doctor's appointment on Harley Street. The ancient woman at the Regent's Park Tube station suggests that the human condition knows no boundaries of time, since she continues to sing

the same song for what seems like eternity. She understands that life is circular, not merely linear, which is the only sort of time that Big Ben tracks. Time is so important to the themes, structure, and characters of this novel that Woolf almost named her book *The Hours*.

Consequently, the central images of the novel take on much more than a decorative role in the writing because they function as metaphors which illuminate its themes.

3.13.8. *Mrs Dalloway* as a Modernist text and its Narrative Technique

Virginia Woolf is closely associated with Stream of Consciousness technique. It is a modernist technique of representation. Just before her James Joyce (1882-1941) too experimented with it in his novel *Ulysses* (1922). In English fiction they are considered to be pioneers of the stream of consciousness technique. This made her literary approach nonlinear, fragmentary, and impressionistic. For that reason, her narrative has become more exploratory than descriptive. The conventional linear structure is conspicuous by its absence in her novels. Her fiction instead follows a pattern-less depiction, taking unexpected twists and turns, while investigating the grey areas of human experience. Likewise, dialogues and statements are mixed with other forms of expression such as monologue, daydreaming and fantasy. They lack cogency and appear anarchic. Sharply critical of logic and rational projection, Virginia Woolf experiments with images, pauses and sudden breaks. This is the preferred stance of modernist writing, rejecting viewpoints rooted in mainstream history.

In her essay "Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown" (1924), Woolf reviewed the need for a new method for fiction because the work of psychoanalysts such as Sigmund Freud had made people newly aware of the complexities of the human personality. She suggested that 'in or about December, 1910, human character changed'. The date was not arbitrary. It was then that her friend Roger Fry organised the first exhibition of post-Impressionist painting to London and the avant-garde began to understand, through the work of artists like Pablo Picasso, the 'Modernist' perception that people are not fixed entities who can be understood completely by an external observer. Woolf was far from alone in these thoughts about how a new method of writing could reflect the complexity of experience, showing both an internal and an external view of the central characters. Like Joyce, Woolf set aside traditional narrative forms and chose instead to use one day as a fixed, known point for the reader. Using this basic structure, she is able to move freely between inner and outer worlds. She can also suggest that there is a difference between external time - the passing of the hours of a day - and the way that time is measured internally. For most of the characters the past is no less alive than the present.

Although Woolf is often spoken of as being a 'stream of consciousness' writer, the term must be used carefully because *Mrs Dalloway* avoids the extended internal monologues favoured by Joyce in which every thought of the character, no matter how incoherent, is presented. Instead, despite her protestations about wanting to show us life 'with as little mixture of the alien and external as possible', Woolf does in fact intervene through her use of what Ann Banfield has called a 'free indirect style' (See *Describing the Unobserved and Other Essays: Unspeakable Sentences after Unspeakable Sentences* by Ann Banfield, 2019. The term means a style of third person narration which uses some of the characteristics of third-person along with the essence of the first-person direct speech.) The internal monologues of a character combine with an external, unidentified voice to give us the impression that there is a narrator talking directly to the reader. For example, if we take the first three sentences of the novel it is obvious that the first of them sees Clarissa as external whilst the next two are both external statements which also express Clarissa's thoughts. The method enables us to follow both the characters' conscious, articulated thoughts and also their inner half-realized perceptions about themselves and the world around them. Woolf is not particularly interested in showing us all the absurdities and oddities of human thought patterns. She aims instead for a method which will allow her both fluidity and compression. Consequently, reading *Mrs Dalloway* is a rather odd experience because we feel that we are both inside and outside the characters at the same time. We are tricked into feeling that the author has disappeared, while at the same time Woolf is able to select and manipulate the material which is put before us. The technique is similar to that used in films when the camera seems to rove innocently over a scene picking out incidental details: the scene before us seems entirely artless, but a viewer is being unconsciously influenced by having his attention focused on some things rather than others. Moreover, the fact that the point of view keeps changing (the method has been called 'multipersonal' by a number of critics) constantly forces the reader to see 'reality' through eyes and prejudices of persons other than his own.

By showing us both an external and an internal view of the central characters, Woolf is able to analyse the loneliness of the individuals in modern society and the ways in which people mistakenly judge and evaluate each other. This technique helps to create and dramatise many of the novel's themes. Above all, she wants to display the multi-faceted nature of human identity. In her diary for 4 July 1934 she noted of herself: 'How queer to have so many selves,' and it is this which she seeks to convey through her narrative method. Our approval is sought for Clarissa because she shows some awareness of the problem. Unlike most of the other characters, she refuses to judge others by external appearances (though she seems to make an exception in Miss Kilman's case) because she knows how badly she herself has been

misjudged by others: 'She would not say of anyone in the world now that they were this or were that.' Similarly at the end of the novel Sally speculates about the Dalloways: 'And were they happy together? ... for as she admitted, she knew nothing about them, only jumped to conclusions, as one does.' Woolf presents the complexity of the 'real' Clarissa Dalloway by giving a number of subjective views, including that of Clarissa herself. There is, however, no objective view of her. Even at the end she remains something of a mystery, and thus the technique of the novel confirms Sally Seton's thought: 'what can one know even of the people one lives with every day?'

Another major narrative strategy employed is that of the flashback. It has the advantage, as Woolf herself noted when talking about her discovery of the 'tunnelling process', that she can tell the past 'by instalments as I have need of it'. Thus, there is no need to go into lengthy explanations of the history of the major characters because the past is gradually revealed insofar as it continues to influence the present. It is important, too, from the writer's point of view that revelations about the past come out slowly, because the reader must never forget that the main focus of the novel is the present: 'life; London; this moment of June'.

Finally, we are asked to see that the novel's method embodies a truth about how we get to know other people. Despite our status as privileged observers we, like the characters in the novel, are still unable to balance all the different aspects of our knowledge about Clarissa, Peter, and Septimus. Woolf's novel suggests that if art is to capture something of the feeling of real life then life in its full complexity, as we ourselves experience it when dealing with our friends and acquaintances, must be vividly placed before us. And it is this that the narrative technique of *Mrs Dalloway* so brilliantly does.

3.13.9. Summing up

This unit opened with a biocritical discussion of Virginia Woolf. After a critical summary of the novel, we proceeded to consider the importance of the First World War in the context of the fiction. It was followed by a discussion of the themes and issues that *Mrs Dalloway* projects such as love and madness, the life and death of the soul, the medical profession, the art of characterization. We also analysed *Mrs Dalloway* as a feminist text and explored the significance of the images of the sea and waves in the text. We concluded with a discussion of the nature of Woolf's modernist narrative technique.

3.13.10. Comprehension Exercises

Long Answer Type

1. What facets of the English social system does Virginia Woolf criticize?
2. '... I adumbrate here a study of insanity and suicide; the world seen by the sane and the insane side by side.' How and why does Woolf link the world of Clarissa Dalloway with that of Septimus Smith?
3. What part does the theme of marriage play in Mrs Dalloway ?
4. Show how Woolf uses the technique of Mrs Dalloway to create some of its themes.
5. Is Mrs Dalloway anything more than a simple social comedy told in an unnecessarily complex way?
6. Would you agree with the opinion that Mrs Dalloway is a bitter condemnation of the priorities of a society which has lost all sense of value and direction?
7. What does Mrs Dalloway suggest about Woolf's views about how women were treated by society in the 1920s?
8. How successful is Woolf in creating the atmosphere of London during the years after the First World War?

Medium Length Answers

1. Discuss the character of Septimus Warren Smith?
2. How would you assess the character of Clarissa Dalloway?
3. Write a brief note on the imagery of time and the Big Ben.
4. How do flowers and trees provide a relevant image in the novel?
5. Discuss Mrs Dalloway as a feminist text.

Short Answer Type

1. How is love a major theme in the novel?
2. Who does the First World War affect the most? How?
3. Who is Doris Kilman?
4. Who was Doctor Bradshaw? Why is he critiqued in this novel?

5. How is this novel a social critique?

3.13.11. Suggested Readings

Bloom, Harold, ed. *Modern Critical Interpretations: Virginia Woolf's Mrs. Dalloway*. New York: Chelsea House, 1988.

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Sellers, Susan, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Virginia Woolf*, London: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

Dowling, David. *Mrs. Dalloway: Mapping Streams of Consciousness*. Boston: Twayne, 1991.

Lee, Hermione. *Virginia Woolf*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997.

Marsh, Nicholas. *Virginia Woolf, the Novels*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998

Unit 14 □ James Joyce: "Araby"; Katherine Mansfield: "The Fly"

Structure

- 3.14.1. Objectives**
- 3.14.2. Introduction to James Joyce**
- 3.14.3. Dubliners - A Brief Insight**
- 3.14.4. "Araby" - Text with Annotations**
- 3.14.5. Analysis of the Text**
- 3.14.6. Key Issues in "Araby"**
- 3.14.7. Summing Up**
- 3.14.8. Comprehension Exercises**
- 3.14.9. Suggested Reading for James Joyce's "Araby"**
- 3.14.10. Katherine Mansfield - An Introduction**
- 3.14.11. The Art of Katherine Mansfield**
- 3.14.12. On "The Fly"**
- 3.14.13. "The Fly" - Text with Annotations**
- 3.14.14. Analysis of the Text**
- 3.14.15. Key Issues**
- 3.14.16. Summing Up**
- 3.14.17. Comprehension Exercises**
- 3.14.18. Suggested Reading for Katherine Mansfield's "The Fly"**

3.14.1. Objectives

This Unit aims to introduce the learners to two short stories of twentieth-century, familiarising them with the form, content and style of the genre during the war years. In its present written form, the short story as a genre may be a relatively new entrant into the literary scene, but it has existed in diverse forms ever since the beginnings of human articulation. Yes, the instinct

for story telling is a very old one, and as you will have seen in earlier Courses, many of the famous novelists came to prominence by trying their hand at short stories. Our focus in this Unit is on how James Joyce's formative years have been an important influence in the making of his fictional art. The significance of his short story collection *Dubliners* has also been briefly reckoned, before making a detailed study of "Araby". Then we move on to a close reading of 'The Fly' by Katherine Mansfield. The development of Katherine Mansfield as a literary artist has also been dwelt upon at adequate length. This is because it is felt that the diverse cultural conditions that she was exposed to, had a major role to play in her growth as a powerful exponent of the short story form.

3.14.2. Introduction to James Joyce

It must be mentioned at the outset that the purpose of this introduction is only to trace the growth of James Joyce, the short story writer and the novelist. So a proper purview of the entire corpus of the writings of Joyce, one of the prominent figures of Irish (English) literature is not within the scope of this discussion. Born on 2nd February 1882, James Augustine Aloysius Joyce was the eldest surviving child of John Stanislaus Joyce and Mary Jane Murray Joyce. For his schooling he was sent to Clongowes Wood College and later to Belvedere College, Dublin where Joyce became both famous and infamous! His fame was as the most gifted pupil while his notoriety arose from the definite signs of irreligiosity that he showed. He was a good student and a good linguist too, having already studied Latin, French and Italian. But he was always at Jesuit institutions and that brought Joyce repeatedly at odds with the authorities.

Such controversies continued brewing as Joyce began to mature - his open advocacy of art over morality or the praise of the new realistic drama of Henrik Ibsen the Norwegian dramatist, drew much flak from the Irish Catholic clergy. He in turn detested their slavish mentality. Though he was deeply influenced by Irish nationalistic tendencies and the literary revival, somewhere Joyce could not accept the 'quaint' provincialism that was grasping Ireland; he felt his land needed to be more continental in approach to greater issues about the Empire that had begun to emerge. His work is generally pervaded by a passionate love for Ireland, as profound as the love of his life Nora Barnacle and in particular we find an unfailing love for his 'dear dirty Dublin'.

Paris, where the young Joyce first went to study medical science in 1902 has been a major influence in the course of his literary career. It was here that he came across Edouard Dujardin's novel *Les Lauriers sont coupés* (The Bays are Sere) written in 1888, which

helped him derive his singular idea of the interior monologue. After a brief spell back in Dublin, Joyce was again in Paris in 1903. By now he had given up all attempts to study medicine and devoted himself to writing poems and epiphanies in the course of shaping his own aesthetics on his journey to becoming a literary artist. It was in 1904 on the suggestion of George Russel that Joyce started writing some simple short stories for the magazine *Irish Homestead* and that marked the beginnings of work on the stories for *Dubliners*. Though most of his adult life was spent abroad, Joyce's fictional universe does not extend beyond Dublin, and is populated largely by characters that closely resemble family members, enemies and friends at home. As he clarified after the publication of his masterpiece *Ulysses* in 1922, "For myself, I always write about Dublin, because if I can get to the heart of Dublin I can get to the heart of all the cities of the world. In the particular is contained the universal." (1)

Joyce's first published work was *Chamber Music* (1907), a book of lyrical verse written in his student days and suffused with the graceful melody of early 19th c poetry. This was followed by *Dubliners* (1914), a collection of 15 short stories set in the Dublin where he grew up. These stories are penetrating analyses of the stagnation and paralysis of Dublin society seen from different facades, coupled with the sensitivities of the adolescent growing up young boy and recounted in narration from a vantage point. Prof. Samir Kumar Mukhopadhyay (2) in his elaborate analysis notes that Joyce experienced great difficulty in getting the stories published, but after publication they earned him critical admiration from major literary figures like Ezra Pound. *Exiles*, which was Joyce's only attempt at drama (though not well acclaimed then), was staged at Munich in 1918 and later performed in London in 1926. It is interesting to note that the play was revived and directed by none other than Harold Pinter in 1970, almost 30 years after the death of James Joyce.

Ulysses (which has been referred to earlier) was partly serialised in an American magazine *Little Review* which however stopped doing so in 1920 after being prosecuted by the **Society for the Prevention of Vice**. In fact just about 13 chapters had been published in serial form when the U.S Customs Court ruled it to be 'obscene' in 1921. Joyce's use of curse words and such radical techniques as the 'stream of consciousness' brought out inner truths that were perhaps too much of a realistic presentation for civil society to bear and live up to! Partly because of this controversy, Joyce found it difficult to get a publisher to accept the book, but it was first published in France in 1922 by Sylvia Beach from her well-known Rive Gauche bookshop, Shakespeare and Company. An English edition published the same year by Joyce's patron, Harriet Shaw Weaver, ran into further difficulties with the United States authorities, and 500 copies that were shipped to the States were seized and possibly destroyed. But censorship apart, the year 1922 was a remarkable one in the history of literary modernism,

what with the appearance of both **Ulysses** and T. S. Eliot's poem, "The Waste Land". In *Ulysses*, Joyce employs stream of consciousness, parody, jokes, and virtually every other established literary technique to present his characters. The action of the novel, which takes place in a single day, 16 June 1904, sets the characters and incidents of the *Odyssey* of Homer in modern Dublin and represents Odysseus (Ulysses), Penelope and Telemachus in the characters of Leopold Bloom, his wife Molly Bloom and Stephen Dedalus, parodically contrasted with their lofty models. The book explores various areas of Dublin life, dwelling on its squalor and monotony. Nevertheless, the book is also an affectionately detailed study of the city, and Joyce claimed that if Dublin were to be destroyed in some catastrophe it could be rebuilt, brick by brick, using his work as a model! (3)

Earlier in 1904 Joyce had written an essay "A Portrait of the Artist" which was a recollection of the spiritual development of an unidentified but seemingly autobiographical hero. This had shaped into a novel called *Stephen Hero*, which was however then abandoned by the young writer. *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916) is almost a rewrite of this abandoned novel, the original manuscript of which Joyce is said to have attempted to burn in a fit of rage during an argument with his soul mate and later his wife Nora Barnacle, though it was finally rescued by his sister. *Portrait* is presumably a heavily autobiographical, coming-of-age novel depicting the childhood and adolescence of the protagonist Stephen Dedalus and his gradual growth into artistic self-consciousness. Some hints of the techniques Joyce frequently employed in later works, such as stream of consciousness, interior monologue, and references to a character's psychic reality rather than to his external surroundings, are evident throughout this novel. This text has even been made into a film directed by Joseph Strick. *Stephen Hero* was subsequently published posthumously in 1944.

Joyce's last great work was *Finnegans Wake*, extracts of which appeared as *Work in Progress* in the magazine *Transition* and was finally published in 1939. While *Ulysses* was a day view of life, this book presented a night view of man's life and was acceptably written in a difficult style. But along with *Ulysses*, it is part of the canon of literature that definitely brought about a revolution in form, structure and linguistic frame of the novel in modernist literature.

3.14.3. *Dubliners* - A Brief Insight

Dubliners is a collection of 15 short stories by James Joyce, first published in 1914. They were meant to be a naturalistic depiction of Irish middle class life in and around Dublin in the early years of the 20th century. The implications of the term 'naturalistic' would best be

understood in Joyce's own words on his collection that he wrote to the publisher of the book: "My intention was to write a moral history of my country and I chose Dublin for the scene because that city seemed to me the centre of paralysis."

He clarifies that the stories are grouped under four different aspects - childhood, adolescence, maturity and public life; and goes on to add:

I have written it for the most part in a style of scrupulous meanness and with the conviction that he is a very bold man who dares to alter in the presentment, and still more to deform, whatever he has seen and heard. I cannot do any more than this. I cannot alter what I have written. I cannot write without offending people. (4)

This is ample testimony to the fact that with *Dubliners*, Joyce was all set to pit the short story into an altogether new dimension; it was to become a virtual power house with a narrative intensity that has hardly even been surpassed. Naturally, he had a tough time getting a publisher for his work as his 'nicely polished looking glass' with 'the odour of ashpits and old weeds and offal' (5) was too harsh a reality to accept. The stories were set at a time when Irish nationalism was at its peak, and a search for a national identity and purpose was raging. Thus Ireland stood at the crossroads of history and culture - the struggle for Independence from Great Britain, the rise and fall of the nationalist leader Charles Stewart Parnell (1846 - 91), the mass risings in favour of Irish language and culture were all important happenings. Subsequently there were several socio-religious splits and it is these social forces that repeatedly find way by whatever means in Joyce's writing. Against a very happening backdrop of events, Joyce situates his characters and traces their growth in different stages of life.

When after much persuasion, *Dubliners* did find a publisher in Grant Richards in 1914, it was discovered that the presentation of the spiritual 'paralysis' of the nasty city was laced with Chekhovian realism, blended with the naturalistic tradition of Emile Zola, Flaubert and Maupassant. But beyond all this, the skilful use of musical effects to add vividness to the reality was Joyce's own device and this, according to Prof. Samir Kumar Mukhopadhyay, is one of the aspects of literary modernism. As we shall see in our reading of "Araby", he is a master at presenting realities - ghastly and intensely emotional, alike - in a detached, impersonal and objective manner.

As has been mentioned earlier, *Dubliners* contains fifteen portraits of life in the Irish capital; from where Joyce, the man, had never perhaps moved away psychologically, though all the stories were written overseas. With all their filth and squalor, the streets of Dublin are a persistent image, almost a motif that threads through all the 15 tales. The perfect focus could

best be understood in Harry Levin's words: he calls them 'fifteen case histories'. (5) The author focuses on middle or lower middle class society - his characters are children and adults such as truant schoolboys, salesmen, timid and depressed housemaids, office clerks, music teachers, students, shop girls, swindlers, and out-of-luck businessmen most of them faced with disasters of sorts. In most of the stories, he uses a detached but highly perceptive narrative voice that displays these lives to the reader in precise detail. Rather than present intricate dramas with complex plots, these stories sketch daily situations in which not much seems to happen-a boy visits a bazaar, a woman buys sweets for holiday festivities, a man reunites with an old friend over a few drinks. Though these events may not appear as something very momentous, the characters are faced with intensely personal and often tragic revelations which are certainly important or defining moments in their lives. Joyce called such moments 'epiphanic', meaning that particular point of time when a character experiences self-understanding or illumination.

The stories in *Dubliners* peer into the homes, hearts, and minds of people whose lives connect and get woven up through the shared space and spirit of Dublin. A character from one story will mention the name of a character in another story, and stories often share common settings. Such minute connections create a sense of shared experience and evoke a map of Dublin life that Joyce would keep returning to in later works. This 'map' of Dublin is ever present in his choice of subsistence level life as the backdrop of the stories; this enables a poignant revelation of the drabness of living conditions so that squalor, sin, degeneration, defeat and despair become the common stay of all the stories. A student with some awareness of the development of literature on the continent will realise that Joyce's Dublin is in many ways like Dante's Florence which is full of envy and iniquity - a near parallel to what Joyce calls 'paralysis' in his collection. But then, there is of course in *Dubliners* a note of universality, for readers of a different place and time can of course identify themselves with Joyce's characters in different phases of their lives. With superb economy of language and a perfect understanding of his created world, James Joyce, in *Dubliners*, gives us a pen picture of life that transcends space and time in its assertion of relevance.

3.14.4. Text of "Araby" with Annotations

Pls copy Section 2.4 (Pp 70 - 75) from SEG 2 SLM. Pls see the following link:

http://www.wbnsou.ac.in/online_services/SLM/BDP/SEG-02.pdf

3.14.5. Analysis of the Text

It is difficult to paraphrase a story like "Araby", for it calls upon an essentially personalised experience of reading and understanding. In fact Ezra Pound seems closest to the truth when he points to its multi-dimensional texture and says that it is '**a vivid waiting**'. So it makes sense to cast short glances at the significant movements of this short story. Yet, let us try and comprehend a few vital movements that drive the plot of this short story.

➤ The Setting

The story is set in a 'blind' lane - North Richmond Street that is quiet for most of the day, apart from the time when the Christian Brothers' School would give over. The phrasal verb 'set the boys free' is ironic as also interesting, because that immediately equates school with a prison in the sense that it inhibits the free flow of the young mind. The other details that specifically interest the boy narrator are equally noteworthy - the uninhabited house of two storeys at the end of the alley and the 'brown imperturbable faces' of the other houses. The boy mightily intuitively (understanding that arises out of sensitivity) that these houses are inhabited by sombre looking people who implicitly have no understanding of the world of the child, for they live 'disciplined lives'.

In the opening paragraph of extremely economic naturalistic details, the multiple images of deathly quietness are offset against the single expression of liveliness - the imagined cries of exultation of the boys when the school would give over for the day. That "Araby" (written between September and December 1905) in specific and *Dubliners* in general is a recollection from a vantage point by the grown up Joyce is amply clear from the vividness of perceptions. The interplay of colour shades, the strong olfactory (related to the sense of smell) images of musty air, the liking for the quaint (curled, damp yellow pages of the books left over by the priest who was long dead) and the Adam syndrome (the boy loitering in the wild garden with the central apple tree behind the house) are all objects that must have been part of his psychic (of the mind) growing up. Unknowingly he must have assimilated it all and now the mature writer gets beneath the skin of his boyhood days as he lets the narrator take over.

The 'wild garden' and the 'straggling bushes' surrounding the apple tree thus virtually recreate an Eden from where the modern Adam begins his quest for a lost world of innocence and love. Joyce's picturisation of adolescence is romantic to say the least and all romanticism has about it a degree of universalising. So the setting of "Araby" is not just spatial, it is intensely psychological too. The naturalistic details of the setting are also closely related with the activities

of the band of boys and the hectic mental activity of the narrator as part of the group. The sombre looking houses in the winter dusk contrast with 'the colour of ever-changing violet' in the sky and the 'feeble lanterns' (hazy street lights) in the street.

Similarly, the pervasive silence of the place is animated with the shouts of the boys at play, trying to prolong their fun hours as much as possible and never at all minding the smelly and dingy nature of the place. In fact they are so used to it that the narrator almost takes it in his stride. The two human figures apart from the boys themselves mentioned in this episode are that of the narrator's uncle who remains to him a sinister emblem of authority, and Mangan's sister who is clearly the centre of all his dreams. The one he hides and escapes from, to the other he is drawn with magnetic charm and he revels in his make-believe world of adolescent fantasy - **"She was waiting for us, her figure defined by the light from the half-opened door."** The setting of the story is therefore a mix of movements, for by the time we have read it we are almost initiated into the myriad moods of the boy narrator.

➤ **In love ... or is it even love!**

The shifts that Joyce introduces in the narrative framework are subtle but very effective. Almost unconsciously the collective 'we' has changed to the intensely subjective 'I' as the boy launches on his private viewing of Mangan's sister; he is at once identified as being alone in the crowd!

The other significant shift is in the time frame - from the fading lights of dusk to bright mornings as he recounts - **"Every morning I lay on the floor in the front parlour watching her door. [...] When she came out on the doorstep my heart leaped."** It is not the simple Wordsworthian leaping of the heart at 'beholding' a rainbow, for the feeling of love though unexpressed, becomes a virtual hymn for the boy. It sustains him amidst the tedium of his life 'in places the most hostile to romance'; exalting him to a transcendental world of absolute innocence. That this trance is almost spiritual in nature is repeatedly insisted - her name is like a 'summons' to all his foolish blood (the text is in the past tense because his foolishness, like all else, is a later/mature realisation); he perceives himself as straining to bear his 'chalice' to safety among marauders (here, it implies people are out to rob him of his sensitive feelings).

To readers Mangan's sister is kept a nameless but vibrant presence, but to the besotted boy she has her 'name' which moves him into an indescribable sensation of love bordering on worship: **"Her name sprang to my lips at moments in strange prayers and praises which I myself did not understand. My eyes were often full of tears (I could not tell**

why) and at times a flood from my heart seemed to pour itself out into my bosom."

This confused adoration of adolescent love defies or requires no logic, no physical co-relative in the sense of an equivalent, expects no returns in real terms; in its lyrical fervour it approximates the condition of music. So even though he has never spoken to her, yet his body in sync with his mind becomes the 'harp' while on wings of fancy her words and gestures are like fingers animating the wires.

The spiritual dimensions of such love are supplemented by deeply sensuous desires, but once again that is in the realm of a make-believe world constructed by the boy in the same abandoned back-drawing room that has been referred to in the setting. But now the musty air fosters the environment for a passionate 'communion' (act of sharing) with his beloved on a dark rainy evening. Through a broken pane on the window of this abandoned room, needles of water play up on the sodden beds and by a thin thread of imagination we realise that the boy is playing out his private erotic fantasies about his love. He is now thankful for the 'feeble lanterns' that shield him from any kind of public view and almost in delirium (excited frenzy) he trembles and presses the palms of his hands murmuring passionately '**O love! O love!**'. Language has hardly ever been so evocatively used as in the spontaneous and intensely passionate erotic-spiritual communion of this adolescent priest of 'love'!

