PREFACE

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

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

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

I wish the venture all success.

Professor Indrajit Lahiri
Vice Chancellor

Netaji Subhas Open University

Four Year Undergraduate Degree Programme

Under National Higher Education 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 1 : Britain after world war II : Society, Culture and Literature

Module 2 : British Poetry

Module 3 : British Novel

Module 4 : British Drama

Module - 1

Britain after World War II : Society, Culture and Literature

Unit 1 ❐ Europe after the Second World War

Structure

1.1.1. Objectives

This Unit aims to introduce the learners to a brief socio-political history of the Second World War, and its effects on Europe at large. The learners will be able to situate the literature originating during this time-frame against a specific epistemological context and temporal time frame.

1.1.2. Introduction: The Second World War

The Second War was a defining moment in European culture.The War which began in eptember 1939 came to an end in 1945. By then, Europe was in ruins. It was the deadliest military conflict in history. The war had caused the death of around 60 million soldiers and civilians. Cities, towns and villages across the continent were utterly destroyed. This destruction of homes created thousands of refugees and displaced persons. In six years at least 60 million European civilians had been uprooted from their homes; 27 million had left their own countries

or been driven out by force. Death, destruction, and mass displacements changed the lives of nations. Air raids, commando raids, guerrilla warfare put the lives of civilians at risk. The most extreme instances were the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in Japan. Hitler's death camps revealed the depths to which human beings could sink.

The Second World War had far outstripped its predecessor in the loss of life and property. Civilian deaths far outnumbered those of military personnel. There was also physical destruction on an enormous scale. Cities had been reduced to rubble. Homes, schools, hospitals, factories, shops and railway stations were buried beneath the tons of rubble. Peace first brought food and clothing shortages, lack of money and employment and other kinds of misery. The lack of adequate shelter was another hardship that thousands faced.

1.1.3. Britain and Europe

i) The Refugee Problem

The search for shelter entailed the greatest migration Europe had ever known. Around 50 million people had been expelled from their homes. Most refugees fled from the East to the West. The process of repatriation was not simple. National boundaries had changed, for eg., Poland became 20 percent smaller than it had been in 1919, whereas Allied-occupied Germany had shrunk by only 18 percent. When it came to establishing national boundaries in Central and Eastern Europe, the Anglo-American allies insisted that the transfers of populations be conducted in a humane manner. There was also a new determination to achieve ethnic conformity and national cohesion by expelling other minority groups.Along with the struggle for shelter was the struggle for food. Sine crops had not been planted, harvested or distributed, there were food shortages long after the war was over.

Most European countries voiced the feeling of "Never again", a universal desire to avoid more wars. Yet, even after such large-scale destruction the bigger nations, like the United Kingdom, France, Germany, and Russia competed fiercely for economic and military dominance. The most immediate effect of the war was the division of the world into East and West. The US government assisted European nation to rebuild themselves after World War II. This was part of the U.S. policy of containment-the effort to keep communism from growing. U.S. leaders hoped that if European nations recovered quickly, they would not adopt the system of communism. Europe was divided into two "camps"—nations that were the military allies of the United States signed the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), and the nations that allied with the Soviet Union signed the Warsaw Pact. Thus began the 'Cold War' with two great powers or 'superpowers'dominating the world stage. The once great powers of Japan

and Germany looked as though they would never rise again. Germany was divided into two parts-West and East Germany. The eastern part of Germany was occupied by the Soviet Union at the end of the war.

ii) The Cold War

The ending of the war did not bring stability. With the use of the atomic bomb, there was the fear of complete annihilation. In the aftermath of World War II, United States and the Soviet Union emerged as superpowers and there was a tussle between them for domination of the geopolitical stageAs tensions between the them grew, an arms race ensued and the threat of nuclear annihilation escalated.The term "cold war" refers to the competition for global leadership between the United States and the Soviet Union that started at the close of World War II and continued for several decades. Soviet leaders battled the spectre of capitalism while Americans looked for signs of communist infiltration. Socialist governments, closely allied to the Soviet Union or "people's democracies," emerged in Bulgaria, Poland, and Romania, Hungary and Czechoslovakia.

iii) Peace Plans

International planning for peace began soon after. Several organizations were formed to bring about permanent multilateral peace initiatives: the United Nations, the Food and Agriculture Organization, the International Monetary Fund, the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund, and several other such institutions were set up to begin rebuilding and reconstructing the damages incurred. A common humanity possessing the same universal human rights was recognized through the establishment of the United Nations in 1945, the International Court of Justice in 1946 and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948. The United Nations was an organization for international cooperation and diplomacy. Members agreed to outlaw wars of aggression in an attempt to avoid a third world war. The end of the war also increased decolonisation of countries like India, Indonesia and the Phillipines.

iv) Europe after the War

The global **economy** was in a state of disarray. By the end of the war, the European economy had collapsed with its industrial infrastructure destroyed. However, most nations bounced back to the pre-war conditions.The **United States** emerged richer than other nations and it soon dominated the world economy. Recovery began with the mid-1948 currency reform in Western Germany and Italy and France followed soon after.In **Britain**, the end of

the war led to the establishment of the welfare state. The Labour victory of 1945 marked a new political beginning. Most people believed it was the responsibility of the governments to provide basic care for all citizens. By the end of the war, the economy of the United Kingdom was in a state of collapse. More than a quarter of its national wealth was gone.The Labour party proposed a programme of nationalisation of the Bank of England, of fuel and power, of inland waterways, and a national health service. Similar reforms were envisaged across western Europe. Measures like full employment, higher wages, fairer taxes, and social security were embraced. "Planning" became the common objective. The 1947 Treaty of Peace with Italy saw the end of the Italian colonial empire. Unlike in Germany and Japan, no war crimes tribunals were held against Italian military and political leaders, though some of them were executed by the Italian resistance. **Austria**, which had been annexed by Germany in 1938, was separated to become the Republic of Austria.

The **Soviet Union** suffered enormous losses in the war against Germany. To rebuild the country, the Soviet government took credit from Britain and Sweden. The immediate post-war period in Europe was dominated by the Soviet Union making satellite states in Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria, and East Germany.After World War II racial tensions were on the rise. In South Africa apartheid was installed. In Korea, anti-Japanese reprisals grew violent. **Germany** was divided into two independent states. West Germany experienced a remarkable recovery after initial decline. Japan, too, experienced rapid economic growth, becoming one of the most powerful economies in the world.

1.1.4. The Social Crises

Britain was the only major European power not to suffer defeat in both the wars. The mood in other European societies was influenced by occupation as well as by war. There were strong Communist Parties in Western Europe, except in Britain. It was only in 1945 that the Labour Party won in an historic election. Its greatest challenge was the creation of a welfare state. The party introduced a programme of nationalisation of banks, civil aviation, gas, electricity and public transport.

Other than the inevitable negative effects of destruction, deaths and dislocation, there were some "progressive" social changes. The war had a socially levelling impact on people's lives of which the significant indicators were a narrowing of the gap between rich and poor in terms of incomes and wealth due to income tax, death duties, and an increase in state welfare. There was an improvement in the lives of the working-class.Though many claim that post-war societies were insufficiently changed, it is true that conservative parties accepted state welfare

measures and the responsibility of government for wages and employment. The war proved that centralised government control could provide the basic needs of its population. In the general election of 1945, the Labour Party won by a large majority with its promise of a National Health Service, a commitment to full employment, universal secondary education, pension and affordable housing.This lasted for almost three decades with both Labour and Conservative governments fulfilling their promises.

By the late 1940s, however, Labour ceased to endorse the ideology it espoused, moving towards an acceptance of market economics. The Conservatives returned to power in the fifties with their promise of affluence and prosperity. This decade marked a return to the old ways in which women were encouraged to remain at home and leave the world of public work. The sudden economic boom of the fifties led to a rise in living standards. The expansion of educational facilities and scholarships led to the hope of a classless society. Lifestyles improved with affordable housing; the advent of the credit society enabled low-income earners to afford televisions and cars. Britain seemed a brighter and cleaner place.

i) Society and Culture

In the immediate aftermath of the war, social class became a central issue in European culture and politics. In Britain, the promise of the government to abolish poverty, provide good wages, education and healthcare seemed to come true to a certain extent. In the 1950s and 1960s, employment opportunities rose and an international trade boom created higher wages and improved standards of living. Kingsley Amis's *Lucky Jim* (1954) was a novel that dealt with the possibility of rising up through the social structure. Writers of the late fifties believed in the political myth of greater social mobility and opportunities for the working class to join affluent society.