➤ **The moment cometh!!!**

From never having spoken beyond a few casual words with her, to when she asks him if he would be going to Araby, the boy is too enamoured to answer. Her words become mystic orders of the goddess to the devotee and the very word 'Araby' comes to denote an icon of his devotion. So he promises to get back something for her from the fair at Araby and this is more than a love-vow, it is the promise of bringing offerings. He almost begins to imagine it to be a magical place lifted out of the pages of some Oriental romance and therefore obviously different from the paralytic markets of Dublin that he has to frequent with his aunt. As they converse, Joyce constructs a vision that inspires both sensuality and sanctity in the dreamer. Structurally the high point of the story is reached, and in the next phase the boy slips into a bout of 'destructive instinct' which in Freudian terms means the desire to destroy anything that comes as an obstacle to the fulfillment of an ardent desire.

➤ **The Waiting commences**

Ezra Pound's description of "Araby" as a tale of 'vivid waiting' finds manifold significance in this section of the story. Just as a pilgrimage is fraught with unknown hazards, so also the

day of the boy's intended visit to the fair begins on a bad note. His uncle, being in a sullen mood, does not give him the money to go to Araby before leaving for work; in waiting for the much needed money the boy gets late for the day and misses out his morning meeting with the girl of his dreams. His uncle is late in returning and he has to endure the gossip of the talkative Mrs Mercer. Even as he tries to luxuriate in fantasies of his beloved at her doorsteps, he realizes that time is slowly but steadily slipping out of his hands. Significantly, we notice that the earlier self-contained and self-constructed world of romantic love is no longer there; rather the callous adult world has begun to infringe upon the autonomy of the boy's emotional plane. Money as means of exchange now becomes a necessary pre-requisite for the fulfillment of his love interest, though it is still some time before the boy will come to a realisation of this paradox. By the time his uncle returns, tipsy and indifferent, gives him the money and the boy journeys to his exotic destination, it is well past nine and he has almost lost his grip on 'the purpose of (his) journey'.

➤ **The Destination ...Is It???**

When the boy finally comes to stand before the building that 'display(s) the magical name', it is almost ten minutes to ten. But his entry into the supposedly magical land soon becomes a disillusionment of sorts. Contrary to being the dreamland of his imagination, Araby is almost covered in darkness and among the handful of stalls that are still open; he finds scenes of crass commerce or heartless flirtation. This is definitely not the shrine he wanted to arrive at after his long wait. But since he has built up the mental image of Araby as the palpable icon of an alternative reality, nor can he dismantle it as easily into the marketplace of real life. On the contrary, the fervid votary of love himself gets transformed as he is forced to acknowledge the self deception he has unleashed on himself for so long. For a while he still tries to keep up the show but that is more to save him the blushes of getting caught by the outside world. So he pretends to be a curious onlooker at the stall, but can carry on no longer. As he lets the two pennies fall against the sixpence into some obsolete corner of his pocket, the moment is ripe for the epiphany: "**Gazing up into the darkness I saw myself as a creature driven and derided by vanity; and my eyes burned with anguish and anger.**"

The waiting ultimately turns meaningless, the destination has lost its purpose; the only experience that one gathers is perhaps that of the relentless march of the process of growing up, of losing out on innocence and childhood!

3.14.6. Key Issues in "Araby"

✓ Title of the Story

The title of a short story is expected to pin point at the central situation that the text unravels. As such "Araby" is a culmination of several strands of thought. It is, to begin with, a 'Grand Oriental Fete' held in Dublin from 14th to 19th May 1894. Michael Thorpe informs us that in English usage a bazaar would be something very different from what we understand by the term; it would signify a special event where goods are sold for the benefit of charities and sideshows are provided for amusement. So it would be quite a thing to look forward to, more so for the young people we find in this story. Mangan's sister being a young girl, presumably tied to a life of domesticity where going out to school would perhaps be her only 'excursion' out of doors naturally has a great attraction for the fete where girly things would be available aplenty. The boy narrator understands nothing of this, it just becomes for him a place where he hopes to find a palpable correlative to the depth of his feelings for the girl - perhaps a token of his love that he could bring back for his goddess. So from a mass commercial enterprise in the eyes of the common man, Araby becomes transmuted to a land of pilgrim's dreams. These dreams are predestined to be shattered and so it happens. It is interesting how Joyce introduces an element of a second climax in the story in the epiphany the boy has in the nearly closed down hall. At once this connects the second part of the story to the first, the different states of consciousness explored in the story merge into a continuum and the title becomes a wonderful mirror to the mental upheaval that the boy is faced with.

✓ Psychological Probe

Joyce's exploration of the adolescent mind from a vantage point makes "Araby" a great mix of memory and imagination. On the one hand there are vivid recollections of childhood incidents and on the other, these remembrances are laced with a mature artist's understanding of the sights, symbols and colours of life. The aim of the analysis in the preceding section has been to capture, among other things, the psychological growth of the boy. It is also interesting how through his eyes, Joyce has also made a very subtle study of the people who willy nilly fill his life - the girl of his dreams, the band of boys, the aunt who somewhat understands his pains but cannot do much and of course the adult world that is very indifferent and largely unconcerned about the sensitivities of the mind of the growing up. Above all, the concluding section of the story is a superb psychological study of the protagonist and it leaves us somewhat baffled and hunting for final answers. Is psychological growth all about the conscious elimination of fancy? Does the darkness from which he seeks relief in the opening section get reinforced with a

peculiar permanence at the end? Can he at all take the epiphany as a journey to consciousness or are the 'anguish' and 'anger' a momentary response that will once again fade when he sees the girl amidst his own drab surroundings? Will he or won't he still seek his private heaven in her? The answers might vary but there is no denying that Hardy has any writer so poignantly captured the essence of the mind of an adolescent in the growing up years.

✓ Symbolism

The use of symbols is central to the edifice of Joyce's story. We could identify three major symbols in course of the narrative, apart from several others that are scattered.

The first and the most obvious is the play of light and darkness. The story both begins and ends in darkness, at both these junctures the boy narrator is enmeshed in the fathomless pits of life, of which he can make no meaning. As dusk engulfs the setting at the beginning, the lives of the boys is visualised in terms of lengthening shadows, dark muddy lanes, dark dripping gardens and dark odorous stables. In contrast to this pervasive darkness, there is a ray of light that illuminates the figure of Mangan's sister in a sensuous way, just as the boy's mornings, bright and sunny, are spent in stealing glances at her. She is mostly mute but remains an eloquent presence of his creation. Again it is a 'dark rainy evening when the boy's emotions surge up and he indulges in a psycho-sexual act. When he reaches Araby it is already half plunged in darkness and the silence is that of a 'church after service'. In the over-arching darkness of his individual psyche, the flirtatious and hollow conversation of the shop girl and the young men act as an ironic counterpoint against the hallowed image of 'his' girl in the mind of the boy. Thus the gathering darkness of evening, paradoxically a passage to self-discovery, climaxes in the darkness of full realization. Or an illumination even!

The second major symbol is that of the boy's journey to Araby. He undertakes it in the spirit of a questing medieval knight in search of a coefficient of his notion of ideal beauty. In the process he dissociates himself from all natural activities that befit his age and position and faces hindrances one too many in the course of his journey. The innocence and impressive nature of the boy raises our pathos for we foresee what he does not. As apprehended, this sufferance of an isolated pilgrimage leads him to the nearly dark hall where his dreams are shattered. The journey thus becomes a powerful symbol of hope turned into despair and the resultant painful process of growing up that must be faced by all in life. In effect therefore, the journey symbol has universal connotations and readers may identify their own individual loss of paradise with that of the impressionable young boy. The metaphor of 'waiting' that Pound identified as a major aspect of the story could also be fitted into this symbol of the journey.

The Biblical/religious references that have been identified in course of the discussion on the text form another important symbolic pattern in the story. The garden behind the house, the Adam figure of the boy, the concept of the chalice, the priest's books and the goddess devotee-prayer triad of relationships between the boy and Mangan's sister - all add up to the religious symbolism that constitutes a major rubric of the story. It also lifts the tale above the dreary intercourse of life and gives a touch of spiritual quest to the boy's narrative.

Besides these, there are several other scattered symbolic usages that have been discussed in the detailed analysis of the text.

3.14.7. Summing Up

We have briefly introduced you to James Joyce, the short story writer and novelist who may rightly be seen as one of the pioneers of the modernist movement in prose fiction. Apart from that, through a detailed analysis of the story "Araby", you have also been equipped on the ways in which to approach a modern short story. Of special interest in this is of course the element of psychological study that motivates characters in a big way.

3.14.8. Comprehension Exercises from "Araby"

Long Answer Type Questions :

1. On what grounds would you call 'Araby' a modern short story?
2. How does Joyce use the setting as a fitting background in 'Araby'?
3. Trace the psychological growth of the boy in 'Araby'.
4. What is an epiphany? What impact does the epiphany create in Joyce's short story?
5. Make a comparative study of Dublin market and Araby as you find these depicted in the story.
6. Justify how the title of Joyce's story relates to the element of a 'vivid waiting'.

Medium Length Answer Type Questions :

1. What aspects of the dead priest's room attract the boy and why?
2. Attempt a vivid description of North Richmond Street by dusk.
3. Trace the sensuous elements in the boy's stolen glimpses of Mangan's sister. How does it attain spiritual overtones with time?

Short Answer Type Questions :

1. Comment on Joyce's use of symbols with reference to any two major examples.
2. Give a brief description of the train journey to Araby.
3. Bring out the difference in the boy's mental state before and after he has spoken to Mangan's sister.
4. Write notes on: Mangan's sister, The old priest, The boy's uncle, Mrs Mercer, The shop girl at Araby

3.14.9. Suggested Reading for James Joyce's "Araby"

Adams, David. *Colonial Odysseys: Empire and Epic in the Modernist Novel*. Cornell University Press, 2003, p. 84.

Demming, Robert H, ed. *James Joyce: The Critical Heritage*. Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970, reprint 1986, Vol. 1 (1902-27), p 67.

Levin, Harry. *James Joyce: A Critical Introduction*. Faber & Faber, 1942,

Mukhopadhyay, Samir Kumar. "James Joyce: 'Araby'", in *Narrative and Narration*, ed. Jayati Gupta, Anthem Press, 2008.

3.14.10. Katherine Mansfield - An Introduction

Katherine Mansfield is one of those rare writers who concentrated only on this genre and took it to such heights that almost a century after her death; she still remains a literary phenomena to reckon with. Katherine Mansfield Beauchamp was born in 'an ordinary, middle class, colonial home' (1) in Wellington, New Zealand, in 1888. She was an adventurous and ambitious schoolgirl who began to try out her writing skills as early as 1898-99 for the *High School Reporter*, the school magazine at Wellington Girls' High School. At the young age of fifteen she was sent to Queen's College School, London and was there for four years. Though she did return to her homeland after that, she was always at odds with the country of her birth and ever eager to distance herself from New Zealand. There was in her a dislike for the poverty and illiteracy of the indigenous Maori population and a discontent at the lack of opportunities for pursuing a career of her choice - as a cellist or as a person of literature. In course of a stormy personal life, she stayed in places as diverse as Germany, France and even Switzerland; apart from London of course, which was more than home to her. Her closeness with Middleton Murry, the leading critic and editor, around 1912 in London was a great turning point in Mansfield's literary career. They married in 1918 and as Michael Thorpe says, with him 'she

found as much happiness as was possible for her'. She died of tuberculosis in January 1923, aged only 35.

3.14.11. The Art of Katherine Mansfield

Given that a writer who worked exquisitely on the short story mode still remains relevant so as to be syllabised, it would make interesting study to have some insight into the development of her literary acumen. We have already spoken of and perhaps even wondered at the rather unusual distance she maintained from her homeland. Like Joyce, for whom distance from his native Dublin was never a hindrance in making his beloved city the backdrop of most of his work, Mansfield too, perhaps unknowingly, drew much creative sustenance from this distancing from her geo-cultural environment. Her letters to her friend Ida Baker written around 1922 are proof of how she felt 'little bits' of herself still sticking out of her past. Naturally, the role of memory is immense in the work of Mansfield, and this is seen in stories like "At the Bay" and "Prelude". With Murry she collaborated in editing the literary periodical *Rhythm* and also its successor *The Blue Review*.

The loss of her brother Leslie in the First World War (1914-1918) was a devastating experience for Mansfield and it actually drove her to recreate memories of home that she had shared with him. She called it a 'sacred debt' she paid to her country, not only because she and her brother were born there but because in her thoughts she ranged with him over all the remembered places. So the stories of this phase, that are considered among the richest literature ever set in New Zealand, are inspired not by nationalist thought but essentially driven by personal emotions. Many of these are found in her second volume, *Bliss and Other Stories* (1920) (her first volume of sketches was titled *In a German Pension*, published in 1911). However, the later volumes - *The Garden Party* (1922) and *The Dove's Nest* (1923) reflect London and the European world of Mansfield's mature years.

In order to get a feel of a short story like "The Fly", we need to understand the nuances of Mansfield's fictional art. While being greatly influenced by Chekov as a short story writer, she also felt the need for a new structure and form of expression that would adequately express the changed conditions of life in a post-war world. In fact, as early as 1910, a visit to the first ever post-Impressionist visual arts exhibition in London brought in her an awareness that the reality of life no longer lay in the blind belief in a static, unchanging objective reality. She began to be increasingly convinced that human experience was to be found not just in externalities but they could as well be interiorised ones. As H. E. Bates (2) correctly points,

she 'saw the possibilities of telling (a) story by what was left out as much as by what was left in, or alternately describing one set of events and consequences while really indicating another'.

Secondly, she resorted to techniques like mental soliloquy that became fluttery, gossipy and almost breathless with questions and answers. Besides, Mansfield was also apt in creating an intense atmosphere through clear observation and suggestive detailing. She could be said to practise what came to be known as the '**stream of consciousness**' technique that was perfected by Virginia Woolf in her novels. Most often in a Mansfield story we thus find no hectic action, no high drama; rather there is a moving presentation of the lives of ordinary, lonely and pathetic people. The author seems so well versed in placing a sensitive finger on the pulse of the lives she describes - she grasps the very essence of their existence at the exact moment as it were.

As learners, you are advised to identify similarities between the story in this present Unit and Virginia Woolf's novel (Unit 13) with help from your counselor to understand how the stream of consciousness technique unfolds itself.

3.14.12. On "The Fly"

The first thing that strikes readers is the insignificance of the object that is focussed upon in the title. But this apparent feeling of a puny creature is deceptive, as is the inordinately short length of the story. "The Fly" has in fact been described as one of the fifteen finest short stories ever written. Whether it is or not may be debatable, but Thorpe puts it very intelligently when he says, 'it must surely be the shortest of good short stories'. It was included in the collection *The Dove's Nest* and was completed, according to Mansfield's own records, by 20 February 1922. The story was written while she lived in the Victoria Palace Hotel in Paris, the same place where she had witnessed heavy bombing by the Germans in 1918. This historical detail somewhat lends credence to the fact that the particular incident of the death of Mansfield's brother Leslie Heron Beauchamp in the war and the general perception of angst could have found creative expression in "The Fly". This should not however lead the reader to expect a story of the battle in progress, far from it, the story as Anthony Alpers (3) says, is the author's 'profound symbolic treatment of post-war sadism and grief and loss'. Thus the story is an intense probe into human reactions of individual losses and beyond, of course in the aftermath of the war. It is now proper that the learner first goes through the story and then formulates responses to it.

3.14.13. Text of "The Fly" with Annotations

Pls copy Section 3.4 (Pp 87 - 91) from SEG 2 SLM. Pls see the following link:
http://www.wbnsou.ac.in/online_services/SLM/BDP/SEG-02.pdf

3.14.14. Analysis of the Text

➤ The Setting

In a striking contrast to the dull setting of "Araby" in Unit 17, the action of "The Fly" is set in the well-furnished and decorated office chamber of the Boss. The Boss makes it a point to mention that he has had the room redecorated very recently, talking specifically of the carpet, the furniture, the electric heating and even draws his listener's attention to the 'pearly sausages' glowing in the copper pan. There is a copy of the *Financial Times*, a leading business daily, that he flips through with a paper-knife.

But significantly, he does not draw the attention of his audience to the photograph of his son that is placed on the table, to his former colleague Woodifield, who has come to visit him. It is not new; we are told it has been there for over six years now. Is it because it is something different from the rest of the décor that he does not talk of it in the same breath? Or is it that the photograph is symbolic of a common memory that the two men share - a common loss, the implications of which go without mentioning? These are vital questions, the answers to which we have to discover in course of reading the story. And there can be no universally acceptable answer to this, for "The Fly" is very much an open-ended story and each reader is left to formulate his own responses to it. The extremely plush setting of the story, for one, should be taken carefully; there is definitely more to it than meets the eye at a first glance. Quite unlike conventional narrative strategies therefore, the setting of this short story itself has the potential to be complex.

➤ The Characters

To a conventional understanding of character, there are three of them present in the story - Mr Woodifield, the Boss and his greyhaired office messenger Macey. There are however several non-present characters as well - Woodifield's wife, his daughters and the sons of the two men, both dead in the war. We shall come to the second set later.

Woodifield is presented by Mansfield largely through the eyes of the Boss. The common experience that the two share is that both are bereaved fathers, having lost their sons in the

war. But their long standing reactions to this loss are strikingly different. We are told that Woodifield has suffered a stroke and has been forced to take a pre-mature retirement from his position in this office. He now leads a mostly domesticated life and keeps coming back to the office every now and then, much to the displeasure of his family, in search of pleasures he has had to give up somewhat suddenly. Clearly the Boss shows a condescending attitude towards him. The image of him that is given is that of a grown up baby, clearly a misfit in this plushly done up office and the Boss seems to derive some apparent pleasure in contrasting himself with his ex-employee. Note the words like 'piped', 'peered', the 'green-leather armchair' in which he seems to sink, and the only too obvious point of similarity - 'as a baby peers out of its pram'.

In contrast, the boss seems quite in control of the situation for a major part of the story, at least as long as he is in the company of Woodifield. He patronises Woodifield when the latter cannot remember what he wanted to say, offers him whisky to get energised and even shows his acute consciousness of the material things of life by displaying the label. But once Woodifield has spoken of the graves in Belgium, the boss seems to be making a retreat. The 'quiver' in his eyelids is the only pointer to the fact that he is hearing what is being said. After all that Woodifield garrulously babbles out, the boss only says a cribbed 'No, no!' and this is supplemented by the narrator's cryptic comment - 'For various reasons the boss had not been across.' He hardly listens to what Woodifield says next, waits for him to depart and then closes himself out of the public world for 'half an hour'. He then plunges into recollections of his dead son - the way he had been bringing up the son, the moment of the crisis and then his own way of coming to terms with it in the years that have followed.

The fly episode which follows next will be taken up for detailed discussion in the following sections, but for the moment it suffices to say that there is a radical evolution in the characterisation of the boss in Mansfield's story. He is one person in public view - very much the boss; and a completely different entity in privacy. The unravelling of the private chambers of the boss' mind is indeed the high point of "The Fly". In this story we must therefore also keep in mind that the use of names for characters is an interesting study - the boss remaining un-named is a pretty good strategy that the author employs to hint at the fact that often in life, there are differences between what 'appears' and what 'is'. This could be a preliminary hint in understanding the complexity that underlies the character of the boss.

The role of the office boy Macey is purely functional - he knows his boss in and out, and has seen him undergo all the suffering on the death of his son from very close quarters. For it was Macey who had handed him the telegram six years back, and though Mansfield does not

explicitly say so, yet we realise that he has some idea of what the boss could do in moments of such intense psychic suffering.

The non-present characters play an equally important role in the story. Woodifield's wife and daughters are not favourably disposed to the idea of his outings to the city; they feel he would be making a nuisance of himself to his friends. More than that, it is the visit of his daughters to the graveyard at Belgium that becomes the occasion for the story. A garrulous old man that he is, Woodifield had actually forgotten that he had come to tell the boss of this visit of his daughters and that they had also seen the grave of the boss' son. Their delight at how well maintained the place was, or their concern over being charged a wee bit too much for the pot of jam - all suggest that Woodifield's family members have perhaps accepted the death of their son/brother as a fact beyond reversal and moved on in life. Of course, much of this narration is provided by Woodifield himself and could lead us to believe that he has perhaps assimilated the sorrow within himself with his stroke and his incessant speaking about it.

The two dead boys - the sons of Woodifield and the Boss, though non-present, are perhaps the pivotal characters in the story. Woodifield's son has a name, Reggie; but like the boss, his son is also un-named. While nothing much is told about Reggie, Mansfield, through the boss' recollection, gives a fairly elaborate picture of his own son. He was bright, well mannered, exuberant and a quick learner at work. But now it is all a thing of the past as he lies cold and dead, or perhaps reduced to a heap of bones at the mass cemetery in Belgium.

➤ **The 'Action'**

As we have suggested earlier, the 'action' in a story in the stream of consciousness technique is more of interiorized than appears to the external eye. Here too, as you read the section that follows, you will find that element of suggestiveness unfolding.

A drink offered by the boss on the sly revives Woodifield's sagging spirits and he narrates the visit of his daughters to the cemetery in Belgium where both their sons, who fell to their death in the war, are buried. The two graves are quite near to each other. To Woodifield's question, the boss says rather peremptorily (with a sense of decisive finality) that he has never been to the grave, but that does not deter the talkative old man from waxing eloquent (to go on and on) on how wonderfully the place is maintained. He also talks about how they charge extra for trivial things like a pot of jam before he finally leaves the room.

Two things are notable here. At the beginning of the story, Woodifield is in discomfort and the boss is in command of the situation - sympathising and patronising him. But as the whisky

warms up Woodifield, he begins and continues to speak on things that are not necessarily related. He is never really in control of the situation but somehow manages to resurrect (here, to pull up again) himself from what he looks like at the beginning of the story. In contrast, the boss who has been so flamboyant (elaborate/colourful behaviour) early on, gradually seems to be withdrawing into a shell, so much so that he actually loses track of whatever Woodifield says before departing - "'Quite right, quite right!' cried the boss, though what was quite right he hadn't the least idea." Left all alone, the boss shuts himself off from the outside world, goes over to his desk with 'firm heavy steps', lets his bodyweight sink on the spring chair and covers his face with his hands. Mansfield piquantly (provocative/suggestive) says: 'He wanted, he intended, he had arranged to weep ...'.

From here begins the second movement of the story which is actually also the beginning of complexities. Unlike Woodifield who is a private individual, the boss has always had to move in life with multiple concerns related to his business, the security of his employees and so on. So if Woodifield has taken the shock of the death of his son by succumbing to a stroke, taking voluntary retirement and now through occasional visits to the city, it has been a personal/private response to grief. It is unfair to conclude that he loved his son more and so all this happened to him; contrarily the boss is a money-minded person who has relegated the memory of his dead son to some remote corner of his mind and concentrated again on his enterprise. We must realize that for both these men, as with all human beings, any event happy or sad, brings out certain responses, the expressed intensity of which definitely lessens with time. So in the early years when the boss would say that he could never live down the sorrow of his son's death, it was a genuinely felt utterance at that point of time. After all, like many parents who expect to find in their children's lives a vicarious fulfilment of their own dreams, he too had been rearing his boy as his successor in business and from this point of view both father and son are perhaps universal figures, hence one possible reason why they are not given proper names.

In the intervening six years he had wept his heart out in private whenever he felt heavy with the memory of his son. So, as opposed to the talkativeness of Woodifield, the boss' is a silent muted response to bereavement (generally grief caused by the death of a near one) - and both are absolutely valid and acceptable as individual reactions, they cannot be compared. But all grief does get internalised after a period of time, the span of which again will vary from person to person. This is not to say that the grief or the suffering is lived down, it is just that external manifestation no longer perhaps occurs. Mansfield has captured the boss at one such sensitive moment of his life. So long he was used to crying out, being relieved and putting on the mantle (here, something that covers) of the 'boss' and readily taking the world. So he

wants, intends and arranges to weep. But however much he groans, tears refuse to come out and he is tyrannised at the thought that he has overcome the grief of the death of his 'only son'. The author almost reads into the mind of the character as he questions himself - 'How was it possible?'

It is at this point of time that the boss notices the fly fallen into his inkpot and trying desperately to extricate (to make oneself free) itself and his attention gets diverted momentarily. The 'fly episode' is the third movement of the story and definitely the most complicated. Apparently it might seem a digression (act of straying from the main action) and in fact it is so for a few moments as the boss finds respite from the angst (a feeling of fear/ insecurity). Or so he thinks, for the memory of the son and the need for weeping are temporarily suspended from his conscious mind. On a sudden impulse the boss picks up the fly from the ink-pot and places it on the blotting paper to dry itself. As the poor creature dries itself with meticulous care, the boss, with a desire to test its tenacity for survival, sprinkles not one, not two but three drops of ink after the fly has dried itself each time. It is a strange psychological-physical war between two unevenly matched forces - the boss acting Fate on the fly and the puny creature representing through its incessant (continuous) attempts the various crises and onslaughts that the boss himself has had to encounter in his daily life. Sub-consciously the boss sees his own fight in the resistance offered by the fly. The drops of ink are the constant reminders of his son that are inflicted on him and that which comes in the garb of sympathy or accidental references, like Woodfield has just done. Thus his own attempts to conquer grief and present a brave façade (artificial effect) are typified by the fly's efforts to save its life. For this reason he encourages the fly by saying: 'That was the way to tackle things; that was the right spirit. Never say die; it was only a question of ...'. Inadvertently (without knowing) he wants to see his own positive attitude in the fly's resolve and spirit and thinks that such fortitude (mental strength) will give the fly - as it has supposedly given him, everlasting strength to challenge and defeat fate. Therefore, he emerges as the destiny of the fly and kills it.

But with its death the boss realizes that after all, human endurance has its limits, beyond which it gets maimed (very seriously injured). There is thus a striking similarity between the dessication (drying up) of his feelings of grief to external manifestation and the fly being divested of dear life. Alternately, the fly might also symbolise the boss' son, the thread to this thought being the words - 'You artful little b...' said tenderly by the boss himself. As the fly waves its teeny weeny front legs, perhaps the boss has reminiscences of his child as a kid babbling the first mutterings of life! The idea here is that just as the fly was under the complete control of the boss and yet pushed aside the domination as sham and died; so too the boss once controlled the life of his son but had to leave him nevertheless.

Thus, there could be an infinite number of interpretations of the fly episode; each would be valid if supported by an authentic reading of the text. If we take the drops of ink falling on the fly as the continuous encounters with life that blur the boss' memory/grief for his son, then the final moment comes with the stopping of the fly's stirrings. He feels he is divested of all traits of grief and hence tears do not come out. So on the one hand the *tete-a-tete* (private conversation between two persons) with Woodfield has welled up the boss' latent grief, on the other he cannot get purged (to get rid of) of his emotional upsurge through tears. Hence the boss is frightened and he just can't remember what it was that he was thinking. There is a kind of mental black-out and he is tormented by the wild drift of his own mind.

3.14.15. Key Issues

✓ Title

Usually the title of a story is a pointer to the central situation of the narrative. So when Mansfield chooses an apparently un-'organic' (in the sense of integrally related) episode as the title, it is clear that she is seeing the implications of the story at a symbolic level. As the text is structured, the fly episode comes in the form of a climax that takes the boss off the hook and brings out the deeper meanings of the story in retrospective (here, starting from the present and going to the past) effect. No discussion on the story can thus be complete without referring to this episode. It is, to use T.S Eliot's term, an 'objective correlative' that brings out the complex emotional turmoil of the boss. (The manifold implications of the fly episode have already been discussed in analysing the text. Learners are encouraged to formulate their individual responses as well, after going through the text very minutely). Not only the boss' character, the episode also helps to place the perspectives of the other characters and certain general observations on life in clearer understanding. It goes to the author's credit that she can weave out such multiple significations from a seemingly trivial incident.

✓ Symbolism

It is commonly held that in "The Fly", Mansfield converts the personal trauma of her brother's death in World War I and her father's artificial grief over it into an art form of the highest quality. The translation of personal experience into art follows the Chekhovian method of hints, suggestions and symbolism. Symbols are used in this story mainly to indicate one set of situations while stating something else.

For instance the plush décor of the boss' office is not so much about the furnishing as it is to indicate that the flow of time has stopped for him. The showing off to Woodfield is thus as

much revenge as self-defence. In contrast, the presentation of Woodifield as childlike proves a misnomer as the same helpless person soon proves to be the agent of nemesis (fate) for the boss.

The whiskey with which the boss steadies Woodifield is an interesting symbol. It shows the boss' total control over his former employee as the former forces the latter to go against his doctor's prescription and his family's instructions. Thus, the consumption of the whiskey by Woodifield symbolises the boss' successful attempt at making him a psychic slave. The grave and the graveyard as mentioned by Woodifield are symbols of both his latent desire for everything around and for everything straight. Clearly the picturesque surroundings have attracted all his attention, removing his son from his focal point.

A gap of six years is indeed enough for memory to turn painless in representation, yet stay alive in the mind. The photograph of the boss' son standing on his table is a very important symbol. In it the boy looks 'grave', though the boss feels his son 'never looked like that'. Besides, the photograph faces away from the boss and he has to get up to have a look at it. This strange way of keeping the image of his beloved son raises several questions. The 'grave' look is perhaps an accusation that haunts the father who has tried to rob the boy of his naturalness by trying to determine his life for him. It is perhaps this denial of choice that drove him to enlist for the army, for it was not compulsory service in WW 1. Thus the photograph taken during enlistment shows a grave look! This look further disturbs the boss by being a constant reminder that he has in a way killed his son by creating such circumstances that he went on to join the war. This conjecture (supposition) is vindicated by the fact that the dead body of the fly is referred to as corpse (human dead body) and not carcass (animal dead body).

In the fly episode which naturally follows in this symbolic study (and has been discussed earlier), the boss not only sees his son in the dead fly; he also sees himself as the virtual murderer. Thus these two symbols - the photograph and the fly, are of great importance in bringing about the self-realization of the boss. The final picture of an important man sitting helplessly, unable to remember a thing and passing his handkerchief inside his collar to mark his discomfiture is a symbolic role reversal - from the position of 'still going strong, still at the helm' to a pitiful figure much like Woodifield whom he despised and even sympathised with.

3.14.16. Summing Up

In this Unit therefore, we have introduced you to the unfolding of the 'Stream of Consciousness' technique in literature, with reference to Mansfield's short story. You would gain greater insights

on this if you relate your reading of the story to the literature of the First World War at large, as has been indicated in Unit 2 of this Course.

3.14.17. Comprehension Exercises from "The Fly"

Long Answer Type

1. Bring out the elements of modernity in "The Fly".
2. How would you relate the 'Fly' episode to the general drift of the story?
3. Justify the idea that in "The Fly", Mansfield works by suggestion and not explicit statement. Medium Answer Type

Medium Answer Type

1. Describe the interior décor of the Boss' chamber.
2. Attempt a description of the cemetery in Belgium as narrated by Woodifield's daughters.
3. Give an account of the 'encounter' between the Boss and the fly.
4. How did the Boss react on hearing the news of his son's death? Show how his reactions underwent change with time.

Short Answer Type

1. What did Woodifield do on most Tuesdays?
2. How according to the Boss did his son look in the framed photograph?
3. Write in brief about the demeanour of Macey.
4. What does the Boss do at the end of the story?
5. What is 'stream of consciousness' technique?

3.14.18. Suggested Reading for Katherine Mansfield's "The Fly"

Alpers, Anthony. *The Stories of Katherine Mansfield*. Oxford University Press, 1984, "Preface", p. xxviii.

Auddy, Manu. "Katherine Mansfield: The Fly", *Narrative and Narration*, ed. Jayati Gupta. Anthem Press, 2008.

Bates, H. E, *The Modern Short Story: A Critical Survey*. Penguin, 1940.

Module - 4

Modern British Literature : Drama

Unit 15 □ Modern British Drama: An Introduction

Structure

- 4.15.1. Objectives**
- 4.15.2. Introduction**
- 4.15.3. Nationalism in Theatre**
- 4.15.4. Irish Literary Theatre**
- 4.15.5. National Theatre of Scotland**
- 4.15.6. Theatres in other parts of Europe**
- 4.15.7. The Influence of European Theatre**
- 4.15.8. Theatre after World War I**
- 4.15.9. Major Dramatists of Early 20th Century British Drama**
- 4.15.10. Summing Up**
- 4.15.11. Comprehension Exercises**

4.15.1. Objectives

This Unit will attempt to acquaint students with the of the general literary features, conventions and methods of the major British dramatists of the early twentieth century. It will therefore, consider the major terms and playwrights of the literary and dramatic movements that developed during this period. This will enable the students not only to acquire a general survey of the drama written and performed during the time but also to contextualise the texts in the course to gain a better understanding of the plays.

4.15.2. Introduction

In view of the long and complex development of British drama in the first forty years of the twentieth century, it becomes imperative to trace a map of the major writers together with the dramatic movements, their features and conventions during this period. As has dealt with the historical and social developments of this period, this unit endeavours to dwell on the historical, social and literary, specifically, theoretical aspects of the dramatic experiments and innovations which characterised this growth.

4.15.3. Nationalism in Theatre

Nations and nation-states are somewhat arbitrary constructions that result from wars, invasions, and other historical events. The geographical and cultural contours of these entities have changed over time but have been legitimated through nationalist discourse in the theatre, emphasizing their homogeneity and distinctiveness and disguising their disharmonies. One of the main proponents of cultural nationalism was Johann von Herder, who rejected the dominance of French culture in German speaking lands and urged his compatriots to acknowledge the German poets of the past. He developed a theory of the organic growth of the nation, its language and *Volksgeist* (national spirit), as distinct and unique, placing his faith in cultural rather than political unity. He encouraged research into German folklore, myths, legends, and local history and argued that German culture would never come into its own unless it was based solely on traditional popular German culture. As a result of his endeavors, Herder fostered a new respect for the German folk traditions and so promoted a notion of national cultural unity. At the same time, he encouraged other nations to do the same, arguing that each nation was organic and distinct and needed to develop its own national spirit. Cultural nationalists in many countries in Europe read his works avidly and adopted his methods and attitudes.

There are common patterns of nationalist cultural expression observable in the artistic work of the nineteenth century that continue into the twentieth and even the twenty-first centuries. Historical plays in the vernacular language portraying heroic national characters from the past or images from national folklore or rural life asserted the uniqueness of their culture and in some cases challenged the dominant discourse of imperial rule. For example, Schiller's *The Maid of Orleans* and *William Tell* depict "nationalist" heroes striving to free the nation from oppression and were written during a period when there was not yet a German nation-state. German speaking lands were fragmented amongst many principalities, dukedoms, and free cities, which were, for a while, subject to Napoleonic rule. In most cases, such plays would focus on male heroes fighting for the author's native land and perhaps dying for it. In the case of *The Maid of Orleans* there are a few unusual features: Joan of Arc is a female warrior, and the play is about a country other than that of the author's. Nevertheless, one can see the typical nationalist rhetoric emerging in the play as the English soldiers are vilified as oppressors and the French are rallied to regain what rightfully belongs to them. The traditional symbols of national flags and Christian icons have a potent effect, as does the image of the heroine dying for her country. Because of her international fame, Joan of Arc has been used as a cross-cultural archetype to serve nationalist purposes not only in her home country but also as a metaphor for such struggles in other countries, especially the righteous battle against a

foreign oppressor. Although anomalous in being a woman soldier, the figure of Joan of Arc also feeds into normative iconography that depicts women representing the nation. Such mythical characters as Britannia, Germania, and Marianne in France have often been represented in monuments and paintings as militant figures though more passive virginal or motherly depictions of the nation are more common.

4.15.4. Irish Literary Theatre

The founders of the Irish Literary Theatre (the precursor of the Irish National Theatre) asserted that the new theatre would no longer demean the Irish people in the way that the British theatre had done in the past. Irish nationalist theatre at the beginning of the twentieth century employed historic struggles, folklore, myths, and stories of idyllic rural life as a means of showing the distinctiveness of Irish (as opposed to English) culture. W.B. Yeats' *Cathleen Ni Houlihan* managed to combine all three of these features, showing the mythical figure of Cathleen Ni Houlihan calling out young Irish peasants to fight in the 1798 uprising against British rule.

In nationalist discourse, rural characters are often depicted as pure and wholesome, unsullied by the grime, squalor, and malevolent influences of the city. J.M. Synge, however, was not a writer to conform to nationalist rhetoric and frequently depicted the ugly sides of rural life. When *The Playboy of the Western World* was staged by the Irish National Theatre Society at the Abbey Theatre, the portrayal of Christie, who is celebrated by the young women of Mayo as a hero for allegedly killing his father, was regarded as unacceptable and caused riots in the theatre. The audience rejected the implication that the loose values of the village women in the play conveyed either an accurate or a welcome depiction of Ireland at a time when they were attempting to assert the superiority of their culture to that of England. Having been depicted by English dramatists as wild men and figures of fun for years, Irish nationalists regarded *Playboy* to be even worse, especially as it was the Irish National Theatre Society that was now presenting this travesty. The director of the theatre, W.B. Yeats, defended the right of the Society to present such a play and insisted that it should be performed for the rest of the week (with the aid of a police presence) while the audience continued to riot. However, in subsequent years the play became canonized as one of the most often performed plays in the Irish repertory, thereby querying the relationship between nationalist rhetoric and national culture. As is manifest in the *Playboy* riots, theatre has equally been a site for disrupting nationalist discourse and challenging essentialist stereotypes. Ibsen's *Peer Gynt* also depicted a rogue figure and criticized the nationalist movement's language reform in the middle of the nineteenth century. Nevertheless, despite Ibsen's critique of nationalism and an initially hostile

reaction, the play rapidly became canonized, especially as a result of Grieg's beautiful music that was written subsequently to accompany it in performance.

4.15.5. National Theatre of Scotland

In the twenty-first century there are obvious echoes of the cultural nationalist movements of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. For example, the creation of the National Theatre of Scotland (NTS) heralds a Romantic nationalist spirit at a time when the possibility of political independence has appeared on the horizon. In the Scottish Parliament in 2003, Frank McAveety, the Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport, revealed the important implications of establishing the new theatre by asserting that it was emblematic of much of the debate about Scotland's identity and cultural future. Without a theatre building but with a six-million-euro subsidy from the Scottish parliament, the National Theatre of Scotland in 2006 launched a series of events in ten venues around the country under the title "Home". This turned into an opportunity in specific instances for nostalgic reminiscence and for identifying what was culturally distinct about particular areas of Scotland. One of the pieces, *Home Shetland*, was a multi-media event aboard a ship that travels between Shetland and the mainland, and featured Scottish music and local stories about Shetland Islanders. Perhaps the most notable production was *Black Watch*, a new play commissioned by the NTS from Scottish playwright Gregory Burke, about a Scottish regiment that was being amalgamated with other regiments after three hundred years of distinguished service. Besides being a well-choreographed and dynamic piece of theatre, it was also an exercise in nostalgia and national pride, recounting the history of the Black Watch regiment as well as its final deployment in Iraq.

4.15.6. Theatres in other parts of Europe

By contrast with the role of the National Theatre of Scotland, many theatre artists have ionized and critiqued nationalistic expression. For example, in Germany, Bertolt Brecht and Rolf Hochhuth overtly criticized the virulent nationalism of the Third Reich by showing its evil effects in such plays as Brecht's *Fear and Misery in the Third Reich* and Hochhuth's *The Representative*. There is a long tradition of comedians throughout the world, from sketches in the Royal Variety Show to Charlie Chaplin in *The Great Dictator*, impersonating and parodying political leaders. Another tactic is that of subversion through over-identification with nationalism, which features in the work of Christoph Schlingensiefel and Janez Janša. These artists, operating on the former border between western and eastern Europe, have devised performances to call nationalist expression into question by imitating and exaggerating it, and yet evoking a serious rather than a comic response.

4.15.7. The Influence of European Theatre

It was a sense of radical and conclusive break with earlier dramatic traditions that defined modern European drama of the twentieth century. It would not be presumptuous to consider Henrik Ibsen (1828-1906) as the origin of the major developments of modern European drama which finally, culminated in the plays of Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956). The first important movements in drama deriving from Ibsen was primarily thematic focusing its attention on the problem play which lent its seriousness and weight to the growth of Naturalist drama.

Though naturalism was severely criticised and dismissed in the twenties, it held considerable influence on the theatre in its own times. In a lecture given in 1871, Georg Brandes (1842-1927), an influential Danish scholar and critic, observed that, "What keeps a literature alive in one day is that it submits problems to debate. ...A literature that does not submit problems to debate loses all meaning" (Bentley 388). Brandes' ideas had a strong influence on Ibsen who, in letter to the critic on April 4, 1872, admitted, "I have read your lectures... no more dangerous book could fall into the hands of a potential writer. It is one of those works which place a yearning gap between yesterday and today" (Bentley 381).

In fact, it is this sense of radical and conclusive break with earlier dramatic traditions that seem to define modern European drama. In fact, Emile Zola (1840- 1902) a founder and advocate of naturalism in drama, stated in his manifesto, *Naturalism in the Theatre* (1881) that this mode of writing was the most appropriate for literature and drama at the time. "Naturalism alone corresponds to our social needs, it alone has deep roots in the spirit of our times, and it alone can provide a living, durable formula for our art because this formula will express the nature of our contemporary experience" (Bentley).

Ibsen's plays specifically submit problems to debate. *A Doll's House* (1879) deals with the problem of marriage and the position of women in a bourgeois, patriarchal society; the conflicting values of different generations become the focus of *The Master Builder* (1892); the issue of environmental pollution and the commercial and materialist values of society is dealt with in *An Enemy of the People* (1882); and the conflict between individual liberty and state authority constitutes the problem in *Rosmersholm* (1886). In fact, as Ibsen had suggested and George Bernard Shaw proclaimed in his *Quintessence of Ibsenism* (1891) and in the prefaces of his plays, the conventional dramatic conflict was substituted with a conflict of ideas which invested in the discussion or argument as the dramatic quotient for action. In *A Doll's House*, Nora thus insists, "It's time we squared accounts. It's time we three talked out for once together from the heart."

Shaw's commitment to Ibsen and naturalism is evident in his plays, which examine contemporary problems ranging from slum landlords and prostitution to husband hunting, professional delusion, and historical issues. This expansive list stretches from *Widowers' Houses* (1892), *Mrs Warren's Profession* (1894), and *Arms and the Man* (1894) to *Man and Superman* (1903), *Back to Methuselah* (1921), and *Saint Joan* (1923), with a considerable number of plays and issues argued and dismissively addressed in between. Shaw sought to introduce a genuine scientific method in his treatment of characters and problems; however, a standard criticism against the dramatist involves his use of characters to advance his theory of creative evolution, thereby reducing them to representative types.

Subsequently, a strong indictment of naturalist drama was made by the Russian playwright Anton Chekov-

I regard the stage of today as a mere routine and prejudice. When the curtain goes up and the gifted beings, the high priests of sacred art appear by electric light, in a room with three sides to it, representing how people eat, drink, love, walk, and wear their jackets; when they strive to squeeze out a moral from the flat, vulgar pictures and the flat, vulgar phrases - a little tiny moral, easy to comprehend and handy for home consumption; when in a thousand variations they offer me always the same thing over and over again - then I take to my heels and run....we must have new formulas. That's what we want. And if there are the same, then it is better to have nothing at all. (Williams, 108)

This new formula emerged in the plays of Ibsen as what was termed Symbolist drama. In fact, Raymond Williams suggests that this mode remained incipient in Ibsen's naturalist plays. Ibsen's later plays, therefore, tend to avoid issues of the social and the communal; *Hedda Gabler* (1896), *John Gabriel Borkmann* (1896), and *When We Dead Awaken* (1899) become explorations of individual consciousness through the use of symbols and suggestive language.

The movement towards a symbolist dramatic assertion is also evident in Strindberg's *To Damascus* (1898-1904). In this play, the protagonist is surrounded by characters representing aspects of his own personality, such as the Stranger, the Woman, the Beggar, and the Enemy. This method for exploring the self and consciousness was also to be adopted by T.S. Eliot in his *Murder in the Cathedral* (1888-1965). In the Introductory note to his next work, *A Dream Play* (1902), Strindberg wrote-

In this dream play as in his former dream play, *To Damascus*, the author has sought to produce the disconnected but apparently logical form of the dream.

Anything can happen; everything is possible and probable. Time and space do not exist. On a slight groundwork of reality, imagination spins and weaves new patterns made up of memories, experiences, unfettered fancies, absurdities, and improvisations. The characters are split, double and multiply, they evaporate, crystallise, scatter and converge. But a single consciousness holds sway over them-that of the dreamer. (Bradbury and MacFarlane, 524; Esslin 352-53)

Strindberg's dream plays, also termed 'intimate theatre,' thus interrogate the notion of the unity of character in traditional drama, thereby anticipating later developments in Surrealist and Absurdist theatre.

A significant contribution to Symbolist drama was made by W. B. Yeats (1866-1939) and the revival of poetic drama by the Irish Dramatic Revival movement. For Yeats, poetry and drama had to return to folklore and legend; it would have to use the language of the common people if it was to become a place of "intellectual excitement- a place where the mind goes to be liberated" (Williams, 125). Therefore, the basis of his work was to be "that conversation of the people which is so full of riches...those old stories of the folk which were made by men who believed so much in the soul..." (Williams 124) Yeats believed that drama should desist from "that can be codified for ready understanding by reasoning and argument; drama ought, therefore, to encourage reverie by allowing us almost the intensity of trance," the spectator's mind should be prompted "to spread out slowly like some moon brightened image crowded sea;" thereby the theatre would become "mysterious doing its work by suggesting, not by direct statement but complexity of rhythm, colour, gesture" (Bradbury and MacFarlane, 563)

Though Yeats's ability to achieve these goals remained uneven in his plays, the poetry of his *The Countess Cathleen* (1892), *The Land of Heart's Desire* (1894), and *The Shadowy Waters* (1902) is marked by an impassioned rhythm and suggestiveness. Apart from his brief prose plays, *Cathleen ni Houlihan* (1902) and *The Pot of Broth* (1904), *The King's Threshold* (1908) and *Deirdre* (1907) rework Irish legend, investing in the symbolic implications of that distinctive image or scene that appears to reveal the wisdom of ages. Yeats considered his "Plays for Dancer's" a new art form, and *At Hawk's Well*, *The Only Jealousy of Emer*, *Calvary*, and *The Cat and the Moon* continue this search for revelation, often expressed in patterns of poetic images that seem to constitute the whole action of the play (William, 136-37). Yeats repeatedly affirmed that the forms of Irish myth, the ideas and cosmology of Buddhism, and the dramaturgy of *Noh* would restore drama to its original sources and the theatre to its only valid function, the evocation of a sacred presence.

This commitment to the revival of verse drama was a major contribution of T.S. Eliot to modern theatre. In fact, Eliot felt that poetry and drama constituted the bases of the European stage from the Greeks to his time. In his essay 'A Dialogue on Dramatic Poetry', Eliot, therefore, asserted, "People have tended to think of verse as a restriction on drama. They think that the emotional range and realistic truth of drama are limited and circumscribed by verse. I maintain the contrary. I say that the prose drama is merely a slight byproduct of verse drama. The human soul in intense moments strives to express itself in verse."

Though Eliot's early plays, *Sweeney Agonistes* (1933) and *The Rock* (1934), are fragmentary and choric pieces, his *Murder in the Cathedral* (1935), *The Family Reunion* (1939), *The Cocktail Party* (1949), *The Confidential Clerk* (1953), and *The Elder Statesman* (1958) achieved reasonable success in the theatre of the period. Eliot was aware of the failure of 19th-century verse plays and thus emphasised that the verse "had to justify itself dramatically and not merely be verse poetry shaped into dramatic form" ("Poetry and Drama," Eliot). As dependence on blank verse by the dramatists of the previous century had added to the defeat, Eliot tried to find "how people of the present day would speak if they spoke in verses." In *Murder in the Cathedral*, Eliot accomplished a fruitful fusion of the elements of religion, ritual, poetry, dramatic tradition, and the body of worshippers into a pattern and rhythm of verse and action that defined the nature of this drama. According to Eliot, poetic drama was to be distinguished from prose plays by a "doubleness of action": "It is possible that what distinguishes poetic drama from prosaic drama is a kind of doubleness in action, as if it took place on two planes at once. In poetic drama, a certain apparent irrelevance may be the symptom of this doubleness; or the drama has an under pattern less manifest than the theatrical one" ("Poetry and Drama," Eliot). Most of Eliot's plays involve the dramatisation of consciousness; thus, the apparent naturalist verisimilitude of the plays was often undermined by the profound experiences of suffering, sacrifice, faith, and reconciliation dramatised through the verse.

In Federico Garcia Lorca's trilogy, *Blood Wedding* (1932), *Yerma* (1934), and *The House of Bernard Alba* (1936), there is the creation of a dramatic poetry intended to express intense desire, suffering, and defeat. Lorca thus returns to the traditional Spanish forms of song and chorus to give his verse a lyrical and elegiac form. For Lorca, the poetry is used not merely to dramatised the action; the poetry, in fact, constitutes the action. Lorca's work is thus a fusion of psychological realism and poetic expression which attempts to give traditional dramatic forms a modern structure.

Symbolist drama was considerably enriched by the plays of Anton Chekhov. His use of symbols as in the eponymous *Cherry Orchard* and the *Seagull* stand witness to this claim.

However, Chekhov's works evade easy classification such as 'realistic' or 'psychological naturalism.' The distinctive quality in Chekhov's drama lies in the manner it is able to evoke a mood, an atmosphere, or an individual state of mind. Theatre critic and Chekhov's close friend Alexsey Suvorin was quick to indicate that "The action takes place behind the scenes rather than on the stage, as though the author was interested only in showing how the characters reacted to events, to reveal their nature" (Bradbury and McFarlane, 519) Despite Chekhov's description of *The Cherry Orchard* (1903-04) as a play where "There's not a single pistol shot...", the incipient tension involving suppressed yearning, frustration, boredom, disillusion, and guilt of the characters remain palpable. *Uncle Vanya* (1897) and *The Three Sisters* (1900-01) similarly display a sense of estrangement in Chekhov's dramatic world where individuals remain prisoners of their own desires and deceptions. In this important aspect, Chekhov seems to anticipate the concerns of the later Absurd drama.

In his *Six Characters in Search of an Author* (1921), the Italian playwright, Luigi Pirandello (1867-1936) first attacks the false conventions of naturalist drama by emphasizing that this form of theatre violates the audience's willingness to suspend disbelief. However, having served this polemical agenda, Pirandello's plays refuse to follow a conventional contemporary model of theatre by questioning the very basis of the relationship between illusion and reality, the mask and the face, art and life, the stage and the audience in drama. The play deals with six fictional characters of a play interrupting a rehearsal in which they are being portrayed by the real actors. However, these characters protest that the actors, though competent, fail to enact their identities or roles.

The real significance of Pirandello's plays is in the reversal they dramatise: the fictional characters and experiences tend to appear more real than the actual actors who try to portray actual situations and events. This is convincingly depicted in Pirandello's *Henry IV* (1922) and *Right You Are, If You Think You Are* (1922), in which the relativity of the real and the illusory is revealed. This thus involves a continuous confrontation between illusion and reality, with one often substituting the other in an uncertain and complex game basic to the plays.

Pirandello gave his *Collected Plays* the title 'Nude Masks.' This oxymoron epitomises a basic preoccupation in modern European theatre, namely, that drama, after all, is a constructed artifice despite its strident claims about mimetic truthfulness. Theatre, therefore, tends to continuously erase the borders between illusion and reality, thereby engaging the audience in questioning the nature of reality and truth. Thus, an important element of modern drama lies in its attempt to reconstruct reality by involving the audience in a complex negotiation between the lying nature of reality and the truthfulness of the fiction on stage.