The major alterations to European society and culture emerged in the 1950s with the "Americanisation" of the world. American popular culture, especially Hollywood, provided a glimpse of an individualistic consumer society and a lifestyle to which many came to aspire. The impact of American films was most evident in Britain, given the common language. After Pearl Harbour, war themes exploded into every artistic medium. Movies captured the lives of both servicemen and civilians of the post-war period. Song lyrics referred to the conflict; some were upbeat, others were slower and solemn. Comic strips, too, picked up the war theme. Enormous technological progress was made during the war. Progress in electronics and computers provided the foundation for further development which completely transformed the post-war world. The atomic bomb transformed the nature of future wars, while marking the beginning of the nuclear age.

ii) Gender and Sexuality

The post-war period was also a time of significant change for issues relating to sexuality and gender. The war gave women the opportunity to do 'men's work'; however, after the war there was immense ideological pressure on women to stay at home and look after hearth and home. Women had won the right to vote in 1918 but even this was restricted to women over thirty who were taxpayers. In women's writing of the time, we see evidence of discontent with the stereotypes of femininity. Writers like Doris Lessing, Barbara Pym, Rosamund Lehmann provided stories of female characters who were dissatisfied with the lot of contemporary women. Literary representations of emancipated women and homosexuality were muted and disguised. One of the best-known explorations of gender and sexual identity in the post-war period is Doris Lessing's book, *The Golden Notebook* (1962). The heroine, Anna Wulf divides her life into four notebooks, each representing different aspects of her life experience. In the fifth notebook, she attempts to resolve her fragmented selves into one meaningful whole. This novel anticipates the emergence of second-wave feminism which was to the challenge patriarchal norms of society. However, homosexuality remained a marginalised area of discussion in the literature immediately following the war.

iii) Empire and National Identity

The post-war period saw a fundamental change in the notion of national identity. The gradual dissolution of the British Empire led to questions regarding the meaning of Englishness. Migrant writers sought to understand the implications of no longer being 'British.' There is a sense of disappointment in their realising the gap between the colonial myths of Englishness and the grim realities of post-war England. Black and Asian writers were left to examine the psychological impact of racial differences and dislocations that alienated them from the mainstream national culture. The writings of immigrants are integral to an understanding of the complex nature of the changing meanings of Englishness in the post-war period.

1.1.5. Literature and the Second World War

These changes have affected English literature in various ways, most notably in the turn against modernism after the war, the rise and fall of post-modernism, the increased significance of women's writing and writing by ethnic minorities.There was a sense of futility, fragmentation, and absurdity which was reflected in the writing of the time. The term 'Modern' was used in the first part of the twentieth century to describe the sensibility of the period. Following the Second World War, 'post-Modern' became the keyword to describe the attitudes that governed creative productions. Post-Modernism differs from Modernism in that it celebrates

diversity, eclecticism, and parody in all forms of art. All forms of experience are mediated and transformed making the 'truth' of experience varied and diverse.

In post-Modern literature, the subject-matter is still the human condition. But the methods of exploring it are infinitely varied. Heroes are no longer evident; instead the solitary individual becomes the focus of concern. Identity assumes importance: whether sexual, local, national, racial or intellectual. Added to this, the literary world was opened up to voices from a wide range of countries, and from differing backgrounds. This makes contemporary writing a rich mix of English and non-English, standard and non-standard, male and female and other such diversities.

Instead of a narrative of progress, post-modern writing and art reflects pessimism about the fate of modern society. It casts doubt on the idea that human life is meaningful. The texts reflected on the difficulty of the act of representation itself and questioned the nature of the real by blurring the distinction between the fabulous and the real.The post-war period saw an unprecedented rise in levels of literacy. This was because of an expansion of the mass-education system and the 'paperback revolution' in publishing. Penguin publishers, founded in 1935 by Allen Lane, began the practice of publishing **'**serious**'** literary fiction in affordable editions which helped to establish a wider demand for literature.