On the 10th of December 1896, the French playwright, Alfred Jarry produced his play, *Ubu Roi* (King Ubu) at the Nouveau Theatre in Paris. The play was a savage parody of bourgeois society and the selfish, cruel, and bestial nature of man. *Ubu*, the hero, is a cruel, cowardly, and greedy character who proclaims himself the King of Poland, killing anyone who opposes him. *Ubu Roi* marks a radical break with the dramatic conventions of late nineteenth and early twentieth century drama. It, therefore, prepared the stage for an experimental and innovative theatre that would redefine the contours of modern European drama. The shockingly bold structure of Jarry's play transformed the stage and initiated what came to be termed German Expressionist theatre whose chief exponent was Frank Wedekind. W. B. Yeats, who was in the audience that night, recounted the event in his *Autobiography* :

The players are supposed to be dolls, toys, marionettes, and now they are all hopping like wooden frogs, and I can see for myself that the chief personage, who is some kind of king, carries for his sceptre a brush of the kind we use to clean a closet, feeling bound to support the most spirited party, we have shouted for the play. But that night at the Hotel de Comedie, I am very sad; for comedy, objectivity has displayed its growing power once more. (Esslin, 359)

Thus, having realised the weakness of the subtlety and suggestiveness of his own poetic and symbolist drama, Yeats was forced to recognise the emergence of a powerful avant-garde theatre in Expressionist drama.

What is significant about post-symbolist drama is its non-representational nature. Drama was not merely an imitation of a particular social reality but also an attempt to interpret that reality often with ideological implications. Antonin Artaud, who proclaimed his commitment to surrealist drama, was more inclined towards developing a theory of dramatic performance in his 'Theatre of Cruelty' and in his essays collected in *The Theatre and its Double* (1938).

Futurist drama, which soon followed surrealist theatre, thus remains prescient with the major developments of the European theatre after the War. Filippo Marinetti, the Italian writer who founded the futurist movement in literature, contributed *The Feasting King* (1909). Marinetti, as it is evident, is better known for the manifesto of futurist theatre published on September 2, 1913:

FUTURISM EXTOLS THE VARIETY THEATRE

because: 1. The Variety Theatre, born as we are from the age of Electricity, fortunately has no tradition of any kind, neither masters or dogmas, and is nourished from the fast moving actuality of our lives. ... (Bradbury and McFarlane, 551)

The **Theatre of Cruelty** and the Futurist drama anticipated the emergence of the Theatre of the Absurd which later found its most prominent expression in the works of Eugène Ionesco (1909-1994), Samuel Beckett (1906-1989), and Harold Pinter (1930-2008).

In an important sense, modernism and its dramatic texts tend to dismiss formulaic writing. According to Peter Gay, modernism involves "a call to authenticity" that detested formulas and prioritized originality. Whether a Realist, Symbolist, Expressionist, Vorticist, or proponent of any other isms crowding one another early in the twentieth century, each modernist liked to see themselves defying stifling rules and deadening traditions to stand as a nemesis of the tyranny of academicism; modernism was thus a call for "expressive freedom that no establishment could command or, in the long run, frustrate" (Kasner 4).

4.15.8. Theatre after World War I

The First World War put a temporary stop to this golden run of drama, as high culture of any kind was, for a time, little in demand. The West End Theatre, however, remained popular with the slick, mildly amusing plays of Noel Coward being performed in front of capacity crowds. The art of the theatre survived and between the World Wars, the acknowledged master was G. B. Shaw. The major dramatists of the period immediately after World War I made a conscious artistic decision to abandon elegant dialogues, unrealistic sets and improbable plot mechanics of their predecessors. Instead, they chose the language of real people, in real situations. Their exploration of larger issues was firmly based in the domestic and the mundane. But this did not prevent the best works of dramatic realism from possessing a rough and poetic grandeur. In Ireland, the theatrical progress was reinforced by the creation of the Irish National Theatre. Yeats and Synge contributed much to the Irish dramatic movement, reacting strongly against the new trend of stark realism in drama.

4.15.9. Major Dramatists of early 20th century British Drama

In this section we will discuss about the major dramatists of early 20th century who made a meaningful contribution in the modern British drama:

Henry Arthur Jones (1851-1929) : Jones began his dramatic career with one act plays, none of which were popular. He gained modest success with a domestic drama, *It's Only Round the Corner* (1878), later performed in London as *Harmony* (1884). *A Clerical Error* (1879) was followed by a spectacular melodrama, *The Silver King* (1882), which established Jones' reputation. He then turned to serious theatre, concentrating on the drama of ideas and on using drama as a vehicle for social criticism. He adapted Ibsen's *A Doll's*

House as Breaking a Butterfly (1884) and showed a talent for naturalistic dialogue and interesting characters. His most notable plays were *Saints and Sinners* (1884), *The Dancing Girl* (1891) and *The Triumph of the Philistines* (1895), *Michael and his Lost Angel* (1896), *The Liars* (1897) and *Mrs Dane's Defence* (1900).

Sir Arthur Wing Pinero (1855-1934) : Pinero graduated from being an actor to a playwright and became the leading dramatist of his age in two distinct genres- farce and the problem play. *The Magistrate* (1885), *The School Mistress* (1886) and *Dandy Dick* (1887) are all among the finest English farces. Other notable works are *The Cabinet Minister* (1890), *Sweet Lavender* (1888), *The Profligate* (1889). Pinero wrote a succession of social dramas highlighting the plight of women in an unforgiving world. These plays included *The Second Mrs Tanqueray* (1893), *The Notorious Mrs Ebbsmith* (1895), *The Benefit of Doubt* (1895), *Iris* (1901), *Letty* (1903), *His House in Order* (1906) and *Mid Channel* (1898).

George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950) : G.B.Shaw was an Irish playwright and critic. His friendship with William Archer led to their collaboration on *The Quintessence of Ibsenism* (1891), which became a manifesto for Shaw's future work as a playwright, as it was an advocacy of Ibsen's genius. Shaw explained Ibsen to English readers and upheld Ibsen's use of drama as a force subverting accepted social attitudes. The English stage during most of the nineteenth century was geared for powerful actors to show off their talent in classic roles. There were no new playwrights of note, and the theatre had become a hub of mediocrity, triviality and artificiality. Dramatists like Pinero and Jones wrote serious plays, but the majority of the plays performed were melodramas or comedies of intrigue. Ibsen introduced poetry and realism to the stage, and his profound themes were taken from life, instead of from theatrical conventions.

Shaw was not a symbolist but a debater and rhetorician and he brought his wit and moral passion to bear on many conventional attitudes that had seduced society into accepting injustice, hypocrisy, self-interest and self-ignorance. His major plays were *Widower's Houses* (1892), *Mrs Warren's Profession* (1893), *The Philanderer* (1893), *Arms and the Man* (1894), *Candida* (1897), *The Devil's Disciple* (1897), *The Man of Destiny* (1897), *Man and Superman* (1905), *Major Barbara* (1905) and *The Doctor's Dilemma* (1906). Shaw contributed four his most serious plays to the new theatre of the 1920s namely *Heartbreak House* (1920), *Back to Methuselah* (1922), *Saint Joan* (1923) and *The Apple Cart* (1929). Shaw was always concerned with ideas, and he freely used his plays as a vehicle for his social messages and views. His startling provocations and admirable sense of the theatre made him a dramatist of a different kind, and audiences responded to his witty, paradoxical presentation

of social problems, as well as the long expository speeches he gave his characters. He became the chief participant in a revolution in twentieth century theatre, initiating a movement towards anti-romantic, realistic plays where human beings, society and social institutions are examined with intellectual honesty and irreverent insight.

W. B. Yeats (1865-1939) : Yeats founded the Irish Literary Theatre with Lady Gregory, George Moore and Edward Martyn, which gave its first performance in Dublin in 1899, with Yeats' play *The Countess Cathleen*. Yeats collaborated with the Fay brothers to produce his most successful play, *Cathleen Ni Houlihan* (1902). He had a lifelong involvement with the Abbey Theatre. In the crucial period from 1899 to 1907, he was the director of the Theatre along with Synge and Lady Gregory, encouraging its playwrights, notably Synge, and contributing many of his own plays, such as *The Land of Heart's Desire* (1894), *The Hour Glass* (1903), *The King's Threshold* (1904), *On Baile's Strand* (1905) and *Deidre* (1907).

John Galsworthy (1867-1933) : Galsworthy's career as a playwright began with the success of *The Silver Box* (1906). He wrote many successful plays namely *Strife* (1909), *Justice* (1910), *The Skin Game* (1920), *Loyalties* (1922) and *Old English* (1924).

J. M. Synge (1871-1909) : Synge wrote his first play, the one- act play *In the Shadow of the Glen* (1903), celebrating the independent spirit of the Irish people. His characterising of the strong- minded Nora Burke aroused ire in the prudish sections of the Dublin audience, who continued to show their displeasure throughout Synge's brief dramatic career. The one-act tragedy *Riders to the Sea* (1904) eulogised the indomitable spirit of the Aran islanders and their relationship with the sea. *The Well of the Saints* (1905) and *The Tinker's Wedding* (1909) were followed by Synge's masterpiece, *The Playboy of the Western World* (1907), which offended the pious people of Dublin and riots broke out at the Abbey Theatre. His last play *Deidre of the Sorrows* (1910) was drawn from Irish myths. Synge wrote in prose, but he exploited with great sensitivity, the poetic suggestiveness of the rhythms, diction and imagery of Irish peasant speech. In this sense, he was an essential part of the Irish dramatic endeavour.

Sean O'Casey (1880-1964) : O'Casey was dogged by ill health during his boyhood. His eyesight was seriously affected and it interrupted his education, to the extent that he was unable to read properly until he was thirteen. He became involved with Irish labour politics and nationalistic sentiments early in life. His first published play was *The Story of Thomas Ashe* (1917). After rejecting at last three of his early plays, the Abbey Theatre staged *The Shadow of a Gunman* (1923) and the one-act play *Kathleen Listens*, which was O'Casey's first experiment with expressionism. *Juno and the Paycock* followed in 1924. His next one-act play, *Nanny's Night Out* (1924) was not well accepted by the highly partisan Abbey

audience, and *The Plough and the Stars* (1926) provoked a full-scale riot because of his unheroic portrayal of the participants of the Easter Rising. After this debacle, O'Casey left Dublin for London. His next play, *The Silver Tassie* (1928), was first staged in London in 1929 and at the Abbey in 1935. *Within the Gates* (1943) was a wholly expressionistic lay set in Hyde Park, London. Sean O'Casey's later plays never rivaled the popularity of his Irish tragic-comedies. He wrote several overtly Communist pieces. His preoccupation with Ireland remained with him in exile, and it is exemplified by plays like *Purple Dust* (1943), *Cock-a-Doodle Dandy* (1949), *The Bishop's Bonfire* (1955), *The Drums of Father Ned* (1959) and *Behind the Green Curtains* (1962).

T. S. Eliot (1888-1965) : Eliot was one of the finest exponents of poetic drama and he contributed greatly to its short revival in the first half of the twentieth century. His attempt to revive verse drama was foreshadowed in *Sweeney Agonistes* (1932) and was advanced further by his pageant play, *The Rock* (1934). His most successful enterprise was *Murder in the Cathedral* (1935), on the subject of the martyrdom of Thomas Becket, killed in the Canterbury cathedral in 1170. Elements from Greek tragedies and the morality play were woven into the dramatic framework. It made a considerable impact, as it dealt with not merely the issue of Roman Catholic martyrdom, but also embraced issues of moral choice and conduct. Eliot's later plays *The Family Reunion* (1939), *The Cocktail Party* (1950), *The Confidential Clerk* (1954) and *The Elder Statesman* (1959) were not very successful in fusing his philosophical ideas with the conventions of the contemporary stage.

Samuel Beckett (1906-1989) : Beckett was one of the most individual voices of the post-war European theatre. Although he wrote in many other genres, Beckett is more widely known for his plays, and above all for *Waiting for Godot* first published in French in 1953 and in English in 1955. He introduced to post-war theatre a philosophical dimension that both befuddled and intrigued audiences. Critics like Martin Esslin saw Beckett as a leading exponent of the 'theatre of the absurd', representing a perception of meaningless and incoherence. Beckett's three full-length plays include *Waiting for Godot*, *Endgame* (first produced in French in 1957 and in English in 1958) and *Happy Days* (1961). Two other plays, *Krapp's Last Tape* (1958) and *Play* (1963) seek to delve into the characters' past, when some action actually happened as does the lively radio-play *All that Fall* (1957). Beckett's stage plays are remarkable for substituting conventional décor with stark images, as in the fragmentary *Breath* (1970). *Come and Go* (1966) which Beckett called a 'dramaticule' showed three women behaving in a regular pattern but not allowing the audience to hear the whispers that motivate their behavior. In *Not I* (1972) and *Footfalls* (1976), he experimented with stage lighting, when all the audience saw was a mouth and feet respectively, as spoken words

reverberated across the stage. *Krapp's Last Tape* features an old man listening to his own voice recorded when he was young.

Beckett, today, stands out as a dramatist whose work has been consistent in its central theme- the paring down of language in a work of art, to produce something meaningful out of the fact that there is no meaning in life, and yet it must be lived. It is not the action of Beckett's plays, but rather the lack of anything happening that arrested the audience's attention. His later work moved further away from any conventional sense of drama. It tended towards fewer characters, extreme concentration and brevity, even more minimalistic sets and an attempt to prune his dialogue to absolute essentials.

ACTIVITY FOR LEARNERS

A NUMBER OF CONCEPTS AND MOVEMENTS CONTINUED IN THE 20TH CENTURY. THEY ARE MODERNISM, EXPRESSIONISM, REALISM, IMPRESSIONISM, EXISTENTIALISM, SURREALISM, EPIC THEATRE, ABSURD THEATRE, PROBLEM PLAY, SYMBOLISM, IRISH DRAMATIC MOVEMENT, POETIC DRAMA AND KITCHEN SINK DRAMA. LEARNERS TO KNOW ABOUT THE CONCEPTS AND MOVEMENTS WHICH CULMINATED IN THE FORMATION OF MODERN BRITISH DRAMA MAY CONSULT BOOKS ON LITERARY TERMS.

4.15.9. Summing Up

This epic journey across the history of modern British drama has been arduous but exciting. As it appears to be quite evident, drama underwent a complete revision and a radical rebirth in the thematic and formal experiments definitive of this theatre. In trying to focus on the major dramatic movements and their important playwrights, the survey has tried to emphasize the aesthetic and theoretical ideas and purposes that redefined the stage during the last years of the nineteenth century and the fifty odd years of the twentieth. In view of this emphasis, the survey has had to ignore chronology regarding the dramatists and their plays, substituting it with a sense of continuity in ideas and dramatic forms which, ironically, developed through opposing aims and practices. Given the wealth and complexity of the drama of this period, an attempt to retain the sense of variety and, in some instances, recount the circumstances and the reception of the plays have been included to suggest the remarkable history of theatre groups, productions, and performances that is becoming the subject of present-day research.

4.15.10. Comprehension Exercises

Long Answer Type Questions :

1. Write an essay on the rise of nationalism in Europe in the 19th and 20th centuries.
2. Who according to you are the major dramatists who contributed in the developments of modern British drama?
3. Assess the contribution of J.M.Synge and G.B.Shaw in development of modern British drama.

Medium Answer Type Questions :

1. Write a short note on the major concepts and movements of the 20th centuries.
2. Write a short note on Irish Literary Theatre.

Short Answer Type Questions :

1. Write short notes on
 - a) Sir Arthur Wing Pinero
 - b) T. S. Eliot
 - c) Sean O' Casey
2. Name the three European dramatists who made a stimulating influence in modern drama. Name the important works of any one of them.

4.15.11. Suggested Reading

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Unit 16 □ George Bernard Shaw: *Pygmalion*

Structure

- 4.16.1. Objectives
- 4.16.2. Introduction - Shaw's Theatre of Ideas
- 4.16.3. Developments in English Drama since the 18th century
- 4.16.4. George Bernard Shaw's Modernism and Influence of Ibsen
- 4.16.5. *Pygmalion*: Introducing the Characters
- 4.16.6. *Pygmalion*: Plot Summary
- 4.16.7. *Pygmalion*: Detailed Act-wise Summaries
- 4.16.8. Themes and Issues
- 4.16.9. *Pygmalion* in Performance & in Popular Culture
- 4.16.10. Summing Up
- 4.16.11. Comprehension Exercises
- 4.16.12. Suggested Reading

4.16.1. Objectives

You have already read about George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950), the Irish born dramatist, literary critic, and political activist in SCC-EG-01. Born in a humble lower-middle class Protestant family in Dublin, he remains one of the most revered pioneers of modernist British drama. Known for his radical political ideologies and satirical style, he won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1925. The Shawian coterie is marked by an innovative and seamless blending of social consciousness with sharp satirical comedy.

In this unit, you will learn about Shaw's modernism, his dramatic style and his incessant engagement with sociopolitical issues of his day through the detailed reading of one of his most celebrated plays, *Pygmalion*. The main objectives of this unit are:

- To briefly acquaint you with the historical trajectory of the development of English drama since the 18th century
- To prepare a comprehensive study on the modernist philosophies of George Bernard Shaw, with special reference to the influence of Henrik Ibsen on Shaw

- To help you understand the basic tenets of the dramatic ethos of George Bernard Shaw
- To offer you a detailed textual analysis of *Pygmalion* and critical readings of the diverse themes dealt with in the play
- To enable you to interrogate further into the various complex socio-cultural issues explored in the text - such as problems of language, class conflicts, gender roles and construction of identity etc. - by offering a list of selected secondary texts

4.16.2. Introduction - Shaw's Theater of Ideas

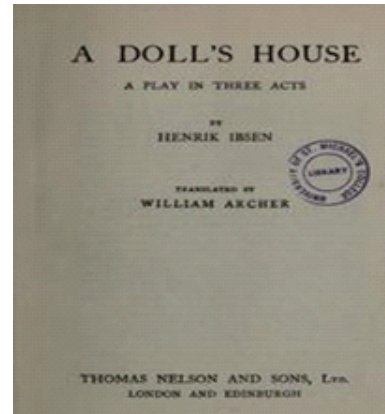
Throughout his extensive career spanning more than sixty years, Shaw has exhibited remarkable diversity in his plays. While studying Shaw's drama, you will notice certain key themes which appear recurrently in his works, such as, socialism, the hypocrisy of war, class conflicts within contemporary British society and a unique treatment of women characters. *Arms and the Man* (1894), *Mrs. Warren's Profession* (1902), *Man and Superman* (1903), *Major Barbara* (1905), *Pygmalion* (1913) and *Heartbreak House* (1919) are among his notable works. It is clear from this account that the play and interplay of ideas, much more than action in the sense of drama, is central to the playwriting of Shaw. But why is it so? To understand this, we need to talk about Shavian drama in brief, and also factor the contexts in which it was majorly created.

In 1889, William Archer's English translation and production of the Norwegian dramatist Henrik Ibsen's *Et Dukkehjem* (first premiered at the Royal Danish Theatre, Copenhagen in 1879) as *A Doll's House* shook the complacency of the bourgeois English audience with its iconoclast heroine, Nora Helmer. Nora ruptured the Victorian ideal of the "angel of the home" by rejecting her husband and children in her quest for self-betterment. As you have learned in the earlier section, Shaw's 'theater of ideas' was born from this radicalization of the traditional English theater of "well-made plays" of the 19th century (French: *la pièce bien faite*). It discarded dramatic conservatism in favor of a new kind of narrative that would accommodate the artist's growing need to express the problems of a rapidly changing world. Similarly, in *Pygmalion* (subtitled "A Romance in Five Acts") Shaw employs and subsequently deconstructs the conventional ideas and expectations associated with the term 'romance'. He creates a clever narrative where appearance and reality are often manipulated and used interchangeably.

Shaw's early plays can be broadly grouped into two categories. He published seven plays in two volumes, entitled *Plays: Pleasant and Unpleasant* in 1898. The first volume contained the 'Plays Unpleasant'. It was comprised of *Widowers' House* (1892), *Mrs. Warren's*

Profession (written in 1893, but not performed until 1902 due to censorship) and *The Philanderer* (also written in 1893 and performed in 1902). Of these, *Widowers' House* most directly exhibits Ibsen's influence on Shaw. These morbidly satirical plays were followed by a second volume of four pleasant plays, namely *Arms and the Man* (the first of the 'Pleasant' plays), *Candida* (1897), *The Man of Destiny* (1897) and *You Can Never Tell* (1899).

The Plays Pleasant are marked by a gentle manner of narration and more or less 'happy' plot resolutions, as the name suggests. The 'Unpleasant' plays, on the hand, delivered a stringent critique against what Shaw perceived to be hypocrisy of the British audience, through his exploration of contemporary social problems. Originally, the early 'pleasant' plays intended to attract and appease the producers and audiences who were offended by his more caustic satires. Yet, in both cases, laughter is constantly threatened by a sense of unease; an unnerving quality pervades Shaw's theater that reminds the audience of the inherent ambiguity in Shavian humour.



4.16.3. Developments in English Drama since the 18th century

After the prolific outpourings of sentimental and domestic dramas of the 18th century, Britain saw a waning in the dramatic output in the early 19th century. The rise of Romanticism redirected the collective literary effort of the nation towards poetry and, to a certain degree, to prose. However, that does not imply there was no dramatic production at all. In fact, the early 19th century saw a rising demand for entertainment.

Under the **Licensing Act of 1737**, Drury Lane and Covent Garden were the only two theaters in London which were allowed to stage plays (*legitimate drama*). However, numerous non-patented (unauthorized) theaters cropped up and became immensely popular. The plays produced by such theaters were called *illegitimate drama*. The Romantic age saw a considerable rise of burlesque and melodrama, which were often accompanied by musical interludes. However, in the aftermath of the War of Independence in America (1776) and the French Revolution

CLOSET DRAMA refers to the plays that are not intended for the stage. They are designed to be read (by a single reader or a group of readers) rather than enacted. Some celebrated closet plays are *Samson Agonistes* (1671) by John Milton and *The Dynasts* (1903-08) by Thomas Hardy.

(1789), the real impetus behind the notable dramatic productions of the early 19th century was driven by socio-political agendas. Political censorship and control over the theaters also

Drury Lane theater, 1775



greatly contributed to this decline in drama in the early 19th century. Celebrated Romantic poets like Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, Byron and Keats produced plays and lyrical dramas that were distinctly influenced by these historical events. William Wordsworth, for instance, wrote *The Borderers* (1796-97) and Samuel Taylor Coleridge wrote *The Fall of Robespierre* (1794) in collaboration with Robert Southey. Both the plays were inspired by the French Revolution. Coleridge's next play *Osorio* (1797) was, incidentally, not approved for performance by R. B. Sheridan

who was the manager of Drury Lane Theater. P.B Shelley's 1819 plays *Prometheus Unbound* and *The Cenci* were also similar products of the poet's deep faith in the ideals of democracy, equality and liberty upheld by the French Revolution. While *Prometheus Unbound* was a **closet drama**, *The Cenci* was specifically written for the stage. However, it was rejected by Covent Garden Theater. Neither Coleridge nor Shelley saw much success as dramatists, though they produced plays throughout their career. John Keats produced historical plays such as *Otho the Great* (1819) and *King Stephen* (1819). Among the great Romantic poets of the time, only Lord Byron had direct professional theatrical connections, as he was a part of the management committee at Drury Lane. However, while he produced successful poetic dramas like *Manfred* (1817) and *Cain* (1821), he did not create plays intended for the stage. Overall, there was a distinct preference for closet dramas during the Romantic age, as they were often utilised as poetic vehicles for the authors' revolutionary political and social ideologies.

The Licensing Act, 1737 granted the Lord Chamberlain executive right to exert control over the Theaters, Companies and, consequently, the dramas staged in the playhouses. The Masters of Revel, or the official supervisors of all court entertainment, became direct subordinates of the Lord Chamberlain, who reserved the right to censor any plays produced during this time.

Drama revived its popularity in the Victorian age (1837-1901). The infamous Licensing Act of 1737 was relaxed in 1843, but not repealed until 1968. This period saw the rise of great playwrights like Oscar Wilde, J.M Synge and George Bernard Shaw. This era is also marked by the pivotal Irish Literary Renaissance and the establishment of the famous Abbey Theater by Lady Gregory, W.B Yeats and Synge. There is a shift from the historical and closet

dramas of the earlier decades to a more naturalistic mode of writing. The plays of this time often exhibit incisive social satire which reflects the modernist philosophies and social consciousness of these writers. Comedy and slapstick melodrama continued to attract its niche audience, though the stage was now being set for a new kind of drama for a new modern world.

4.16.4. George Bernard Shaw's Modernism and Influence of Ibsen

In Module 1, you have already learned about the historical context of the rise of modernism and the key aspects associated with the art produced during the modernist era. To understand and appreciate the developmental trajectory of modern theater, in particular, you need to know about the three great authors of the late 19th century: the Norwegian playwright, Henrik Ibsen (1828-1906) whose influence we have already mentioned; the Swedish dramatist - August Strindberg (1849-1912); and the Russian writer, Anton Chekov (1860-1904).

This trio of literary geniuses heralded the advent of modernism in Europe, which was later taken up by British writers such as George Bernard Shaw, J.M Synge, Sean O'Casey and John Galsworthy. Ibsen, in particular, has been lauded by John Fletcher and James McFarlane as "the origin and impetus" of modern drama. A reading of the Shavian canon requires a close study of Ibsen's modernism, which exerted a foundational influence on Shaw. Ibsen's insistence on social freedom through individual emancipation created radically subversive and rebellious characters. In Toril Moi's assessment, his plays use theatricality to highlight the moral and philosophical ambiguities of the modern society.

Shaw's takes up Ibsen's brand of social realism for his own creative purposes as he attempts to understand and express the uncertainty of the modern world, rising from the fractured remains of the old order. Shaw's plays served as the model for dramatists throughout the modernist period and continued to exert significant influence even after his death. One crucial aspect of Shaw's modernism was, of course, his "Ibsenism". Incidentally, William Archer, a Scotsman and one of the earliest translators of Ibsen's plays, was a close compatriot and mentor of Shaw's and played a critical role in his early career as a playwright.

In his 1891 essay, *Quintessence of Ibsenism*, Shaw pays tribute to the great modernist stalwart through a detailed critical reading of Ibsen's works. Another interesting instance of his fascination with Ibsen is witnessed in his play *The Philanderer* (1893), where he brings in two opposing groups of characters - "Ibsenites and non-Ibsenites" - and manipulates them

into a novel and comic confrontation. In fact, along with *Quintessence of Ibsenism*, Shaw authored two other critical volumes on Ibsen's works: *Our Theatres in the Nineties* and *The Prefaces*. Though it was Edmund Gosse, an English author and translator, who introduced the Norwegian playwright to the English readers and audience, critics like Javier Ortiz recognize Shaw as the "authentic exponent of Ibsen's message to the British public." By the 1890s, Ibsen's works gained favor with a group of English and Irish writers who were the proponents of the avant-garde 'New Theatre' of the 1880s.

Ibsen's "message" was one of progressive social remaking, assisted by his feminist and socialist ideologies. Shaw drew inspiration from Ibsen and re-hauled the romantic tropes of the conventional "well-made plays" English theater into his own innovative "theater of ideas". You can clearly discern Ibsen's influence in several key aspects of Shaw's drama. Take the example of *Candida*, for instance. It is clearly a counter-narrative to *A Doll's House*. *Candida* represents the Shavian version of the New Woman, which both draws from and contrasts against Ibsen's emancipated women characters such as Nora Helmer (*A Doll's House*, 1879) and Rebecca West (*Rosmersholm*, 1886).

Critically influenced by Marx, Shaw's socialist ideals, along with his affiliation with the Fabian Society from 1900-1913, firmly established him as an iconoclast who prioritized utilitarianism over aesthetics. Shaw's socialist realism in his plays, therefore, had a very definite purpose. He sought positive and progressive social reforms. In 1976, Shaw famously claimed, "For art's sake alone I would not face the toil of writing a single sentence." Furthermore, Shaw invested his plays with the Irish disdain for class hierarchies, as evidenced by his ardent socialist and Fabian philosophies.

Shaw believed in a "scientific religion" - a post-Darwinian vision that he developed from the combined ideologies of significant 19th-century thinkers such as Henri Bergson ('Creative Evolution') and Jean-Baptiste Lamarck (theory of Functional Adaptation) along with Schopenhauer ("will") and Nietzsche ('Superman'). Combining these various strands of thoughts, Shaw appropriated Bergson's idea of *élan vital* or life force and awaits the arrival of an ideal Nietzschean Superman (*Übermensch*). For Shaw, the life force exists both within and without human beings, and it is by harnessing the energy of the *élan vital* through the collective

Some Important Influences on Shaw:

- Henrik Ibsen
- Karl Marx
- Henri Bergson
- Jean-Baptiste Lamarck

"universal will", that man can evolve into the Superman, who would replace God and herald a perfect world where all moral, social and metaphysical problems would cease to exist. This Shavian ideology is most prominently portrayed in *Man and Superman*.

4.16.5. Pygmalion: Introducing the Characters

Henry Higgins : Higgins is a scion of an upper-class family and a professor of phonetics who plans to conduct a social experiment involving Eliza Doolittle, a brash and impoverished flower girl. He resolves to transform the boisterous cockney girl into a fine lady fit for high society by teaching her to speak like one in three months. He is seen as an ardent academician who views people only as viable subjects for his theories and experimentations. He diligently documents his research with photographic materials. Higgins is the creator of Higgins' Universal Alphabet, a phonetic tool with which he can identify different dialects. Though he belongs to a wealthy family and is a member of the high society, Higgins is, nevertheless, extremely critical of the rigid rules of polite society. His undertaking of Eliza Doolittle's transformation can be seen as a mockery and transgression of such aristocratic social codes. He is presented as a rude, at times immature, but well-meaning man. Higgins' preoccupation with his experiment blinds him to his own desire for Eliza and he is only brought to the realization when Eliza finally leaves him. He is the Shavian recreation of the mythic Pygmalion.

Eliza Doolittle : Eliza Doolittle is a loud-mouthed cockney flower-girl, who catches Higgins' eye at the opening of the play while selling flowers on the streets of London on a rainy night. She does not fit the conventional mold of the romantic heroine. Her character serves as a foil to the romantic traditions of the "well-made plays" which is a significant aspect of Shaw's theater. She is a sassy, unpolished young woman who aspires to work in a flower shop but cannot get hired because of her unkempt appearance and flawed speech. She approaches Higgins and requests him to train her so that she can correct her speech. Initially, her character serves as a tool for Higgins' experiment. She retains some part of her old self by holds on to her sassiness but gradually loses her sense of identity as her transformation proceeds. She is often casually bullied and belittled by Higgins, but still desires his attention and admiration. Paradoxically, she gains respect in Higgins' eyes only when she finally becomes a self-sufficient woman who no longer requires him in her life. She is the Shavian version of the mythic Galatea.

Colonel Pickering : Colonel Pickering is a retired military officer belonging to the upper class. He is a friend and colleague of Henry Higgins and shares the latter's love and talent for phonetics. He has authored a book called *Spoken Sanskrit*. He is a gentlemanly, sociable and compassionate man who serves as a foil to the unsocial, domineering and churlish Higgins.

He is uniformly civil. His behavior to Eliza is courteous, even when she is a lowly flower girl. He participates in Higgins' experiment by betting money on it. He promises to cover the entire expense of the experiment if Higgins succeeds in transforming Eliza into a fine lady. However, while Higgins imparts the technical knowledge of phonetics to correct Eliza's flawed speech, it is Pickering's respectful attitude towards her that helps her gain a sense of self-worth and dignity.

Alfred Doolittle : Alfred Doolittle is Eliza's father and an elderly but energetic man of lowly birth. He works as a dustman and speaks with a Welsh accent. He is shown to be a rapacious and greedy man, devoid of conscience. He accompanies Eliza when she arrives at Higgins' house and proposes to sell her to Higgins for five pounds so that he may buy alcohol. His excesses, brashness and unapologetic greed appeal to Higgins' sense of humor and he laughingly asks Alfred to become a lecturer on moral reform, since he is an expert on middle-class morality. While, Alfred's lack of a moral compass is evident from his apathetic attitude to his daughter, he is peculiarly honest about himself. He lacks the trappings of civilized language and, therefore, lacks the deception and hypocrisy that is born of polite language.

Mrs. Higgins : Mrs. Higgins is the mother of Henry Higgins, who loves her son but is not blind to his vagaries. She is a highborn woman and often dissuades Higgins from visiting her when she entertains guests. She disapproves of the Eliza Doolittle experiment and often treats Higgins and Pickering as thoughtless juveniles. She is clearly dubious about the outcome of the experiment and is justifiably worried about Eliza's future. Henry Higgins clearly sees his mother as a model of female excellence. While Higgins lacks self-awareness as he is immersed in his illusions of greatness, Mrs. Higgins is shown to be highly perceptive and practical.

Freddy Eynsford-Hill : Freddy is a pleasant but weak-willed young man, who is dominated by his mother and sister. The Eynsford-Hills are of genteel birth. But with their dwindling finances, they are struggling to uphold their image of gentility in order to fit into the upper-class society. Henry Higgins summarily dismisses Freddy as a "fool". He falls in love with Eliza and courts her when she enters the polite society. In Shaw's controversial prose sequel, he marries Eliza.

Mrs. Pearce : Mrs. Pearce is Henry Higgins' housekeeper. She is charged with Eliza's care when she first arrives at his house. She is clear-sighted and intelligent and foresees the problems that would arise for the Eliza after the experiment is over. She is sympathetic to Eliza from the very beginning.

4.16.6. Pygmalion: Plot Summary

A group of people take shelter at St. Paul's church in Covent Garden on a rainy summer night where Eliza Doolittle, an impoverished Cockney girl, is selling flowers. Mrs. Eynsford-Hill is present, along with her daughter, and she is waiting for her son, Freddy, who has gone to call to a cab. Eliza enters into an altercation with Freddy who has bumped into her and scatters her wares. Colonel Pickering enters. She tries to convince the Colonel to buy flowers. He politely declines but offers her some money. Eliza is warned by bystanders that there is a man behind her who is noting down everything she says. The man turns out to be Henry Higgins, a famous professor of phonetics. He is capable of figuring out people's birthplaces from their accents. Higgins boasts that he can transform the sassy and graceless Eliza into a lady within months, by helping her acquire polite speech and social graces that can fool the London society into believing that she is a duchess. It turns out that the Colonel, himself a noted linguist, has come to London with the sole purpose of meeting Higgins.

The next day, Eliza comes to Higgins' home and requests him to give her lessons which would improve her speech and help her get a job in a flower shop. Higgins makes fun of her, but eventually agrees, as the idea of remaking Eliza into a 'duchess' intrigues and challenges him. Colonel Pickering also excitedly participates in the project by wagering that he would bear the expense of the experiment if Higgins can fulfill his claim within the stipulated time. He instructs Mrs. Pearce to give Eliza a bath and get her new clothes. Alfred Doolittle, Eliza's greedy and alcoholic father, comes to Higgins' house and offers to trade Eliza to him for five pounds which he intends to spend on drinks. Higgins, amused by the man's caustic views on life and society, gives him the money after bantering with him for a while. While leaving, Doolittle sees Eliza, who is now bathed and clean, but cannot recognize her.

Eliza's training begins. After a few months of learning proper ways of speaking, Eliza faces two trials. In the first, she is formally introduced to the Eynsford-Hills at Mrs. Higgins' house on her 'receiving day'. Freddy is immediately attracted to Eliza, though he does not recognize her as a flower girl he had bumped into at Covent Garden. Her painstakingly correct yet inappropriate speech causes some bewilderment as well as amusement among the assembled guests. In this humorous episode, Eliza narrates the death of her aunt in rigidly correct English, but it contains explicit details that belie the apparent politeness of her speech. Mrs. Higgins, who disapproves of the Eliza Doolittle experiment, warns Higgins and Colonel Pickering that Eliza is not ready for society.

The next phase of the plays opens with the two gentlemen returning from a party with Eliza. They are in high spirits and in a self-congratulatory mood as they have successfully passed off Eliza as a Duchess at the Ambassador's garden party. This was the second trial. They contribute their success solely to their knowledge of phonetics and ignore Eliza's own efforts in the matter. Eliza realizes that since the experiment is now over, her future is uncertain. She fears that she will have to return to her previous pitiable existence. She becomes angry at Higgins and throws his slippers at him. Higgins does not understand the cause of Eliza's anger and suggests that she may now marry someone. Eliza returns all her clothes and jewelry and Higgins assures her that they all belong to her now.

Next morning, Higgins arrives at his mother's house to look for Eliza who has run away. He is extremely worried. An enraged Alfred Doolittle follows Higgins. It is revealed that Higgins had falsely boasted to someone about Mr. Doolittle's aptitude as the "most original moralist" and a deceased millionaire had left all his money to him in a trust. Mrs. Higgins is hiding Eliza from Higgins and Colonel Pickering and scolds them for their cavalier treatment of her feelings. Eliza enters the drawing room and warmly thanks Colonel Pickering for his respectful behavior to her. She is, however, unforgiving towards Higgins and threatens that she would abandon him to work for a rival phonetician. Higgins tries to convince her to return with him. But she declines. In the end, however, it is uncertain which path Eliza would follow, since she has been inducted into the ways of the upper-class, has a newly gained sense of self-respect and independence and also a prospective groom in the besotted Freddy.

4.16.7. Detailed Act-wise Summaries

Act 1 Summary

On a stormy summer night in London, several people are caught in the heavy rains and gather under a portico of St. Paul's Church in Covent Garden. Among the assembled people, are Mrs. Eynsford-Hill, her daughter, Clara and her son, Freddy. Freddy is a weak-willed young man, who is bullied by his mother and sister into looking for a taxi for them in the rain. He bumps into a flower girl and scatters her wares. Surprisingly, the young woman addresses him by his name and exclaims: "Nah, then, Freddy: look wh'y' gowin', deah." Mrs. Eynsford-Hill is morbidly curious to find out how a lowly flower girl knows Freddy's name. The flower girl - Eliza - demands recompense for the ruined flowers, and Mrs. Eynsford-Hill pays her despite Clara's protests. It is then revealed that Eliza calls all men by generic names like Freddy or Charlie.

Eliza encounters Colonel Pickering - "an elderly gentleman of amiable military type" - who has arrived under the portico for shelter, and tries to sell her flowers. He refuses to buy them, as he has no change. Eliza persists. At this point, a nearby hawker brings Eliza's attention to a strange man who had been taking note of all that she does and says. Afraid of being mistaken as a prostitute soliciting a prospective client, Eliza self-defensively exclaims: "I am a good girl, I am." Her loud claims that she is allowed to sell flowers there draws the crowd's attention. The man taking notes interjects at this point and asks Eliza to "shut up". He is Professor Higgins, an expert on phonetics, and the notes he had taken is a shorthand transcript of Eliza's cockney speech.

Colonel Pickering and the other people present begin to question Higgins about the specifics of his talents. Higgins demonstrates his aptitude by accurately identifying the birth place and residence of people based on their accents. The Colonel reveals himself as an enthusiast of phonetic and languages claims that he trains people in proper speech so that they may elevate their social ranks. Higgins then boasts that he can transform Eliza into a duchess in three months: "in three months I could pass that girl off as a duchess at an ambassador's garden party." Colonel Pickering then introduces himself as the author of *Spoken Sanskrit* and as "a student of Indian dialects" to Higgins, the author of *Universal Alphabet*. It turns out that they are admirers of each other's works and that Pickering has come to England specifically to meet Higgins and the latter had planned a journey to India to meet the colonel. As they are about to depart together for supper, engrossed in their mutual interest, Eliza interrupts them and asks for money for rent, Higgins is skeptical about her claim but nevertheless pays her with some coins. This unexpected gain allowed Eliza to take the taxi brought by Freddy, only to find that his mother and sister have abandoned him.

Act II Summary

The second act opens at Higgins' laboratory at Wimpole Street at 11 a.m. next morning. Higgins discusses his work with Colonel Pickering, demonstrating the use of various recording devices and phonetic tools for scientific experimentations such as a phonograph, laryngoscope, 'tiny brogan pipes with bellows', as Shaw specifies in his stage directions to the scene. Colonel Pickering admiringly compliments Higgins' on his work. At this point, Mrs. Pearce interrupts their discussions to inform Higgins that a young woman has come to meet him. She refers to the woman as "quite a common girl [...] Very common, indeed." She chidingly reproves Higgins: "but really you see such queer people sometimes-you'll excuse me, I'm sure, sir."

Eliza, the flower girl, enters in an odd, but moderately clean outfit. Higgins dismisses her from the outset and asks her to leave. Eliza refuses to be bullied. Higgins' recognizes her and

is irritated by her presence. He rudely claims that "She's of no use" as he has already learned all about her "Lisson Grove lingo". His behavior to Eliza is contrasted against Colonel Pickering's sympathy. Eliza had been struck by Higgins' claim that he can transform her into a duchess and wants to take speaking lessons from him so that she may get a job at an upscale flower shop and be "a lady". Higgins' dismissive attitude to Eliza can also be attributed to the fact that he makes no distinction between classes or genders, as Shaw mentions in his stage direction.

With innate politeness, Colonel Pickering respectfully addresses Eliza as "Ms. Doolittle" and offers her a seat. She offers Higgins a shilling (twenty-five cents) an hour for lessons. This is a very small sum of money, but Higgins realizes that, for Eliza, the amount is indeed significant. He considers her request. Colonel Pickering is also intrigued and wagers that if Higgins can fool the high society into believing that Eliza is a duchess at the Ambassador's garden party, then he will bear all costs of the experiment. The scene vacillates between the conversations among these three characters as Higgins alternately berates and makes fun of Eliza, she threatens to leave him and Colonel Pickering tries to mediate. Higgins offers to host Eliza at his home for six months, where she will be trained in proper speech and polite manners. He instructs Mrs. Pearce to take her for a bath and provide her with clean clothing. Higgins estimates that he can turn Eliza from a "draggletailed guttersnipe" into a Duchess in "six months-in three if she has a good ear and a quick tongue."

Mrs. Pearce asks Higgins to be conscious of his manners as a young woman is staying with them. She wonders what would befall Eliza at the end of the experiment. Colonel Pickering concerned for Eliza's virtue, conscientiously, inquires after Higgins' motives and intentions. Higgins reveals that he has never had many private interactions with women because they become a bother and a "damned nuisance" when they enter a man's life. He claims to be a "confirmed old bachelor".

At this point, Alfred Doolittle arrives to purportedly save his daughter from ruining her honor. However, instead of protesting, Higgins tells Doolittle to take away Eliza at once. Alfred Doolittle is flustered since he does not want her back but only intends to extort money from Higgins. He wants five pounds to spend on alcohol. When Colonel Pickering berates him for having no morals, he says: "What's a five-pound note to you? What's Eliza to me?" He identifies himself as one of the "undeserving poor" and cynically expounds on middle-class morality. Doolittle's Welsh accent and his brash dishonesty fascinate and amuse Higgins. He gives him the money.

Eliza enters wearing a clean blue kimono. Alfred cannot recognize his daughter and is surprised to find her look so good. Eliza warns the men that her father must have come for

money that would waste on drinks. She wants to show off her new clothes to the neighborhood but is chided by Higgins for her vanity. The men agree that they have undertaken a tough job.

Act III Summary

The scenes open in Mrs. Higgins' drawing room. Higgins visits Mrs. Higgins, his mother, on her receiving day or "at-home day". Mrs. Higgins is displeased with Higgins' sudden arrival as she deplores his lack of polite graces and social manners. "Nonsense," Higgins impatiently remarks, "I know I have no small talk; but people don't mind." In fact, Higgins had promised his mother that he would not appear before her guests. Higgins explains his wager with Colonel Pickering. He tells Mrs. Higgins that he has invited the subject of his experiment - a girl he had "picked up" - and wants her to observe how and what she speaks. Mrs. Higgins is reluctant to receive an impoverished commoner in her drawing room. Now, do you remember the Eynford-Hills from Act 1? The parlor maid enters and informs them of Mrs. Eynsford-Hill's arrival, along with Miss Clara Eynsford-Hill. Higgins vaguely remembers their accents from their encounter at Covent Garden but cannot exactly recall them. They are soon followed by Colonel Pickering and Freddy Eynsford-Hill. Higgins is excited to get a large audience to showcase and gauge Eliza's improvement.

Eliza is announced by the parlor maid. She greets everyone with painstakingly accurate "How do you do"-s. She proceeds to make tortuously pedantic conversation: for instance, in response to "Do you think it will rain?" she replies, "The shallow depression in the west of these islands is likely to move slowly in an easterly direction. There are no indications of any great change in the barometrical situation." She exhibits her carefully-tutored speech with great success until Mrs. Eynsford-Hill brings up the topic influenza which propels her into an involved diatribe about an aunt's death from flu. Her old cockney accent re-emerges and she inadvertently reveals embarrassing details of her past life such as Alfred's alcoholism. Freddy, already besotted with Eliza, mistakes her stilted attempts at genteel conversation as the "new small talk" and is deeply impressed by her.

Freddy offers to walk Eliza home, but she intends to take a taxi. Like Freddy, his sister Clara is also extremely impressed with Eliza and attempts to emulate her unusual speech. After the guests have departed, Mrs. Higgins scolds Higgins, saying that Eliza would never learn to be genteel if she lives in his crude and graceless company. She inquires after Eliza's living situation with him and sarcastically calls the two men "a pair of pretty babies playing with [their] living doll". After Higgins and Colonel Pickering have left, Mrs. Higgins angrily mourns their idiocy and exclaims "men! men!! men!!!" in an exasperated expletive.

Act IV Summary

The act opens in Higgins' house at midnight after the ambassador's garden party where he has introduced and convincingly passed Eliza off as a duchess to the assembled attendees with resounding success. The scene opens as Higgins and Colonel Pickering congratulate themselves on the successful completion of the experiment, though Pickering has lost their original bet. They are excited about their triumph. Eliza enters the room. She is well-dressed in but "she is tired: her pallor contrasts strongly with her dark eyes and hair; and her expression is almost tragic." She is "brooding and silent." Her depressive mood goes unnoticed by Higgins and Colonel Pickering as they continue to talk excitedly about the garden party. Higgins looks for his slippers and Eliza silently goes out of the room to bring them. She places them at his feet. Higgins is surprised by the sudden appearance of his slippers, as he has not noticed Eliza returning with them. It is almost as though he doesn't even register her presence. Higgins exclaims, "Thank god, it's over", which causes Eliza to flinch "violently; but they take no notice of her".

They ignore Eliza completely and discuss her performance without including her in the conversation. When Colonel Pickering claims that Eliza didn't seem nervous at all at the party Higgins says:

"Oh, she wasn't nervous. I knew she'd be all right. No, it's the strain of putting the job through all these months that has told on me. It was interesting enough at first, while we were at the phonetics; but after that I got deadly sick of it. If I hadn't backed myself to do it I should have chucked the whole thing up two months ago. It was a silly notion: the whole thing has been a bore."

As Higgins goes on complaining to Colonel Pickering about how tiresome the whole duration of the experiment has been, "Eliza's beauty turns murderous." Colonel Pickering, however, expresses his enjoyment in the charade and Eliza's competence in carrying it off successfully. He decides to retire for the night, followed by Higgins.

Eliza loses her temper at their dismissive attitude towards her and throws herself on the floor in anger. Higgins re-enters looking for his slippers. Furious, she hurls them at him. Shocked at this burst of violence, he pulls her up from the floor. Eliza angrily calls him a selfish brute and asks - "Why didn't you leave me where you picked me out of-in the gutter? You thank God it's all over, and that now you can throw me back again there, do you?" Argument ensues. Eliza expresses doubt and fear about her future now that the experiment is over. She asks: "What am I fit for? What have you left me fit for? Where am I to go? What am I to do? What's to

become of me?" Higgins callously dismisses her concerns: "What does it matter what becomes of you?" Then he tries to pacify her by saying that she can either get married or she may open a flower shop. Eliza tells Higgins that she wishes he had left her where she was.

Eliza eventually calms down and asks if her clothes belong to her or Colonel Pickering who has paid for them. She says that she does not want to be accused of thievery if she keeps them for herself. Higgins tells her that everything except the jewels (which were rented) belonged to her. She takes off her jewelry and gives them to Higgins for safe-keeping. She also returns a ring Higgins has gifted to her. Enraged, he throws it into the furnace. Eliza, frightened, covers her face and implores him to not hurt her. Higgins feels wounded and angry at her behavior and he leaves the room after calling her a "heartless guttersnipe". Eliza is triumphant in achieving this small victory over Higgins.

Act V Summary

The scene is set in Mrs. Higgins' house. The parlor maid announces the arrival of Higgins and Colonel Pickering and informs Mrs. Higgins that they are telephoning the police downstairs. Higgins enters, frantic and "in a state". He is looking for Eliza who has left his home without informing him and has come back to collect her clothes in the morning. Higgins is upset at Mrs. Pearce for letting her leave without Higgins' knowledge. Mrs. Higgins supports Eliza's right to leave if she wishes so and Higgins counters by saying that he cannot find anything since Eliza took care of his appointments and such.

Colonel Pickering enters. He informs Higgins that the police inspector is suspicious of their motives and has "made a lot of difficulties" instead of helping them. Mrs. Higgins reprimands them for their childishness and for thoughtlessly setting the police after Eliza.

The maid announces the arrival of Alfred Doolittle. He enters, dressed magnificently in fashionable clothes. Alfred is enraged at Higgins and accuses him of having ruined his life and for having "Tied [him] up and delivered [him] into the hands of middle-class morality". It is revealed that Higgins had jokingly referred to Doolittle as "the most original moralist at present in England" to a wealthy American who wanted to donate five million pounds to Moral Reform Societies. On Higgins' reference, he contracted Doolittle to speak on moral matters for the Wannafeller Moral Reform World League for an annuity of three thousand pounds. He claims his life has been burdened with "middle-class morality" and has forced him to discard his careless, irresponsible ways. Higgins and Doolittle quarrel as each claim ownership over Eliza. Mrs. Higgins summons Eliza and asks Doolittle to step outside on the balcony so that she is spared the shock of seeing her father so transformed.

Eliza enters. Colonel Pickering pleads with Eliza to return. She thanks him for his courteousness towards her. She claims that it was his gentlemanly and chivalrous behavior that taught her to respect herself and to become more ladylike. He contrasts Higgins dismissive attitude with the Colonel's attentive politeness:

"[...] the difference between a lady and a flower girl is not how she behaves, but how she's treated. I shall always be a flower girl to Professor Higgins, because he always treats me as a flower girl, and always will; but I know I can be a lady to you, because you always treat me as a lady, and always will."

Higgins warns that she will "relapse" in a matter of weeks without his guidance. Doolittle enters. Eliza is deeply shocked by her father's altered appearance. He informs Eliza that he is going to St. George's church to marry her stepmother, who has also fallen victim of middle-class morality. Doolittle invites Mrs. Higgins and Colonel Pickering to attend his wedding as well. They leave to get ready.

An argument ensues between Eliza and Higgins. He claims that he is equally rude to everyone and therefore cannot be particularly accused of treating Eliza badly. He offers to adopt her as his daughter or, alternatively, to marry her off to Pickering. His blindness to Eliza's true feelings angers her and she disclaims any wish to marry Pickering and even Higgins, who is closer to her age. Eliza casually refers to Freddy who regularly sends her love letters. Higgins is annoyed. She further enrages him by claiming that she'd marry Freddy and take up a position as an assistant with Professor Nepean, who is Higgins' professional rival. Perversely, Higgins is deeply impressed by Eliza's show of spirit which attracts him more than her submissiveness:

"You damned impudent slut, you! But it's better than sniveling; better than fetching slippers and finding spectacles, isn't it? [Rising] By George, Eliza, I said I'd make a woman of you; and I have. I like you like this."

Mrs. Higgins comes to take Eliza to the wedding. Before leaving, Higgins reverts back to his old self and asks her to order some ham and cheese, a pair of reindeer gloves and a tie to "match that new suit". She responds by rudely asking him to buy them himself and leaves. The play ends with Higgins jovially informing his mother that "she'll buy 'em all right enough". However, it is uncertain whether Eliza will ultimately follow his directive (which will indicate her reconciliation with Higgins) or not.

4.16.8. Themes and Issues

➤ The Title of the Play:

The title of the play is famously derived from the tenth book of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, which features a sculptor from Cyprus named Pygmalion. He crafts an ivory statue of a woman which embodies his vision of ideal femininity and beauty. Pygmalion is so enamored by the perfection of his own creation that he falls in love with it. He passionately prays to Aphrodite, the goddess of love, who is moved by his devotion and brings the statue to life, in the form of a beautiful woman. Pygmalion names his beloved Galatea and marries her. They later bear a son named Paphos. Jean-Jacques Rousseau (*Pygmalion*, 1770; a play), Johann Wolfgang Goethe (*Pygmalion*, 1767; a poem) and Franz von Suppé (*Die Schöne Galathee*, 1865; an opera) have also utilized the myth of Pygmalion and Galatea in their works.