Unlike the First World War, the Second War did not produce an easily identifiable body of writing. It had its own 'war poets' in Keith Douglas, Alun Lewis and Sidney Keyes who spoke about the unheroic nature of war. Films, on the other hand, told stories of courageous battle. Douglas's most famous poem, 'Vergissmeinnicht' talks of an enemy soldier who lies 'abased.' There is no glory in such death. Evelyn Waugh's *Sword of Honour* (1952, 1955, 1961) trilogy is a record of the lies, folly and disgrace of war. Heroes are not 'heroic', and war is an inglorious enterprise. He was in the line of writers like George Orwell, Dylan Thomas, Graham Greene who also believed that war was a systematic destruction of life.

With the decline of the music-hall in the 1930s, theatre came to be predominantly a middle-class form of entertainment. John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger* (1956) was heralded as the beginning of working-class theatre in Britain, and was followed by the so-called **'**New Wave**'** of social realist dramatists like Arnold Wesker, Shelagh Delaney and John Arden.

1.1.6. Summing Up

Post-World War II literature reflects the diversity and complexities of the modern world, grappling with the aftermath of war, the quest for meaning, social and political transforma-

tions, and the exploration of new literary forms and styles. It continues to be a vibrant and evolving literary landscape, capturing the spirit of contemporary times and offering insights into the human condition.

1.1.7. Comprehension Exercises

Long Answer Type Questions

1. What were the political conditions of post-war Europe?
2. Are there any noticeable changes in literature after the Second World War? Discuss.
3. How did women writers like Doris Lessing, Barbara Pym, and Rosamund Lehmann portray the experiences and challenges faced by women in the post-war era?
4. How did World War II influence the shift away from modernism and the rise of postmodernism in literature?
5. What are the key characteristics of postmodern literature, and how do they differ from those of modernism?
6. How did the concept of "hero" change in post-modern literature, and what new themes emerged?

Medium Answer Type Questions

1. Discuss in brief the effect that the World War had on women.
2. Write a short note on Cold War.
3. In what ways did *The Golden Notebook* by Doris Lessing anticipate second-wave feminism?
4. How did war poets like Keith Douglas, Alun Lewis, and Sidney Keyes portray the nature of war in their works?
5. What is the significance of Evelyn Waugh's *Sword of Honour* trilogy in the context of war literature?

Short Answer Type Questions

1. Name any two poets writing during the Second World War.
2. What kind of theatre does *Look Back in Anger* fall under?

3. How did the concept of "hero" change in post-modern literature?
4. What contributed to the rise in literacy levels after the war?
5. Name three war poets of WWII.
6. What is the title of Evelyn Waugh's war trilogy?
7. Which play is considered the start of working-class theatre in Britain?

1.1.8. Suggested Reading

Poplawski, Paul.ed. *English Literature in Context*. Cambridge University Press. 2017.

Briggs, Asa and Patricia Clavin. *Modern Europe: 1789-Present*. Pearson Longman. 2003.

Sinfield, Alan. *Literature Politics and Culture in Post-war Britain*. The Athlone Press. 1997.

Unit 2 ❒ The Setting Sun of the British Empire

Structure

1.2.1. Objectives

This Unit introduces the learners to the socio-cultural context of 1940s Europe as we see the British Empire gradually reaching its downfall. We take a brief look at the various political crises faced by the English Imperial power during that time and try to analyse the ideological concerns that post-World War literature addresses.

1.2.2. Introduction

The beginning of the British Empire can be traced to the sixteenth century when maritime expeditions began to be sent across the world. Most of the early settlements were a result of private enterprise rather than the Crown or government. At first, these colonies were unorganised. It was in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that the Crown began taking an interest in the territories that were under the merchant companies. This marked the beginnings of the British Empire which comprised the colonies, dominions, mandates, and protectorates

that were ruled by the United Kingdom. It was considered to be the largest empire in history and the foremost global power during its heyday. At its height, the Empire held sway over 24% of the Earth's total land area and a population of over 412 million people, i.e. 23% of the world population. The phrase "the sun never sets on the British Empire" literally meant that the Empire's expanse was so great around the globe that the sun was always shining on one of its territories at any given time.

The fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were times of explorations and discoveries. Spain and Portugal were the pioneers in setting up overseas empires. Soon England and France began their own explorations and started setting up colonies and trading posts of their own. Following the union of England and Scotland in 1707, Great Britain became the dominant political power in the West. After the East India Company laid its hold over Indian territories, the Empire emerged as the principal imperial power on earth.