Shaw appropriated the myth to serve certain very specific purposes. While Alfred Doolittle remains Eliza's biological "creator", she is presented in the play as Higgins' "creation" - in the sense that he gives "birth" to a new/better version of her. This betterment is, of course, a social elevation, achieved through stringent lessons in polite speech and manners. Unlike the classical myth, the characters do not find happiness in love and matrimony. Instead, it is Higgins' treatment of her that drives Eliza away and propels her to seek self-respect and independence. Eliza, incidentally, is truly brought to life, only when she rejects the control and authority of her male creator, Higgins. These digressions from the classical Greek myth allow Shaw to create a narrative that subverts the traditional expectations of a romantic comedy or a fairy tale, by implicating both the creator and creation in the complicated questions surrounding ownership and agency.

➤ Romance:

In the Introductory section of this Unit, you have already briefly learned about Shaw's Theater of Ideas and the subversive treatment of 'romance' in his plays. Shaw's *Pygmalion* is subtitled 'A Romance in Five Acts'. The term 'romance' is used to highlight the play's deviations from the traditional ideas associated with the label. In his infamous prose sequel to the play, Shaw claims that the term indicates an improbable or a fantastical situation (such as Eliza's transformation from a commoner to a lady) and has nothing to do with love.

Unlike, Ovid's myth, the play does not end with matrimony, nor does it offer a satisfactory resolution of the conflict between Shaw's Pygmalion (Higgins) and Galatea (Eliza). The traditional fairy tale structure is disrupted in the end as Eliza's love for Higgins is left unspoken and unfulfilled. While there are clear indications in the play about Higgins' affection towards

his "creation", he makes no discernible effort to establish a romantic relationship with Eliza. Though he tries to lure her back with promises of adopting her as a "daughter" and even quarrels with Alfred Doolittle about his ownership over Eliza, he never confesses his love for her.

Higgins is no perfect hero: he is harsh, unfeeling and lacking in empathy. He is a "confirmed old bachelor", conspicuously devoid of social graces. Similarly, Eliza, with her brash tongue and lowly antics, disrupts the stereotype of a romantic heroine. She is enraged by Higgins' dismissal of Eliza's own effort at re-creating herself and assumes that her transformation is a product of his genius only. Moreover, her active pursuit of socio-economic advancement also belies the passivity associated with women protagonists in traditional romances. Thus, while the 'rags to riches' story does have elements of a fairy tale romance, the uncertainty and poignancy of the ending operates as a discordant reminder of Shaw's infamous ambiguity about love and marriage. The title sets up the audience for failure. The matrimonial expectation suggested by the title is thwarted in the ending as Eliza destroys the masculine fantasy of a silent, submissive helpmate.

➤ **Women and Gender Roles :**

The Shawian heroines are notorious for subverting masculine expectations by conforming to the traditional tropes which attempt to appropriate women as the stereotypical 'angels of the hearth', who are perpetually submissive and silent. The evolution of Shaw's women characters, from Elizabeth Warren to Candida to Eliza Doolittle to Joan of Arc, show an increasing demand for greater social mobility and freedom. Shaw championed the cause of women's liberation by creating heroines who reject the institutional imposition of inferiority by challenging prescribed gender roles. From Raina's naïve romanticism and hero-worship, Candida's marital compromise with Morell to Eliza Doolittle's vocal rejection of male patronage and domination, the development of Shaw's heroines clearly exhibit his impatience with the unequal institution of marriage.

Critics believe that Shaw's attitude towards women had been colored by his complex relationship with his mother. Disappointed by her husband's alcoholism and the overall financial struggles of the Shaw family, Lucinda Elizabeth Shaw withdrew emotionally from both her husband and her son, lavishing her affections on her two daughters instead. Shaw's eagerness for his mother's approval and love and her emotional distance from his affected own history with women. Shaw's mother, incidentally, left her husband and her unhappy marriage to settle with a music teacher named Vandeleur Lee. Eliza, too, leaves Higgins and her doomed love for him in search of a more fulfilling future. Shaw's cynicism towards women is reflected in Higgins' misogyny: "I find that the moment I let a woman make friends with me, she becomes

jealous, exacting, suspicious, and a damned nuisance." Higgins' relationship with his mother is indicative of this autobiographical influence as Shaw molds his women according to the model set by his mother. Interestingly, in Act III, Higgins says to Mrs. Higgins: "Oh, I can't be bothered with young women. My idea of a lovable woman is something as like you as possible."

Reportedly, Shaw wrote the character of Eliza Doolittle specifically with Mrs. Patrick Campbell in mind. He was, at the time, romantically involved with the actress. However, there is much controversy regarding Shaw's sexuality, since, despite his many high-profile love affairs, his forty-five-years long marriage was chaste and devoid of sexual contact. Shaw's rejection of sexual relationships can be seen as an inherent distrust or fear of women. This is borne out by his treatment of women in his plays as well his tendency to idealize women. He envisioned his ideal woman as "the huntress", suggestive of a kind of predatory femininity that preys on men. His wariness about sex is clearly exhibited in the following remark by Shaw: "The quantity of Love that an ordinary person can stand without serious damage is about 10 minutes in 50 years." Nevertheless, Shaw remains staunch in his support for women's progress and liberation.

It is interesting to note that Eliza's own sense of self-hood and identity is a product of her induction into the masculine realm of "proper speech" by Higgins, who trains her to be "a lady". Moreover, even her nascent but strong sense of self-respect is a product of male validation, derived from Colonel Pickering's politeness towards her. However, Higgins' attempt to establish his ownership over Eliza as his self-proclaimed 'creation' ("I'll make a woman out of you") is rejected by her and she embarks on a quest for independence and self-validation. Eliza's own strength of character is made evident in her choice to utilize her polite education to create an identity for herself. She leaves her 'creator' behind and becomes her own creation. Furthermore, Eliza's volubility thwarts the masculine fantasy of female submission and silence represented by Ovid's Galatea as well as the matrimonial expectation suggested by the deceptively innocuous title.

➤ **Class and Social Hierarchies :**

Class is a defining element in *Pygmalion*. You have already read about Shaw's socialist ideologies in the earlier segment on Shaw's modernism. Socialism is a political ideology that envisions and aims to achieve a classless society. Shaw's own plays reflect the deeply segregated social system and class hierarchies of Victorian England. Higgins' attitude to the characters shows him to be equally dismissive of all characters. Colonel Pickering, in contrast, is equally polite to all. Higgins, Mrs. Higgins and Colonel Pickering represent the moneyed upper class. Mrs. Pearce and Mrs. Higgins' parlor maid represent the servant class.

However, the main difference between the classes, as portrayed in *Pygmalion*, seems to be language and money. The rapid industrialisation since the 18th century had already led to the growth of a middle class, who held considerable economic power. Birth was no longer enough to ensure a person's status. The Eynsford-Hills are representative of the declining genteel class, struggling to survive on the fringes of upper-class society. Alfred Doolittle's elevation from a low born dustman to a rich middle-class man is achieved solely through an influx of money and the assumption of a mantle of morality. Eliza's own transformation, on the other hand, leaves her oddly stranded without a particular class she could belong to. Her lack of finances does not allow her to fully become an upper-class lady and her newly acquired civility and social know-how leaves her unfit for the lower class. While both Alfred Doolittle and Eliza gain a social mobility, through money and language respectively which allow them to climb the social ladder, they are no longer comfortable in their own skin and are unsure of their own identities. Eventually, Eliza realizes that her transformation has only isolated her and robbed her of a sense of belonging. This is the crux of Shaw's piercingly ironic take on class in *Pygmalion*.

4.16.9. *Pygmalion* in Performance & in Popular Culture

Pygmalion was first performed in German (translated by Siegfried Trebitsch) at Hofburg Theater in Vienna in 1913. It premiered in London in 1914 at His Majesty's Theater with Herbert Beerbohm Tree playing Henry Higgins and Mrs. Patrick Campbell as Eliza. Eliza's unpolished language and lack of respectability created quite a stir among the audience. *Pygmalion* was undeniably a hit. However, Tree, who was also the stage manager, subsequently altered the ending without consulting Shaw, to appease the audience. He portrayed a more romanticised resolution between Eliza and Higgins. Shaw vehemently protested the alteration of the ending and fought to reinstate his original ending till 1938, when the film adaptation, *My Fair Lady* was being filmed. Shaw was reportedly horrified and enraged at Tree's alternate ending during the hundredth screening of the play in which Higgins throws a bouquet of roses to Eliza from a window. He had angrily exclaimed: "Your ending is damnable; you ought to be shot."

From the very first screening of *Pygmalion*, audiences and directors alike have disagreed with Shaw and conspired to recreate an ending which would unite the two as lovers. In fact, in order to protect the integrity of the play and Shaw's feminist ideology, he appended a prose sequel to the 1916 edition of *Pygmalion* entitled "What Happened Afterwards." This sequel blasts the audiences' expectation of a marriage between Higgins and Eliza. Shaw explains that the term "romance" in the title indicates the improbability of the events unfolding (such as

Eliza's transformation from a flower girl to a lady) and not a fairy tale story of love and romance. He is disinterested in such "happy endings" and will not allow smart, young and beautiful Eliza to end up with Higgins, who is more than twenty years older than her. He does not wish to appease the sentimentality of people.

In Shaw's sequel Eliza marries Freddy who adores her. Colonel Pickering helps them set up a flower shop. The rigid concepts associated with class are challenged here as Freddy, a well-born man, enters trade, which is looked down upon by the upper class. However, due to the young couple's inexperience, the Colonel is often obliged to rescue them financially. Higgins spitefully enjoys Freddy's failures. However, they implement new strategies such as hiring help and introducing food items in their wares and, through their perseverance, the business gradually becomes profitable. Shaw's eyes are thus clearly set on dismantling puerile notions of class and blending it with the pragmatism of bourgeoisie as an undeniably emergent and viable social classification. To such an understanding, the term 'romance' obviously has the sense of being impractical, at least the ways in which middle class audiences were attuned to expecting it as a result of the kind of native English drama that had preceded. This explains the fact of Eliza remaining a regular presence at Wimpole Street and in Higgins' life. Though her interest in Higgins is still there, she maintains a prudent emotional distance from him. Her affections for Freddy and Colonel Pickering remain steady. Her relationship with Higgins and Alfred Doolittle remain strained. As Shaw succinctly puts it, "Galatea never does quite like Pygmalion: his relation to her is too godlike to be altogether agreeable." Shavian women, like most of Shakespeare women, have always been the nerve centre of sanity; and to this *Pygmalion* is no exception.

The earliest cinematic rendering of the play came in 1938. Shaw wrote the screenplay for the film, but the director covertly changed the ending into a romantic uniting of Higgins and Eliza. Ironically, Shaw won an Oscar for this movie. *Pygmalion* has inspired multiple theatrical and cinematic spin-offs, the most well-known being the 1956 eponymous Broadway musical featuring Rex Harrison and Julie Andrews which in turn inspired the equally famous 1964 Audrey Hepburn starrer film *My Fair Lady*. Both these productions had opted to forego Shaw's intended ending, replacing it with reconciliation between Eliza and Higgins. Both these adaptations were immensely popular. In fact, the musical went on to set a record as the longest running show in the history of musical theater.

4.16.10. Summing Up

Pygmalion remains one of the most beloved and frequently staged plays among Shaw's coterie. As the play's controversial production history proves, there was a general discomfort about the ending of the play which points towards the deep-rooted gender bias in society that Shaw was targeting. The image of a woman rejecting the attractions of romance and the comfort of a marriage was a subversive statement that did not sit well with the majority of the audience. At a time when women still did not have the right to vote, the idea of a heroine like Eliza, who rejects the life of silent obedience and compromise expected from women and chooses to prioritize her self-respect over love, caused considerable discomfort. The alteration of the ending by subsequent directors and actors shows a repeated attempt to transform Shaw's feminist vision of women's liberation into a lukewarm, fairy tale "romance".

In summing up, the following should be your takeaways from this Unit:

- *Pygmalion* recounts a low-born, impoverished woman's journey to personal and economic freedom.
- Though the title of the play emphasizes the role of the male creator - "Pygmalion" - it is Shaw's Galatea who is the true protagonist of the play.
- Eliza Doolittle escapes the shackles of class and conventional gender roles to emerge as a stronger individual who does not require masculine validation or support (in Shaw's sequel, Freddy and Eliza remain equal partners in their business and marriage).
- The root of disparity among classes is shown as being mainly economical. As Alfred Doolittle's elevation from a poor dustman to a wealthy moralist proves, in matters of social mobility, money trumps birth and familial lineage.
- Eliza carries the echoes of Ibsen's Nora. She embodies the Shavian ideal of the strong and spirited 'New Woman', who eschews the burden of societal expectations and, thereby, subverts societal oppression.

4.16.11. Comprehension Exercises

Long Answer Type Questions :

1. Describe Eliza Doolittle's character with reference to her evolution in the course of the play.

2. Examine the character of Henry Higgins. Comment on his relationship with Eliza Doolittle.
3. What is your understanding of the character of Colonel Pickering. Comment on his relationship with Eliza Doolittle.
4. How does Shaw conceive of gender roles in his play *Pygmalion*.
5. Critically comment on the title of Shaw's *Pygmalion*. How does Shaw appropriate Ovid's myth in his play?

Medium Length Answer Type Questions :

1. Analyse Henry Higgins' role as 'Pygmalion' in Shaw's eponymous play.
2. Examine and analyze two minor women characters in *Pygmalion*. Critically discuss their reaction to and effect on (if any) Eliza.
3. Comment on the character of Alfred Doolittle?
4. In Act V, Alfred Doolittle says that he has been ruined at "the hands of middle-class morality". Discuss the significance of this statement.
5. What is the significance of the ending of Shaw's *Pygmalion*.

Short Answer Type Questions :

1. Where did Eliza, Higgins and Colonel Pickering first meet?
2. What is the subtitle of Shaw's *Pygmalion*? How would you justify the subtitle?
3. Can *Pygmalion* be categorised as a 'romance'? State reasons for your answer.
4. Whom does Eliza finally marry? Why do you think Eliza marries this person?

4.16.12. Suggested Reading

Bloom, Harold. *George Bernard Shaw*. Chelsea House Publishers, 1987.

Costello, Donald P., and Bernard Shaw. *The Serpent's Eye: Shaw and the Cinema*. U of Notre Dame P, 1965.

Griffith, Gareth. *Socialism and Superior Brains: The Political Thought of George Bernard Shaw*. Routledge, 2002.

Innes, Christopher, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to George Bernard Shaw*. Cambridge UP, 1998.

Shaw, G.B, and Nicholas Greene. *Pygmalion*. Penguin Classics, 2003.

Unit 17 □ J.M. Synge : Riders to the Sea

Struture

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4.17.10 Suggested Reading

4.17.1 Objectives

In this Unit you are going to study the play Riders to the Sea by J.M. Synge. These introductory and explanatory materials on the play will help to increase your understanding and awarness of the playwright, the play, its background and some of the implications of its themes. In no case should these be considered as being a substitute for a detailed reading of the text by you. Among several editions, the one edited by Profs. B. N. Chowdhury and B. Banerjee and revised by Dr. S. C. Sengupta may be recommended for first-hand study of the text.

4.17.2 Introduction

The materials in the sections which follow, will introduce you to several important aspects of the play and the author's objectives in embodying them through the text. For this, we have

provided you with a brief sketch of the writer's life, the literary background in which the play was written, the literary genres in terms of which the play may be judged, the main line of development in the play, its characters, and difficult words and expressions. For the interested student a short reading guide has also been appended along with comprehension exercises.

4.17.3 J.M Synge : a brief biographical sketch

Born in 1871 near Dublin, Ireland, Synge did not have a smooth childhood. His father died early of smallpox and he himself was a sickly child too. Early in his childhood his mother took care to hammer the Christian concepts of Sin, death and damnation into him.

As he grew up he sought consolation for the troubles of life in books on theology but found them insufficient and disheartening. In 1889 he formally renounced Christianity through a nameless cosmic religious sense grew up within him.

When he was a student of Trinity College in Dublin he was not a serious student except that of language. But his studies were wide-ranging in language, history and folk culture. When he met W.B. Yeats in 1890 he was already an accomplished and cultured intellectual but he knew very little about the real life of the Irish people. Yeats encouraged him to go to the Aran Islands, (on the west coast Ireland) where he was advised to mingle with the local people and study folk culture.

Synge spent four months and a half in the Aran Islands. There he got involved in the simple and humble life of the local people and came to know about their religious beliefs and their folklore.

His literary output included the account of his experiences gained in the Aran Islands with the name *The Aran Islands* (1901, published in 1907), and the plays *In the Shadow of the Glen* (1903) and *Riders to the Sea* (1904). Later plays included *The Tinker's Wedding*, *The Playboy of the Western World* and *Deirdre of the Sorrows*.

Around 1906, Synge was secretly engaged to Molly Allgood. She was an actress. But as Synge was preparing for a blissful home life, his own illness increased and the marriage had to be postponed. An inoperable tumour slowly increased his pain and on 24th March 1909 Synge died. Robin Skelton, a major critic, says about Synge: "... his work is, in any serious sense of the word, international, for he tackled fundamental crises of the human spirit." (The Writings of J.M. Synge, Robin Skelton, 1971).

4.17.4. The Irish Literary Movement and Synge

In the years 1898-1902, Anglo-Irish drama, i.e. drama written by playwrights in Ireland, received a momentum. Irish playwrights like Lady Gregory, J.M. Synge, W.B. Yeats and a wide range of enthusiasts (many of whom were nationalist leaders, writers and actors) felt that the Irish theatre needed plays written from a new angle and in a new style and also wanted styles of staging and acting that would match the new fervour in the themes and styles of plays. Under the influence of Yeats and Lady Gregory, Synge started writing his major plays for the Irish National Theatre Society (founded in 1901): *When the Moon Has Set*, *Riders to the Sea*, *The Shadow of the Glen* and *The Tinker's Wedding*. *Riders* met with mixed response (1904), one critic calling it 'intensely pathetic, and in a sense, supremely human.' Internally the society was strife-ridden, with the earnest nationalists intending to use it for propaganda purposes and people like Yeats and Synge desiring to use it as a forum for art. Out of this conflict the Abbey Theatre was born in 1904 and Synge became busy in its activities. In terms of strikingly new plays and new style of acting and realism on the stage, the Abbey Theatre continued to earn fame collectively and Synge began to get European fame personally. Even James Joyce, who had earlier called *Riders* 'unAristotelian', translated it into Italian. Synge's collaborative effort with the Abbey Theatre was a major factor behind his emergence as a major playwright.

Riders may be more appreciated as a 'poetic drama written in prose. The emotional intensity of the play attained through the passionate exchange of dialogues is what makes the play poetic. Another quality of the play is the suggestive reverberating quality of the dialogues. The medium is apparently prose, but it is heightened to maximum effect.

Stop and Think

1. How did Synge learn about the Irish Common people and their culture?
2. Name some of the other plays of Synge.
3. What was Synge's Attitude to traditional Christian religion?
4. In what ways did Synge contribute to the Irish National theatre?
5. In what ways did the Irish Dramatic movement influence Synge ?

4.17.5 The one-act play

It is generally said about the one-act play that brevity is its soul. There must be a brief plot, because it cannot be complex. Characters are very number, since the playwright cannot

develop his characters and situations gradually, making use of a cumulative effect. The dialogues, too, must be suggestively meaningful from the beginning to the end. Each sentence is expected to contribute something to the final effect. However, the hallmark of the one-act play is the unified impact that it creates. Normally a single main episode is carried on from beginning to end. There is also the continuity of a single locale. The scene does not change and the middle is connected with the beginning as much as it is connected with the end. As for the dramatic conflict which is the soul of a full-length play, there is not much scope but the unity of impression compensates for it.

Riders exemplifies all these major aspects of a successful one-act play. James Joyce had criticised the play on the ground of its being 'un-Aristotelian'. For, it maintains a very perfect continuity of the setting. Everything takes place in Maurya's cottage, with the meagre household articles spread out in the different corners of it. [See the end of this section for an explanation of this point.]

The brief duration time of the action of the play represents the very spirit of conciseness. In fact the play is composed in a continuous mood of mourning. Anxiety and anticipation over the discovery of the clothes of Michael lost at sea are followed by Maurya's concern over Bartley's going out, Bartley's steady defiance of her entreaty, his departure and speedy return as a corpse. Bartley's death is an off-stage event, thus causing the maximum possible condensation in the unity of impression.

In fact this single-minded unity of action runs through the entire play to make it a successful one-act play. Michael's death is just conveyed to the reader, but it is inextricably linked up with their daily life. Michael's shirt is used by Bartley and even the rope preserved for his burial. Once again, Bartley's death, as seen by Maurya in her 'vision' (hallucination?), is caused by Michael's ghost. In the end Bartley's body, when brought back, reminds her of the deaths in the past and thus, past, present and future are inextricably bound up to convey an absolute sense of fatalism against which shines man's stoic and rather heroic endurance.

Joyce's criticism of *Riders to the Sea* as un-Aristotelian, refers to Aristotle's comments on tragedy in his poetics. In section VII Aristotle says that tragedy is the imitation of an action that is complete and whole, and a whole is that which has a beginning, a middle and an end. He meant that within the play a strict sequence of cause and effect must be established. In *Riders to the Sea* there is no clear sequence of cause and effect. Michael's death at sea, surmised from the clothes which are found, is immediately followed by Bartley's death. More importantly, although the sea is established as the antagonist, Bartley does not die at sea, but in an accident, as he falls off his pony. James Joyce considered these as structural defects of the play.

In defence of Synge we might say that the undoubtedly slight plot of *Riders*-an old woman losing her one remaining son -makes up for the slightness with its intensity. There is no development in the action and the movement from climax (Maurya's vision) to the catastrophe (Bartley's dead body brought in) is too quick, but Synge makes up for this defect with the details of everyday reality which solidly establish the pressing economic need which compels Bartley, like his father and his brothers before him, to face the dangers of the sea. In fact, it is not necessary to judge all plays by the canons of Aristotle. Synge intentionally used conventions of naturalistic drama, to convey the reality of the lives of the inhabitants of the Aran Islands.

Stop and Think

1. Show how Synge allows little development of action between the anticipation of Bartley's death and the death itself.
2. Can you establish, with reference to the text, how a mood of mourning is established and maintained from beginning to end?
3. Can we say that human characters in *Riders* are mere victims?

4.17.6 Tragedy : Various Levels of Significance

Riders is often praised as a great tragedy. There are, as you may know, some universally accepted concepts of the vision and forms of tragedy. We shall discuss some of those ideas, so that you get a better understanding of the full meaning of the play.

Many of the concepts about tragic drama, found in Aristotle's *Poetics*, and accepted by Renaissance critics, have been either modified or challenged later. Aristotle defined tragedy as "imitation of an action that is serious and also, as having magnitude, complete in itself." Aristotle was talking about full-length plays, since the one-act short play was not in existence. Aristotle places great emphasis on the tragic hero, who is of noble birth and is endowed with great qualities but also suffers from a tragic flaw (error of judgement or 'Hamartia'). He indicates that tragic drama is expected to move the audience to a 'catharsis' of pity and fear. There has been a lot of discussion about the meaning of "catharsis". It is now generally accepted that Aristotle ascribed this important function to tragedy, since his master Plato had condemned both epic and tragic poets, since, according to Plato, these poets showed gods and great men alike, capable of acting rashly and wrongly, in the heat of passion.

In the Greek tragedies, we find a deep sense of fatalism. Fatalism means a feeling of inevitability, as if the tragic protagonist is doomed to destruction. This feeling, that fate or the gods

themselves are responsible for the doom of the protagonist is modified in the tragedies written after the Renaissance. In the plays of Marlowe and Shakespeare, their heroes of Shakespeare we feel that they themselves bring about their doom.

In the modern period common men and women have been chosen as tragic protagonists. Middle-class or even working-class people in their bewildered, defeated moods have been portrayed in notable tragedies like Arthur Miller's **The Death of a Salesman** (1949). A term sometimes applied to the protagonist of such tragedies is the 'anti-hero', or a person who, instead of being magnanimous, dignified and powerful, is petty, passive or ineffectual. Riders is such an instance where a pathetic old woman is chosen as the focus of attention, who cannot qualify as a tragic protagonist according to the standards of Renaissance drama, or Greek drama. However, in her stoic endurance and universalized stance of motherhood, she rises far above her insignificant stature as merely a poor Aran Island fisherwoman.

4.17.0 Section-wise Summary

(Any edition may be consulted)

Section -1 : When the play begins, both Cathleen and Nora are tense about Maurya who is upset by the reported drowning of her son Michael.

Nora reports that a bundle of clothes have been found and quotes the young priest as saying that this information should be suppressed for they almost expect the grieving Maurya to die with crying and lamenting.

Section- 2 : When Maurya enters, she enquires about the condition of the weather and insists that Bartley, her last remaining son, must not go over the sea. But Bartley, when he comes in, ignores Maurya's pleading. Maurya is rebuked by Cathleen. Bartley leaves. While Maurya laments, Cathleen. Bartley leaves. While Maurya laments, Cathleen discovers that she had forgotten to give Bartley his loaf of bread.

Section -3 : Maurya is apprehensive that Bartley is going to meet his doom. She is sent by Cathleen and Nora to offer him both bread and her blessings. In the meantime the two daughters check and confirm that the clothes which had been taken off a drowned man belong to Michael, their brother.

Section-4 : Maurya returns with the awful memory of a 'vision' seen and by her. She has seen the dead Michael following the horse of Bartley. Now they, mother and sisters, too, are almost convinced that their brother would never return. The family would have no male member

to look after them. Maurya seems to lose all sense of the present and in her memory the recollections of death of her husband, father-in-law and sons, mingle with those of the present—the recent presumed death of Michael and the anticipated death of Bartley.

Section-5 : As Maurya kneels beside the dead body of Bartley, she passes through a final stage of realization. She feels that none of her sons is left now and therefore, she will no longer have any need to worry or fear the sea, no cause for mourning and lamentation. She longs for absolute rest and begs God for mercy on all who are living in the world. She accepts the inevitability of death and is reconciled to what fate has inflicted on her.

Stop and Think

1. Briefly narrate the conversation of the two sisters at the beginning of the play.
2. Why has Maurya been mourning?
3. Why does Maurya ask questions about the weather?
4. Why does Bartley ignore his mother's pleading?
5. Why does Cathleen send Maurya to meet Bartley after he has left?
6. Describe the vision Maurya sees,
7. When and why does Maurya say that she does not have to care for the sea any longer?

4.17.8 Characters outlines: Maurya

She is the leading character. She is physically and emotionally exhausted from the very beginning, since she has suffered innumerable shocks.

She deplores the way in which younger people die early on the islands and leave the older people behind. Her motherly instincts are expressed in her earnest attempt to prevent Bartley from going to sea despite rough weather.

Her helplessness is underlined when Bartley goes away. Her deep belief in local folklore is stressed by the vision she sees.

Before the corpse of Bartley is brought on to the stage, she begins to remember the past deaths in her family, of her husband and sons.

In her recollections, past and present mingle.

When she realized that Bartley had died, she accepts it and even finds life's deeper meaning in a stoic endurance.

4.17.8.1 Bartley, Nora and Cathleen

Bartley is like any other active young man who has to carry on the business of life with a calm acceptance of family responsibilities along with a sombre acceptance of the hardships of life makes him interesting.

Cathleen is the elder, and seems to have a greater sense of responsibility, more self-control and greater awareness of the shadow of doom over their family. Nora is younger and more hopeful. She still retains her faith in the consolation offered by the Christian religion. She is less aware of the tragic possibilities of life and reacts in a more direct, more emotional manner.

4.17.8.2 The Sea

The most dominant presence is that of the sea. There is hardly any other modern play where a non-human entity gains so much prominence both physically and symbolically. Notice how many references there are to the sea. All the characters talk about the sea, are aware of its moods and know about its menace. As the play progresses, notice how the sea gains in symbolic stature. The play seems to present a conflict between the sea and the human beings, i.e. the fisherfolk of Aran.

At the end, Maurya seems to become a representative figure for the entire humanity. The sea seems to triumph in the conflict with man. But Maurya's acceptance of fate seems to be a kind of quiet victory.

Read the play carefully and find out how the reference to the sea builds up the impression about its might and its importance in the lives of the people of Aran.

Stop and think

1. From the play, give examples to show how Maurya is first a helpless old woman, and then acquires tragic dignity.
2. How do we come to know that Cathleen, and not her mother, looks after the family matters?

4.17.9 Comprehension Exercises

1. Discuss *Riders* as a modern tragedy.
2. Discuss the Man-Sea antagonism in the play.
3. Analyse the character of Maurya and show how she attains calm dignity at the end.
4. From the text, find out how simple everyday objects are used to convey a symbolic meaning.
5. Discuss *Riders* as a specimen of modern one-act plays.
6. Discuss the play as a 'poetic drama'.

4.17.9.1 Some suggestions about the questions

Question 4 :

You may already know what a symbol is. when something in any artistic representation, in this case a literary text, acquires a suggestive meaning which is not inherent to it, we call it a symbol. Notice how in ***Riders*** (a good annotated text would give you the details) simple objects in the fisherman's cotage, trivial things spoken by the characters, acquire an additional and more powerful meaning. To give you some examples : Bartley puts on the shirt which belonged to his dead brother Michael although they are not yet sure that Michael is dead; Cathleen forgets to give Bartley the bread, and bread, and bread is a symbol of life; there are references to Aran fisherman's superstitions; for example, they had seen a slam beside the moon, which is an evil omen, Bartley takes a rope as halter for his mare and the rope had been chewed by a pig with black feet. In Celtic superstitions (the people of Ireland are Celtic) a black pig is associated with death.

Question 6 :

Properly speaking, drama in which verse is used as medium can alone be called "poetic drama". In the two great periods of European tragedy -classical Greek tragedy and English Renaissance tragedy in the Elizabethan-Jacobean period-the playwrights used verse. Synge's play is in prose. BUT there are other characteristics in Greek and Elizabethan tragedies which we find in Synge's play. For example, although Synge uses naturalistic stage setting and presents the real life sufferings of Aran fisherfolk, there is an emotional intensity in the play, conveyed by Maurya's fatalism, her lamentations, which is more commonly found in poetic drama. Synge's language moreover, has a strong melodic element, a rhythm, reminiscent of

poetry, Read some of Maurya's speeches with their repetitions, "and when black night is falling I'll have no son left me...". Notice the many images & symbols Synge uses which give poetic intensity to his play.

4.17.10 Suggested Reading

1. Ellis Fermor Una : The Irish Dramatic Movement, 1939
2. Grene, Nicholas : Synge : A Critical Study of the plays, 1975.
3. Price, Alan : Synge and Anglo-Irish Drama, 1961
4. Skelton, Robin : The Writings of J.M. Synge, 1971
5. Chowdhury, B.N. & Banerjee B : (Eds.): J. M. Synge : One Act Plays, 1992
6. Biswas, S. : Studies in Riders to the Sea, 2001.

Ellis, Fermor Una. *The Irish Dramatic Movement*. Methnen & Co. Ltd., 1939

Grene, Nocholas. *Synge : A Critical study of the plays*. Macmillans, 1975

Price, Alan Frederick. "Synge and anglo-Irish drama". *Modern Language review* 57, 1965, P.P. 434.

Skelton, Robin. *The Writings of J.M. Synge*. Thames and Hudson, 1971.

Chowdhuty, B.N. & Banerjee B. (Eds.). *J.M. Synge : One Act Palys*, 1992

Biswas, S. *Sudies in Riders to the Sea*, Books way, 2009

Unit 18 □ T.S. Eliot: *Murder in the Cathedral*

Structure

- 4.18.1. Objectives
- 4.18.2. Introduction
- 4.18.3. Historical Context of *Murder in the Cathedral*
- 4.18.4. Critical Summary (Including Plot & Characterisation)
- 4.18.5. *Murder in the Cathedral* as a Poetic Drama
- 4.18.6. The Concept of Martyrdom
- 4.18.7. Imagery in *Murder in the Cathedral*
- 4.18.8. Summing Up
- 4.18.9. Comprehension Exercises
- 4.18.10. Suggested Reading

4.18.1. Objectives

You have by now come across T. S. Eliot as a literary figure in several ways - as a poet, as a literary critic, and of course as one of the most influential Anglo-American voices of the twentieth century. In this Unit, we will acquaint you with Eliot the dramatist, a distinct turn that came quite late in his literary career, and with varying levels of success and acclaim. In fact, in a lecture delivered in 1933, Eliot famously said that "Every poet would like, I fancy, to be able to think that he had some direct social utility... He would like to convey the pleasures of poetry, not only to a larger audience but to larger groups of people collectively; and the theatre is the best place in which to do it." (*The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism* 1933). In this context, *Murder in the Cathedral* (1935) which comes after works like *Sweeney Agonistes* (first attempt and incomplete, two scenes published in 1926 and 1927) and a pageant play *The Rock* (1934) marks a significant turn in his literary career towards the writing of poetic drama. More than Eliot's bio-brief that you have already received in earlier courses; here we will concentrate on his use of the poetic drama as a literary form, his recreation of a slice of early Middle English history of conflict between Church and State, and his understanding of the idea of martyrdom. Between them, all these ideas converge in Eliot's deeply religious beliefs that punctuate his later poems, and finally lead to his conversion from

what he himself called "the very heart of Boston Unitarianism" (*The Letters of T.S. Eliot* Vol. 3 403-4) in which he was born and brought up, to Anglo-Catholicism in 1927. Cumulatively therefore, this final Unit on the reading of Modern British Literature through drama will bring together several aspects of early twentieth century considerations.

4.18.2. Introduction

From the sub-section above, you definitely realise that *Murder in the Cathedral*, a play T. S. Eliot wrote in 1935, simultaneously concerns many issues that are paradigmatically related both to the triadic relationship between politics-faith-society, and the power of literature to represent these issues. In that way, there could be much in the play that readers today might find relevant in their understanding of how all of these define much of the controversies surrounding nation states in our times.

From your reading of plays by Marlowe and Shakespeare in 6CC-EG-04 and J. M. Synge's *Riders to the Sea* in Unit 17 of this Course, you are acquainted with the power of verse when it is used in drama. Let us begin by saying that *Murder in the Cathedral* is also a poetic drama that uses several conventions of classical dramaturgy to re-historicise a twelfth century English social conflict in the twentieth. For the text of the play, we shall follow the Oxford University Press publication that carries an Introduction and Notes by Nevil Coghill, whom Eliot had himself invited to prepare the edition with special emphasis on historical authenticity that went into the playwright's shaping of action and dialogue. This will at once tell you about the level of commitment Eliot had in his work, the fact of his conversion from agnosticism to a deeply religious following perhaps having informed his conception of the play. In fact, while many of Eliot's contemporaries found his conversion shocking, Coghill in his 'Introduction' locates a gradual and continuous move from "a sad, liberal agnosticism ...into the positive grief-in-joy and joy-in-grief of Christianity" (10) evident in Eliot's work right from "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" (*Prufrock and Other Observations*, 1917) that culminates in *The Rock* (1934). If we accept Coghill's point that *The Rock* was "a trial run for *Murder in the Cathedral*" (11), we can have clarity on our point of view in approaching the present play.

If you have had the slightest acquaintance with Aristotle's *Poetics*, you will realize that even though *Murder in the Cathedral* revisits the classical form of tragedy, Eliot moves away from certain Aristotelian principles. The first of these is the distinction between history and poetry (which was an embracive term that meant drama as well). In Chapter 9 of *Poetics*, Aristotle creates a binary between poetry and history - the former is perceived as having a

universal nature, while the latter is largely a record of particulars. In that sense, Aristotle sees poetry as offering a higher level of truth. On the contrary, as we have just mentioned above, Eliot was insistent upon historical authenticity as the shaping influence behind the play; and so *Murder in the Cathedral* is quite different as a history play from the imaginative recreation of history that we find in Shakespeare's history based plays. The second major difference is in the choice of the tragic hero in Eliot's play that is Thomas Becket the Archbishop of Canterbury. While Aristotle's understanding is that the tragic hero should be an intermediate kind of a personage (neither wholly good nor abysmally bad) so that he retains a verisimilitude with average human beings, Eliot's Becket who is a saint and a martyr displays infinite goodness that is immobile in nature and uncombative in the face of adversity. As S. H. Butcher, one of the foremost commentators on Aristotle feels, impersonal ardour for a righteous cause lacks the degree of dramatic fascination that the spectacle of human weakness embroiled in a losing battle with fate generally has. When Eliot's protagonist shows a steely resolve to go down as a possible martyr in the conflict between Church and State, it thus becomes difficult to categorise him as a typical tragic hero; though the form of the play is derived from ritual tragedy of ancient Greece. All the same, his supreme sacrifice brings us to think over something equally serious - what is martyrdom in the Christian context, what goes into the making of a martyr, and what are its implications for larger society.

It is also interesting to know in this context about the writing of the play. After varying levels of success at playwriting with *Sweeney Agonistes* and *The Rock*, Eliot was commissioned by George Bell, Bishop of Chichester, to write for the Canterbury Festival of June 1935. The choice of the martyrdom of Thomas Becket, the most famous of English Saints and Archbishop of Canterbury from 1162 to 1170 when he was brutally murdered, was Eliot's own. The conditions for staging were not great to say the least. Elliott Martin Browne (1900-1980) the British director who collaborated for many years with T. S. Eliot in directing plays written by the latter, recalls an amateur cast, an uncomfortable auditorium with a narrow platform stage, a run time of a week at the most, and a time limit of one hour and thirty minutes (<https://tseliot.com/editorials/ts-eliot-in-the-theatre>). From Browne's account, we further know how Eliot developed the play in parts, the first one dealing only with the return of Thomas from France, and having the initial title *Fear in the Way*. The complete play, as we now know, was the result of a fruitful weekend that Eliot spent with the Brownes at their Sussex home, the present title having been suggested by Martin Browne's wife Henzie Raeburn. You can follow the link above for more details on this.

4.18.3. Historical Context of Murder in the Cathedral

Before we proceed to the play proper, it would be in place to briefly acquaint you with the history that Eliot reviving here. Thomas Becket, born to Norman (people of Danish, Norwegian and Icelandic origins who settled in Northern France and founded the Duchy of Normandy) parents in 1118, received a privileged education and soon attracted the attention of the Archbishop of Canterbury, Theobald, and became his clerk. He was soon made the Archdeacon of Canterbury in 1154, a position just next to the Bishop in importance. The position of the Archbishop of Canterbury, you need to understand, is at the top of the Anglican Church, and therefore Thomas was literally in the echelons of power. He gained fame with his abilities as Archdeacon, so much so that King Henry, the then ruler of England, appointed him Chancellor of the realm. As a position, this was next only to the King, and therefore at a rather young age Thomas was the centre of both Church and State power; and he executed both responsibilities with elan. However, it must be noted that that such dual power never adversely affected Thomas, for he was exceptionally incorruptible in discharging his duties; amiable to all; and most importantly, maintained strict chastity even amidst the hedonistic environment of the royal court. In King Henry's pursuit of setting the kingdom in order following the mayhem of his predecessor King Stephen, Thomas thus proved an able companion and was known as the royal favourite. It was therefore no surprise that when the Archbishopric of Canterbury fell vacant, Henry advanced Thomas to the position in 1162, quite in disregard of the latter's objections. In his place, Thomas was right in warning his benefactor that the position of the Archbishop of Canterbury, who reported directly to the Pope, might bring him into conflict with royalty. While King Henry paid no heed to this, Thomas remained true to his ideals and relinquished the position of Chancellor that he had so long adorned. Henry's aim of using his friend Thomas to strike a balance between royalty and clergy was thus foiled.

One of the first points of contention was the coexistence of a separate set of church laws with general law in England, the result of which was the provision of different punishments for similar crimes committed by clergymen and commoners. Henry's efforts at establishing uniform secular authority first brought him to loggerheads with his erstwhile friend Thomas Becket. The interference of the Pope in Church affairs was also something that the King resented, for it seemed interference in his system of government. This led to the drafting of the 'Constitutions' in 1164 - a set of sixteen points to streamline relations between Church and State. The Archbishop in turn, was in no mood to give up the supremacy of the Church when it came to

decisions on clergymen, and hence opposed what he felt would be double punishment for a single offence - unfrocking a priest by the Church laws and hanging him by State laws. While Thomas was forcibly made to sign the document, he refused to seal it, and took to fasting and abstaining from serving at the Altar. In this act of non cooperation that would definitely lead to a crisis, Nevil Coghill finds similarities between Thomas Becket and Mahatma Gandhi, "particularly in their power to combine saintly self-denial with legal acuity." (142)

Understandably, problems between the two only began to multiply, leading to the possibility of the Archbishop's imprisonment, his escape to France, and the Pope's interference in the King's attempts at governance - all of which only further complicated situations. Around 1170, Henry's attempts to have his eldest son Prince Henry advance-coronated to the throne of England by the Bishops of York, Salisbury and London in violation of what was historically the right of the Archbishop of Canterbury further angered Thomas. At his insistence the Pope suspended the errant adjutors, and this not only furthered the breach between the two pillars of authority in England but also led to strife within the Church orders.

Following a truce between King Henry and Thomas Becket engineered by the Pope in 1170 that only meant a temporary lull between further eruptions, Becket returned to his people in early December. But by then it appears his mind was already made up about the possibility of his being killed, and he had perhaps begun to look upon his impending death as an act of martyrdom. While there are no historical records confirming that the King sent his men to murder the Archbishop in his own cathedral, Thomas was in fact hacked to his death by four men who proclaimed they were executing the will of the ruler. It is also heard that King Henry was penitential following the death of his erstwhile friend, and that the killers were sent off to participate in the Holy Crusades for the upholding of the faith.

As we go into the critical summary of *Murder in the Cathedral* in the next sub-section, you will see how all these incidents have deep bearings on the play. No summary however can substitute the original; you are therefore advised to read the text for yourselves.

4.18.4. Critical Summary

Note to the learner - The purpose of this sub-section is simply to give you an idea of the text. It is not and should not be taken as a substitute for a full textual reading of the play.

Murder in the Cathedral is divided into three sections which are as follows:

Part I

*

Characters

A of Women of Canterbury
Three Priests of the Cathedral
A Messenger
Archbishop Thomas Becket
Four Tempters
Attendants

The Scene is the Archbishop's Hall, on December 2nd, 1170

If you relate these details with the previous sub-section on the historical context, you will realise that the play opens at a time when Thomas Becket is set to return to England, following his truce with King Henry. The play opens with the of the women of Canterbury, the equivocal nature of their words at once makes it clear that they are aware of an impending disaster and are trying to fathom how it might/ might not affect their lives :

Are we drawn by danger? Is it the knowledge of safety, that draws our feet
Towards the cathedral? What danger can be
For us, the poor, the poor women of Canterbury? What tribulation
With which we are not already familiar? There is no danger
For us, and there is no safety in the cathedral. Some presage of an act
Which our eyes are compelled to witness, has forced our feet
Towards the cathedral. We are forced to bear witness. (Coghill 23)

While you know by now that the spirit of the play is distinctly Christian, its execution is in many ways classical; and Eliot's use of the Chorus is one of the earliest instances of this. The Chorus in Greek drama usually consisted of a group of persons performing a multiple individuality and continually punctuating the action with their odes and songs or dialogues. Their purpose most often was to advise the protagonist, comment on the action for the understanding of the audience, recall what has happened and also foretell/ offer premonitions of the future. The Victorian poet and critic Matthew Arnold looked upon the function of the Chorus as that of combining, harmonising, and deepening for the spectator the feelings that are excited by the sight of the dramatic action. As you see in the lines above from the text, and

as you will see at critical points of the play, the women of Canterbury resonate the voice of the common man to the hectic turn of events that are taking place. As individuals they are constantly weighing in their personal lives and how much it might be affected by this conflict between Church and State; but as devout followers of the faith, they also share close emotional ties with the Archbishop. So, while they initially do not comprehend all the complex implications of martyrdom and are more worried for the safety of Becket, their understanding also evolves (though alternating between hope and despair) in course of the play. It is through the words of the Chorus that we get a glimpse of the daily life of the common man, the cycle of seasons and the commensurate agricultural activity, their hazy perceptions about martyrs and saints, and their faith in Biblical lore. However, the deeper wisdom that reveals their pragmatism, is too obvious to escape notice:

Destiny waits in the hands of God, not in the hands of statesmen
Who do, some well, some ill, planning and guessing,
Having their aims which turn in their hands in the pattern of time. (Coghill 24)

The priests on the other hand offer a different and more informed perspective. They contemplate over the long absence of the Archbishop, on the irreconcilable conflict between the Archbishop and Pope on one side and royal intrigues on the other, and the pervasive "violence, duplicity and frequent malversation" (25) inherent in temporal government. When the messenger informs of the arrival of the Archbishop, their apprehensions are logically grounded. The third priest sums up the improbability of any hopes of lasting peace when he says, "What peace can be found/ To grow between the hammer and the anvil." (26) However, in their berating of the women of Canterbury who express similar fears regarding the impending future of Thomas Becket, the priests are only executing their ordained duty of maintaining a semblance of normalcy in society.

At this juncture Thomas arrives, and his first words which are in support of the deeper understanding of the reality of the grimness of situations shown by the women of Canterbury show why, as Chancellor or as Archbishop, his standing has always been very high among common people. He knows their pulse all too well, just as the ambivalence that weighs heavy in his words is Eliot's first tangible preparation for the complex enunciation of martyrdom:

They speak better than they know, and beyond your understanding.
They know and do not know, what it is to act and suffer.
They know and do not know, that action is suffering
And suffering is action. Neither does the agent suffer
Nor the patient act...for the pattern is in the action

And the suffering, that the wheel may turn and still
Be forever still. (32 Emphases added)

With these words, Thomas reveals that he is mentally engaged in the conundrum over what constitutes martyrdom and how one can perfect one's mind for that state of sublimation to Divine Will. These lines also bring out Eliot's own belief in the ritualistic necessity of suffering as purgation and renewal, his literary output whether in poetry or in drama being a manifestation of this conviction.

Thomas' conversation with the priests reveals that on the one hand the rebellious priests excommunicated by the Pope at his insistence are baying for his blood, just as the agreement with the King in reality hold little value.

The Temptation episode that follows is Eliot's own addition to historical material, introduced as part of the Christian tradition and theological pattern. Its purpose is to take English drama back to its origins in the church, though with much psycho-emotional complexity added to it. On the part of Becket, like Samson in Milton's *Samson Agonistes*, it marks a journey of being subjected to several kinds of temptations - material and psychological, that must be surmounted to reach the state of spiritual tranquillity in which one can completely surrender oneself to Divine Will and expect not even the glory of martyrdom in return. This is therefore akin to the ritual of purgation before the mind is purified of all attractions that can hold back an individual. As for the audience, the Temptation episode serves as an initiation into an understanding of why one must undergo such ritualistic purgation and what such martyrdom can mean for the community at large.

One after the other Becket is subjected to four tempters, their degrees of temptation incrementally upping the ante. The first tempter reminds Becket of bygone days when the ties between State and Church were closer, he insists on exploring the possibility of reconciliation. With facile temptations of wine and good company returning to the life of a man who has turned somewhat melancholic, he hardly makes a mark on Becket who snubs him off with "You come twenty years too late." (35) The second tempter's words have more substance, as he implicates Becket for having resigned from the Chancellorship. His words are politically loaded, for had the Archbishop retained the state position the duties of which he had ably discharged, the balance between the two now-opposed institutions could have been maintained; and he would be better placed to serve his people, which is his own stated priority in any case. His temptation therefore is clear and precise - Becket should assume Chancellorship once again and guide the state. He concedes that this will require pretence of priestly power

but feels that is worth "For the power and the glory" (38) that are there to be regained. The consequences of rejecting this offer are put forth by the second tempter in dire terms:

...Or bravery will be broken,
Cabined in Canterbury, realmless ruler,
Self-bound servant of a powerless Pope,
The old stag, circled with hounds. (39)

Quite expectedly, Becket rejects the offer, for he feels he has made a choice beyond that of doing good simply through temporal power. Besides, as the head of the Anglican Catholic Church in his present capacity as the Archbishop who is answerable only to the Pope, he refuses to "descend to desire a punier power". (40)

The third tempter, who is wiler than the earlier ones, begins by saying that he is no courtier trained in intrigue but a country lord who values his own interests, and is therefore concerned about the larger predicament of England. He tries to utter the rhetoric of nationalist pride, invokes his shared Norman ancestry with Becket, and proposes "a happy coalition of intelligent interests" (42) through a union between the Church and the country barons against King Henry. To woo the Archbishop, he tries to establish that both "Church and people have good cause against the throne" (43). Becket's response is unambiguous - having ruled like an eagle over doves, he would never "take the shape of a wolf among wolves" (44). Besides, he is not one who would betray the king; their differences are ideological and he would rather contest accordingly.

You will have noticed that the first three tempters try to play upon confusions and conflicts that would have at some point of time or the other inhabited the upper strata of his conscious mind. So their natures and attitudes are quite predictable and plainly combatable, which he does. He had in fact expected all three of them to make their appearances and try to get him off the chosen path. The fourth and last tempter however is the most subtle one, his functioning is insidious and he takes Becket by surprise as his words penetrate into the subconscious level of the mind. He externalises Becket's inward desire for sainthood and martyrdom, which he posits as the only way left for him since it is not practically possible to be reconciled with so many hostile forces as the Archbishop now has to contend with. The conversation between the two - Thomas Becket and his alter-ego is interesting and fraught with dramatic tension:

Tempter. I am only here, Thomas, to tell you what you know.

...

Thomas. I have thought of these things.

Tempter. That is why I tell you ...

You have also thought, sometimes at your prayers,
Sometimes hesitating at the angles of stairs,
And between sleep and waking, early in the morning ...
When miracles cease, and the faithful desert you.
And men shall only do their best to forget you ...

Thomas. But what is there to do? What is left to be done?

Is there no enduring crown to be won? (47-48)

As you well understand, the strategy of introducing the protagonist's visible mirror-image on the stage is classic in its neatness and suggestiveness. To those who argue that Becket is wholly a good man and hence incompatible as a tragic hero, it must be said that Eliot's drama goes beyond the role of fate in classical tragedy and probes into the inner recesses of the mind of his protagonist in order to dig out aspects of his psyche that belie the claim of being a 'paragon of virtue'. To have had these aspirations of being celebrated as a martyr is no sin, it is quite natural in fact as a driving force for a man who is so ready to renounce all worldly pleasure in the pursuit of his faith. All the same, this subtle desire to achieve fame as a martyr is what can stand in the way of Becket's martyrdom, and this is a state of mind that he needs to overcome. In that sense, the fourth tempter is more of a reality check than a temptation. The interaction and the subsequent realisation take Becket to a different level, and so he says something that is essentially different from the drift of his thoughts we have seen hitherto:

Is there no way, in my soul's sickness,
Does not lead to damnation in pride?
I well know that these temptations
Mean present vanity and future torment.
Can sinful pride be driven out
Only by more sinful? Can I neither act nor suffer
Without perdition? (49)

It is interesting that the fourth tempter's last words to Becket are a verbatim replication of Becket's own words said to the priests regarding the women of Canterbury when he first enters the stage. The only difference is that while Becket refers to the Chorus as 'they', the tempter addresses himself directly as 'you'. The import of these words which relate to the necessary connection between action and suffering that must be undergone by an individual, irrespective of one's standing in life, applies equally to the who need to be protected and to Becket who is in search of martyrdom.

Part I ends with a long declamation by Becket that suggests he has finally found the way ahead, that he has overcome the last temptation which he calls "the greatest treason/To do the right deed for the wrong reason". (52) In his long speech, Becket recalls his entire life thus far - early ambitions, good life under the tutelage of the King, his realisation that politics has never been his calling from within, and finally his complete surrender to the will of God.

Interlude

The Archbishop

preaches in the Cathedral on Christmas Morning, 1170

As you can see from the heading above, the second section of the play, the Interlude, is Archbishop Thomas Becket's sermon to his people delivered at the Cathedral of Canterbury on 25th December 1170. This too has historical accuracy, for he preached his last sermon on the text of Luke (II, 14) as given in the account of William Fitzstephen who was Becket's biographer. The only difference is that while Eliot mentions morning as the time here, the last sermon was preached on Christmas night. An interlude generally means something occurring or being done during an interval, here it is specifically the utilisation of the time between the two parts of the play where stage time is being utilised. You must also notice that this section is in prose, presumably for easy understanding of the common people of Canterbury. However, the Interlude in *Murder in the Cathedral*, as we shall soon discuss, is hardly just filler between two parts of the dramatic action. In fact, it is a logical culmination of the action of Part I and shows that Becket has well internalised the lessons and understandings that he needed to. Naturally, the Interlude also sets the pace for the ultimate action to follow in Part II. It is therefore not without reason that Nevil Coghill is of the opinion that, "It need hardly be said that this sermon, as Eliot has imagined it, is the core of his vision of sanctity. To understand this sermon, in its application to the action and discourse as a whole, is to understand the play." (122) There are three distinct things that Becket says in the sermon, and the three are causally connected in ways that explain not just the basic tenets of the Christian faith but also Eliot's own understanding of it and application to the very core of his creative potential. Let us try and understand these one by one.