It was during the eighteenth century that Britain had established herself as the greatest commercial power in Europe and laid the foundation of her Empire. By the 1760s she had won Canada from the French, and the East India Company had enormous powers in India. The Battle of Plassey in 1757, left the British East India Company in control of Bengal and as the major political power in India. In the following decades the British Indian Army brought several territories under its control. During the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the British Crown began to assume a greater role in the affairs of the Company. Several Acts of Parliament were passed to establish British political power over India. The Indian mutiny of 1857 sealed the fate of the Company and brought India under the British Raj. From now on, an appointed governor-general would govern the country while Queen Victoria was crowned as the Empress of India. India came to be known as "the Jewel in the Crown."

1.2.3. The Second World War and its Aftermath

After the Second World War life in Britain changed considerably. The war lived on in the British imagination longer than it did with other nations. The declining power of Britain in the world with the loss of empire resulted in a complex process of redefining national identity. Britain was no longer secure as a world leader. The First and Second World War left Britain weak and exhausted. Many parts of it Empire who had troops and resources to the war effort began to look for their own independence. The decline of the empire began with the Boer War (1899-1902), the War for Irish independence (1919-22), or the Statute of Westminster in 1931, which granted political and legal independence to Commonwealth countries.

For Britain, the Second World War represented the last great opportunity for heroism. The war had a lasting impression on British culture. On the one hand, it placed Britain on the

side of righteousness as the saviour of oppressed people from Nazism. At the same time, British society was deeply divided along class lines, the working classes were badly off almost as they were during the depression of the 1930s.

i) Decline of the Empire

The Second World War marked the fall of the British Empire. This became evident in the way it lost its hold on its territories. The story of Britain's declining power was intricately related to the rise of American and Russian global power, and the 'Cold War' between them. Britain could not compete successfully with the newly developing economies of the world. Most of Europe was in ruins. The United States and the Soviet Union held the new balance of power. The British economy was in shambles and insolvency was avoided after the United States loaned the U.K 4.33 billion dollars.

When the Cold War started it became clear to both the U.K and U.S.A that Russia would now dominate a vast empire in Eastern Europe. Around 1944-45, Britain and America became uneasy about growing Soviet military strength in eastern and central Europe. Both camps were keen on making their ideologies felt on the entire world. Britain's apprehension about Russia was focussed on threats to the empire. In 1946, Russia demanded bases in Libya and the Dardanelles, and refused to leave northern Persia. Soviet attacks on British policy in the Mediterranean, India, Persia, and the Dutch East Indies, during the United Nations meeting in 1946 made Britain realise that Russia was now intent on the destruction of the British Empire. America had a similar view of the situation as they regarded the empire as a valuable asset in a global confrontation.

Anglo-American solidarity took on a special concern in this period. America need for Britain as an ally against Russia helped soften Washington's attitude towards the empire. The United States supported the continued existence of the empire as it wanted to check the expansion of communism. For the Labour government newly elected to power, the Cold War was an unwelcome distraction. Their election manifesto, *Let us face the Future*, was a plan for a social and economic revolution. The state would take the responsibility for welfare and education; the economy would be revitalised through a mixture of public ownership and private enterprise.

ii) Decolonisation

In the general election of 1945, the Empire had been a peripheral issue. Labour had affirmed that it would give self-government to India. West African students threw themselves into the

campaign for Labour thinking it would bring nearer their countries' independence. But they were disappointed. Labour's imperial policy differed little from Conservative colonial policies. The colonial policies of the Labour government stressed on social and economic regeneration rather than self-government. Thus Colonial Development Acts were passed in 1940 and 1945, which offered grants and loans for road and bridge building, clinics, hospitals and schools. It was thought that an efficient infrastructure would prepare the way for self-sufficiency. Between 1946 and 1951, 40.5 million pounds were given for improvements.