First, Becket says it is important to think deeply on both the meaning and mystery of masses (prayers) that are said on Christmas day. Why do you think does he use two words that are apparently contradictory in denotation? The apparent sense of contradiction is resolved by Becket himself as he says that while Christmas is largely known as a time of rejoicing at the birth of Christ who came for the salvation of men; that is not all about it. Through the uttering of the Mass on Christmas, Christ's sacrifice is recalled and the officiating priest prays to God

the father requesting Him to send the Holy Spirit upon the bread that is broken and wine that is kept on the altar. By doing so, it is symbolically held that the offering becomes the very body and blood that Christ offered on the Cross. This is known as Transubstantiation, which means the change by which the substance, though not its appearance, becomes the real presence of Christ. Thus a devout Christian believes that through the offering of this 'changed' substance, the congregation is offering Christ anew to God the father, and the church too unites with the sacrificial Christ in that offering. Thus while the birth of Christ gives joyous meaning to life, the mystery (in the sense of enigma) of his sacrifice equally gives assurance of the presence of benevolent divinity - hence birth and death are celebrated at the same time. As Becket says,

Beloved, as the world sees, this is to behave in a strange fashion. For who in the World will both mourn and rejoice at once and for the same reason? For either joy will be overborne by mourning, or mourning will be cast out by joy; so it is only in these our Christian mysteries that we can rejoice and mourn at once for the same reason. (55)

Second, Becket talks of the meaning of the word 'peace' which is from Luke's Gospel, and was said to have been uttered by the angelic voices that pronounced the birth of Christ in a stable in Bethlehem. He clarifies that this is not the same as we understand peace in common terms as prosperity or nations at peace with others. Rather, it is the peace which surpasses common understanding and imbues humanity with a sense of the Divine inherent in us that Becket means.

Third, and this is the most important one that follows from the two above, Becket says it is no surprise or accident that the martyrdom of the first martyr - the blessed Stephen falls on the very next day of "Our Lord's Birth and His Death." Just like the birth and passion (as in endurance of the pain of death by crucifixion to redeem humanity) that is rejoiced and mourned simultaneously, so is it with the death of martyrs. The mourning he says, is "for the sins of the world that has martyred them" (56); the rejoicing is because "another soul is numbered among the Saints in Heaven, for the glory of God and for the salvation of men." (56) Therefore, Becket is essentially saying that in a lesser degree, every martyrdom is a re-enactment of the crucifixion of Christ.

Cumulatively, it follows from these three propositions that Becket is preparing himself for martyrdom, he has overcome every single temptation that till some time ago held him back, and for the first time he says to his people that this might be his last sermon. But before coming to this pronouncement at the end of the Interlude, Becket enunciates in the most categorical terms what constitutes martyrdom. The clarity of his utterance will tell you that Becket has

undergone the rites and rituals of purification, and has assimilated in himself both the meaning and the mystery that he alluded to at the beginning of the Interlude:

A Christian martyrdom is never an accident, for Saints are not made by accident. Still less is a Christian martyrdom the effect of a man's will to become a Saint, as a man by willing and contriving may become a ruler of men. A martyrdom is always the design of God, for His love of men, to warn them and to lead them, to bring them back to His ways. It is never the design of man; for the true martyr is he who has become the instrument of God, who has lost his will in the Will of God, and who no longer desires anything for himself, not even the glory of being a martyr. (57)

Part II

*

Characters

Three Priests

Four Knights

Archbishop Thomas Becket

of Women of Canterbury

Attendants

The first scene is in the Archbishop's Hall, the second scene is in the Cathedral,
on December 29th, 1170

The second part also begins with the commentary of the Chorus, but with one noticeable difference. While in Part I they invoke "happy December" (25), here they are apprehensive about the wrong that is soon to be committed and how nature's manifestations like the bird's song or the green tree or the fresh earth can cover such wrongdoing. It is clear that the Chorus will still take some more time to register the deeper implications of martyrdom beyond the immediacy of the killing of Thomas Becket that is soon at hand. Part II is in fact a preparation for that understanding, and the Chorus at the end of the play is a better informed group than it is at this point of time. As the priests enter one after the other with banners of martyrs, saints, and the holy innocents, their conversation clearly veers on the impending arrival of the agents of Thomas' death.

As the Knights arrive, the banners disappear, implying therefore that the stage is gradually being set for the final onslaught. They proclaim themselves as "Servants of the King" (64), which nearly corroborates with Thomas' biographer Fitzstephen's account; but there is nothing

in historical records to suggest that King Henry had exclusively deputed men to have the Archbishop killed. However, the roughness of their tone suggests that the Knights are working themselves up for the dastardly act; so when the First Priest invites them to dinner before whatever urgent business they have with Thomas, the First Knight gruffly replies:

Business before dinner. We will roast your pork
First, and dine upon it after. (65)

Clearly this is a crude joke about the intended murder of Becket. Their haste and impatience in meeting Thomas also perhaps belie not just impatience to get done at the earliest, but also an element of tension for they are fully aware of the implications of the act at hand. As events transpire, they first kill him and then make a public feast of their justification behind doing so.

In their first interaction with Becket the Knights severally accuse him of revolting against the King by whose munificence "the back-stairs brat who was born in Cheapside" (66) rose to such high positions both in the State and the Church. It is the worst kind of personal attack they make by saying that Thomas has crept out of the London dirt "crawling up like a louse on your shirt" (66), is now full of pride and concerned only with his own ambitions, and has cheated swindled and betrayed his benefactor the King. By implication, they say that Thomas has violated the law of the land by defying the King whose orders he was supposed to execute. Thomas' response is categorical - apart from his first duty as Archbishop which was to God (he calls it "my order"), he has never gone against the King. The Knights consider this a quibble (Holy Orders/ Royal orders) and they are quite confident that Becket's received Divine orders will not be enough to save his life.

Since the Knights say they are here on the King's command, Becket asks them to get beyond personal slander and bring forth specific charges that he can publicly refute. Clearly this is something that the Knights cannot afford, so they make to attack him, a bid that the priests and attendants return to foil. While the stage directions do not explicitly say so, it can be presumed that the charges which follow are made in the presence of these church members who returned to save Becket from the Knights. The allegations made are in tune with the historical facts that have been narrated in 4.18.3 above - the escape from England and plotting against the English King on French soil, nullifying the legality of the coronation of the young prince, acting against the Bishops who officiated the coronation - in short using all means to run over those faithful to the King and working at the behest of royalty. Knowing full well it is not logical answers that will satisfy the intruders; Becket still retains composure and makes it a point to offer logical rebuttals to all the allegations. Quite expectedly, the Knights are unbending

and they demand that Becket once again leave England. The Archbishop resolutely nullifies this demand and rounds off his defiant speech with the words:

Never again, you must make no doubt,
Shall the sea run between the shepherd and his fold. (71)

Becket makes clear the fact that it is not against him as a person that the Knights are striving, for it is not his personal prerogative to pronounce doom on anyone; it is de facto against the laws of the Church pronounced by the Pope that they are railing. With the clarity he has already attained in the matter of his impending death and its association with the strong possibility of martyrdom, Becket flamboyantly says,

I submit my cause to the judgement of Rome
But if you kill me, I shall rise from my tomb
To submit my cause before God's throne. (72)

These lines are to be unerringly read in continuity of Becket's theological understanding or martyrdom in the Interlude, as his unambiguous voicing of the point of view of the Church to the State/ monarchy. It is thus little surprise that the Knights leave the stage with the cry that they will return with swords and uphold "the King's justice." (73) Finally the breach between the two institutions of English society is thus sealed. It is worth noting here that in Martin Browne's production of *Murder in the Cathedral*, the same set of actors doubled the roles of Tempters and Knights. In "T. S. Eliot in the Theatre: The Director's Memories", Browne emphasises upon the thematic similarities between the Tempters and the Knights primarily, and then mentions the paucity of available acting resources as a logistic ground for economising the cast.

The long speech of the Chorus that follows is interspersed with several animal images that we shall discuss later in this Unit. These images are warranted by the arrival of what the Chorus calls "the death-bringers" (73) whom they can smell as it were, with their senses that are quickened with subtle forebodings. Becket's last words to them are an advice for peace in thoughts and visions, for they too must play their part in what he calls their "share of the eternal burden". (75) He reiterates the need for the Chorus to be ready for the moment of "a sudden painful joy" (75) that must be undergone in order to give completion to the Divine purpose. The priests make a last futile attempt to secure the gates of the Cathedral and to take Thomas to the altar where evening prayers are to be uttered, in the vain hope that all of these might desist the killers. All the same, as the first priest says, they know well that the assailants are no longer men but maddened beasts. Becket however shows a stoic calm and chastises the

priests for trying to turn the Church of Christ into a fortress. His words have a ring of the eternal truth which, if humanity could grasp, would have left the world a more wholesome place for then and in all times to come. The salutary component ingrained in Becket's words contains the message of the meaning, the mystery and the magic that he referred to in the Interlude.

We are not here to triumph by fighting, by stratagem, or by resistance,
Not to fight with beasts as men. We have fought the beast
And have conquered. We have only to conquer
Now, by suffering. This is the easier victory. (79)

As the Knights come back baying for his blood, Becket retains the same composure and shows fortitude that comes from his complete surrender to and assimilation with the Divine:

I am a priest,
A Christian, saved by the blood of Christ,
Ready to suffer with my blood...
Blood for blood.
His blood given to buy my life,
My blood given to pay for his death,
My death for His death. (80-81)

If you go back to the Interlude which is Thomas Becket's last sermon to his flock, you will understand the significance of this blood bond with Christ the Saviour that the Archbishop is forging, just before facing the swords of the Knights. While the Knights are engaged in killing Thomas Becket, the Chorus utters a long chant that provides a continuous symbolic parallel of the spilling of blood. By doing so, Eliot manages to abide by the classical decorum of not showing the gory spectacle right on the front-stage, even though the audience would be completely aware of what was going on.

In a truly demagogic manner, after completing the horrendous act of murdering one unarmed man, the four Knights come forth and offer their points of view in simple prose. The first who leads the band of killers, Reginald Fitz Urse, takes up the task of opening the justification and of introducing his cohorts. He holds that as honourable Englishmen who believe in fair play, the audience has the right to sympathise with the victim, but they ought to hear out the other side as well in the spirit of trial by jury. He calls upon the Third Knight, Baron William de Traci who says they have been disinterested participants in this killing, and that he himself had great admiration for the Archbishop. Yet it was a duty that they had to take up and quite against their

own selves at that; the consequences of which will definitely befall them. The Second Knight, Sir Hugh de Morville who is presented as an expert in statecraft and Constitutional Law speaks next. He eschews emotion and claims to go by reason, whereby he accuses Archbishop Becket of being instrumental in effecting the breach between State and Church, while a union of the two could have ensured an ideal nation. He concedes that the manner of the decimation was unacceptable, but asserts that there are times when violence is the only way out, howsoever much everyone might abhor it. He goes a step further in making the audience a comprador in the murder by saying that the removal of Becket was necessary to secure common interests, and therefore claims their support. The Fourth Knight Richard Britto who comes from a family known for loyalty to the Church, clearly reminiscent of the Fourth Tempter, turns the whole thing on its head with the insidious question - "Who killed the Archbishop?" (87) He attempts to prove that Becket himself can only be held responsible for preparing the long path to his own death - by his prolonged acting against the interests of England, by reasonably answering their questions, by not provoking their already agitated minds, and last of all by not escaping! In Britto's understanding, Becket did/ did not do any or all of these simply because "he had determined upon a death by martyrdom." (88) The Knights depart with the final advice to the people of Canterbury to get back to their homes, and refrain from doing anything that might cause public unrest.

The play ends with the priests and the Chorus trying to come to terms with the enormity of what has just happened. The differences between social classes are evident in the divergent ways in which these two sections struggle to grapple with the passing of Archbishop Thomas Becket. The priests try to believe that even though the Church is poorer, it will be stronger in time with another Saint in Canterbury, and hope that they too will be remembered with the long line of saints and martyrs. For the scrubbers and sweepers of Canterbury, life will continue to be one of toil, enlivened only by the faith that the blood of martyrs shall enrich the earth and lead to the consecration of more of holy places. They beg forgiveness for being common men but still proclaim that they fear the justice of God more than the injustice of fellow men. Eliot concludes *Murder in the Cathedral* on an incantatory note that is given to the all important Chorus :

We acknowledge our trespass, our weakness, our fault; we acknowledge

That the sin of the world is upon our heads; that the blood

of the martyrs and the agony of the saints

Is upon our heads.

Lord, have mercy upon us.

Christ, have mercy upon us.

Lord, have mercy upon us.
Blessed Thomas, pray for us. (91-92)

Technically, the play ends in that point of time where Thomas Becket is revered as a blessed soul who gave his life for his faith. It will be some time before his martyrdom is sealed by the apex Catholic Church and he is glorified at Saint Thomas Becket of Canterbury. While Becket's tomb almost immediately became a site for pilgrimage, he was canonised by Pope Alexander III in 1173, within three years of his gruesome death.

Note for the learner:

In this rather long critical summary of the play, apart from detailing the events dramatised by Eliot, we have also touched upon the following aspects that are important for your understanding:

- ✓ **Role of the Chorus**
- ✓ **The Temptation Episode**
- ✓ **The Priests**
- ✓ **The Knights**
- ✓ **The evolution of the character of Thomas Becket**

4.18.5. *Murder in the Cathedral* as a Poetic Drama

As with many English dramatists, the starting point of T. S. Eliot's writing of plays in verse would have been to break away from the influence of Shakespeare, whose heritage would else weigh heavy for his original expression of thought and shaping of content. Eliot therefore set out to elaborate a form of poetic drama in which the lack of action is replaced by the incantatory power of words. With this, one must remember Eliot's frequent references to the 15th century Morality play *Everyman*, whose allegory, dramatic patterns and versification find echoes in *Murder in the Cathedral*. In its rejection of Elizabethan blank verse and adoption of the verse of *Everyman* - its prose and rhyme, alliterations and rhythmic hymns and chants - *Murder in the Cathedral* offers a clear statement of what religious drama meant to Eliot.

A brief examination of some of the features of Eliot's language and versification will show a tendency towards mannerisms in this play. One of these is the recurrence of certain words and images to emphasize upon the mood or significance of a character or a situation. Thus words like 'clean', 'death', 'destiny', 'doom', 'fear' appear repeatedly. While the use of alliterations

frequently set up a pattern of sounds, repetition of words also serves as substitute for alliteration and gives rhythm to certain passages. You may see for instance the choric utterances in lines like "Ill the wind, ill the time, uncertain the profit, certain the danger...grey grey grey." (29) Similarly, phrases like "living and partly living" are repeated to produce certain effects at both thematic and rhythmic levels. Sometimes refrains too are used with great effect as in the somewhat tipsy verses of the Knights or in the introit sections of Part II. Besides, Eliot makes interesting variations in the length of his lines, prompted sometimes by the internal necessity of moods and feelings as also the external necessity of acting and adjusting to natural breath length. He also uses sprung rhythm, rhythmic prose and cadences, hymns and anthems to secure the desired effect of a religious play. The following passage from Part I of the play could serve as an illustration of Eliot's use of verse in drama :

Messenger. Peace, but not the kiss of peace.
A patched up affair, if you ask my opinion
...
If you ask my opinion, I think that this peace
Is nothing like an end, or like a beginning ...
My Lord, he said, I leave you as a man
Whom in this life I shall not see again ... (27)

In Part II of the play specifically, one sees a strong stress on poetry, and that is with a definite purpose. As the hour of martyrdom approaches, a spiritual need appears - the need to seek strength in a traditional myth of sacrifice and salvation. The poetry here is thus not only reminiscent of the sorrow and glory of Jesus and other saints and martyrs, it is also incantatory so as to turn drama into ritual. You are advised to read this section of the text thoroughly to understand this transformation.

It will not be wrong to say that in *Murder in the Cathedral*, Eliot uses language to create and distinctly identify his characters. For example, even though Becket is given different kinds of speech patterns across the play depending on who his audience for the moment is, yet once just cannot miss the gravely formal architectural quality of his words right from his first entry and comments about the Chorus to his Priests. Similarly, each of the tempters is assigned a specific linguistic register that is unique to him alone, thus making it easy to distinguish each of them simply from the auditory component.

On the whole of course, one cannot deny that the language used in the play is almost too dramatic. It is well suited for stage delivery, being full of contrasts of mood and mode and is

invested with a great pace. Understandably the play signals the need for audiences to reorient attitudes and expectations, something that the brief alternations of prose with the dominant poetic mode effects.

Note for the learner :

You have another poetic drama in this very Module of the syllabus - J. M. Synge's *Riders to the Sea*. With help from your counsellor you can try and make a comparative study of these two plays as examples of Poetic Drama in the 20th century. The results of such an intertextual study will be interesting, to say the least.

4.18.6. The Concept of Martyrdom

Having read the purpose behind Eliot's writing of the play and after going through the detailed analysis of the text, you are by now aware that an explication of the concept of martyrdom was one of the central concerns of *Murder in the Cathedral*. In fact it would not be wrong to say that Thomas Becket's martyrdom is the pivotal theme of the play around which all other members of the *dramatis personae* rotate. It is important to understand that martyrdom involves the participation and understanding of an entire community, it is not just the attainment of one man. It is not an easy task to transform the shock, fear, and anger that surrounds a cold blooded murder into something as liberating as the attainment of a martyr.

We have discussed at length in 4.18.4 how and why the fourth tempter is fundamentally different from the three who have preceded him. Even Becket concedes that the fourth is not just unexpected; he is also the most challenging, as he confronts the Archbishop with the thoughts that have traversed in the innermost recesses of his mind. The encounter is therefore the real beginning of Becket's preparation for martyrdom - the understanding that he needs to overcome the temptation of doing the right deed for the wrong reason. The visible traces of agony in Thomas are because he is brought face to face with his latent spiritual pride that he needs to not just overcome but also obliterate from his psyche, for the true martyr is one who has been able to neutralise for himself even the desire for subconscious glory of being a martyr. The play shows how Thomas makes this a lived reality of his life, not just a proposition to which he gives intellectual assent. He realizes more than ever that god's will and rule must get precedence over the rule of King or man, so his rebuttal of the Knights after his encounter with the Tempters is much gutsier. Contrary to the insinuations that the Fourth Knight makes in his declamation after the murder, it has not been a conscious preparation for death or even suicide; it is in reality Becket's preparation for the manifestation of God's ultimate design on

man to be perceived by men. Since such a death can come only when one is worthy of it, Becket's final words in the play show a poise that is hard attained:

Now to Almighty God, to the Blessed Mary ever Virgin, to the blessed John the Baptist, the holy apostles Peter and Paul, to the blessed martyr Denys, and to all the Saints, I commend my cause and that of the Church. (82)

To talk of the concept of martyrdom is not just to deliberate on what makes a martyr but also on what martyrdom means to the community at large. Every martyr is a witness in the efficacy of Christ's sacrifice, a gesture of compassionate love in response to the Divine Love of Christ. Becket's martyrdom too is a means of enabling human society to share the elemental contradictions existing between Creation and the Cosmic Order - the lapses and perjuries that creep in through the course of the existence of human societies. In this, the human share of the eternal burden represents the weight of guilt on human shoulders, symbolised by the weight of the Cross on Christ. It is also a symbol of the elemental sin of man, but Christ's death on the Cross is also an awareness of the possibility of the redemption of man through Divine munificence. This is the share of the "perpetual glory" that Becket refers to in his last hours. In other words, Becket equates his martyrdom with the crucifixion of Christ and so he can be envisaged as a Christ figure who gives up his life for the weal of the Church and his people. *Murder in the Cathedral* also reinforces another important and relevant understanding. The ecstasy offered by such an act of canonisation involves the coexistence of contradictory elements (sadness of death and glory of martyrdom) that are of course eventually submerged under the burden of daily chores. Yet it reasserts itself at intermittent points of time as a vision that makes us aware of our own essential existence as part of the Divine Order. A perennial remembrance of it is however impossible since as Becket himself says, "Human kind cannot bear very much reality." (75) The truth of this is borne out in the responses of the final choric utterance with which the play ends.

4.18.7. Imagery in *Murder in the Cathedral*

In his attempts at reviving poetic drama, Eliot's singular concern was that poetry and drama must be fused into one. As he famously observed,

... if poetry is merely a decoration, an added embellishment, if it merely gives people of literary tastes the pleasure of listening to poetry at the same time that they are witnessing a play, then it is superfluous. It must justify itself dramatically, and not merely be fine poetry shaped into a dramatic form. (*Atlantic Monthly*, Feb. 1951)

This fusion of poetry and drama depends heavily on rhythm and imagery. We have discussed about rhyme in 4.18.5, here we will briefly look into the predominant image patterns that give functional effect to Eliot's versification in *Murder in the Cathedral*.

To a large extent, it is the Chorus that exemplifies the sensuous richness and diversity of Eliot's images. In fact the principal images in the play are drawn from nature and the life of the poor rural populace. It is possible to find intricate links between these two major sources in that the lives of agrarian communities are traditionally dependent on the natural cycle of seasons - in consonance the two determine what has been aptly described as the condition of "living and partly living."

At the very beginning of the play the Chorus' unwillingness to submit to a phase of spiritual rebirth is embodied in their rejection of the return of life with the onset of spring. This seasonal imagery insists upon the endless cycle of Time through which the common people live lives that are meaningless without relation to some eternal purpose outside of cyclical Time. Eliot's Chorus fears the disturbance of the erstwhile quiet season as something sterile and destructive and their apprehensions are expressed with the use of Fraserian images:

Now I fear the disturbance of the quiet seasons:
Winter shall come bringing death from the sea,
Ruinous spring shall beat at our doors,
Root and shoot shall eat our eyes and our ears,
Disastrous summer burn up the beds of our steams
And the poor shall wait for another decaying October. (24)

The Chorus has the premonition of the crossing of the sea by the Four Knights, who actually come over from France to accomplish their mission. Again, the same December is elsewhere a happy time for them (Come, happy December ...) because it is both the time of Christmas and the return of their spiritual leader Becket among them. Thus, similar images are used to express contrasted mental states in the play. Such images of nature are abundant, and you are advised to identify and explain them with help from your counselor.

In their unwillingness to give up the order of their mundane existence (the dismantling of which is necessary to establish a greater spiritual Order), the chorus mainly fear that such unsettling can bring out the bestiality inherent in man. So, the use of animal imagery is recurrent in the play, and is used to signify the order-disorder pattern. The Knights compare themselves to beasts, the Chorus associates themselves with bestial degradation, and even the Lords of Hell are associated with beasts of prey.

Other recurrent images in *Murder in the Cathedral* are those of Hell, and the wheel. While the former has a surrealistic quality about Eliot's vision of hell for which he might have been indebted to Dante; the image of the wheel referred to by Becket and also his alter-ego the fourth tempter, relates to the one still point of an otherwise turning/ fast changing world. Borrowing the concept of the Brahma wheel of the Upanishads, Eliot uses it to present the world of Time that revolves and is always related to God who is eternal at the still point of the centre. Through this wheel image therefore, Eliot implies that the true centre of the Christian world is God who imparts motion to all living objects. The image is used by Eliot in a metaphysical sense to imply the relationship that exists between man, Time, Eternity, and God. Thematically and structurally put, the martyr is placed at the centre of this wheel while all other characters operate along its circumference. This explains how the wheel can both turn and turn and yet be forever still.

Note for the learner: With help from your counselor you are expected to identify the detailed use of these predominant images in the text of *Murder in the Cathedral*.

4.18.8. Summing Up

In this Unit therefore we have tried to provide you with a detailed critical understanding of Eliot's play *Murder in the Cathedral*, keeping the following aspects in mind:

- Eliot's art of characterisation in drama
- Revival of the classical model of the Chorus and making it functional to the purpose of a modern drama that aims to revivify a catholic understanding of Christianity
- Explored the flashpoints between State and Church, which in a broader modern understanding could apply to the role of religion as a community aspect in the context of statehood, nations and nationalism
- The concept of martyrdom
- The significance of the Temptation Episodes and the role of the Knights
- A critical perspective on Thomas Becket - his suitability as a tragic protagonist
- Poetic drama as a form and with special reference to Eliot's use of images
- History and the making of drama

4.18.9. Comprehension Exercises

Long Answer Type Questions :

1. How would you read Aristotle's idea of the connections between Poetry and History in the context of *Murder in the Cathedral*?
2. Would you agree with Helen Gardner's view that the Chorus and not Thomas Becket is the real protagonist of *Murder in the Cathedral*? Substantiate your view with textual analysis.
3. What view of martyrdom does T. S. Eliot uphold in *Murder in the Cathedral*?
4. Critically analyse T. S. Eliot's use of imagery as a vehicle of expressing his ideas in *Murder in the Cathedral*.

Medium Length Answer Type Questions :

1. What is the significance of the Temptation Episodes in *Murder in the Cathedral*?
2. Assess *Murder in the Cathedral* as a poetic drama.
3. What are the principal objections that authorities of the State raise against Thomas Becket? How does he counter them?
4. Analyse the declamatory speeches delivered by the Knights after they have murdered Thomas Becket to show how politics overpowers the Church as a social institution.
5. What is the significance of Becket's words when he says:
I am a priest,
A Christian, saved by the blood of Christ,
Ready to suffer with my blood.

Short Answer Type Questions :

1. How were King Henry and Thomas Becket connected before the latter became Archbishop?
2. What parallels do you find between the Fourth Tempter and the Fourth Knight?
3. Show how despite their different socio-economic backgrounds, the four Knights are unified by a common objective.
4. Explain with reference to the context:

Destiny waits in the hand of God, not in the hands of statesmen

4.18.10. Suggested Reading

Browne, Elliott Martin. "T. S. Eliot in the Theatre: The Director's Memories."

<https://tseliot.com/editorials/ts-eliot-in-the-theatre>

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Notes