In the end, nothing came of the plans. In 1948 the Cold War entered a dangerous phase. The Russians annexed Czechoslovakia, and blockaded Berlin. Britain and the empire were already on the side of the United States. A nation which had always been at centre stage was now relegated to playing second fiddle. Around 1944, the British Empire could claim to reign over some 760 million inhabitants outside the British Isles. By 1997, what remained were less than 170,000 people outside the British Isles. A number of countries within the British Empire gained independence in stages during the beginning of the twentieth-century. The major part was dismantled in the twenty years following the end of the Second World War.

a) India

The British Raj refers to the period 1858 to 1947 when the rule of the East India Company was transferred to the British Crown (Queen Victoria had already been proclaimed Empress of India in 1876).India's two major political parties—the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League had been fighting for independence for several years. The Labour government in Britain hastened the process and partitioned the nation into Hindu and Muslim areas. This made minorities of the two religions in the respective states. Millions of Muslims crossed over from India to Pakistan and vice versa. In 1946, a number of mutinies broke out leading to an outcry to grant freedom. The new Labour government in Britain sent Sir Stafford Cripps to negotiate the transfer of power. By now, the British exchequer was exhausted specially after the Second World War.

Burma and Sri Lanka gained independence in 1948. In Palestine, a problem similar to that of India pertained. The Arabs opposed the creation of a new state for the Jews. Frustrated by the situation, Britain announced that it would withdraw its forces and leave the matter for the United Nations to solve. The UN General Assembly later partitioned Palestine into a Jewish and Arab state. In 1957, Malaysia gained freedom while Singapore became an independent state in 1965. Brunei became independent in 1984 and Sudan in 1956.

b) The Suez Crisis

The Conservative Party returned to power in Britain in 1951 under the leadership of Winston Churchill. Churchill wanted to retain Britain's hold over the Suez Canal as it was the entry point to the East. However, Abdul Nasser's new revolutionary government in Egypt would not allow that. The inability to capture the Suez exposed the decline of British forces and its dependence on America. In 1956, Israel, Britain and France launched an attack on Egypt. Nasser could not win the battle but he blocked the canal to all shipping. Heavy political pressure from the United States and the USSR led to a withdrawal of military forces. U.S. President Dwight Eisenhower warned the U.K. that it would stop financial help unless it pulled out of Egypt. This crisis has, largely, been considered as the end of Great Britain's role as one of the world's major powers.

In the next few years Britain was forced to release its hold on Oman (1957), Jordan (1958) and Kuwait (1961). By 1971, British troops across Asia and the Middle East withdrew all their major military bases. The British withdrew from the Maldives in 1965, gave independence to Qatar, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates in 1971.

c) Africa

It was in the latter part of the nineteenth century that Britain began organising its colonial outpost in Africa. The Dutch East India Company had established the Cape Colony in South Africa in 1652. But by 1802 more and more Britishers began to arrive and there was a scramble for the African states which were rich in minerals. In 1884, a conference was held in Berlin to bring some order to the colonial camps. Unsurprisingly, no African country was invited. Between1880-1900 Britain had gained control over the major part of African land. It had occupied almost 30%of the Continent.

In 1960, the Conservative Prime Minister Harold Macmillan embarked on a Grand Tour of Africa. He visited Ghana, Nigeria and Rhodesia. Macmillan realised that Britain was losing from an economic point of view by retaining its colonies. The Empire was under severe constraints due to trade imbalances. Britain could no longer financially sustain the political and military requirements of maintain its outposts without American help.

Except for Rhodesia, all colonies had gained independence by 1968 in Africa. Civil war overtook Rhodesia from 1965 to 1979, and finally the new nation christened as Zimbabwe gained independence in 1980. Cyprus was freed in 1960, Malta in 1964 and most of the Caribbean in 1961-62.

Decolonisation of the British Empire was a result of people clamouring for self-rule and independence. From the British point of view it became a necessary step in order to strengthen its relationship with the U.S. Another reason was the rise of Marxism in Africa. If Britain did not concede independence, most African states would lean towards U.S.S.R. Thus, the appearance of the Soviet threat was also an important force in the decolonisation process.

1.2.4. Post-Colonial Aftermath

As British colonial rule weakened across the world, the Empire was transformed into a Commonwealth of Nations. In the aftermath of decolonisation, many newly independent countries did not have the monetary capability or coherent leadership to keep them running well. Most of these countries voluntarily continued their association with the "mother" country. The Commonwealth of Nations, a non-political organisation comprising former British colonies was an association of fifty-two states. Centuries of British rule had affected life in former colonies. English had become the primary language of most of these nations. The English parliamentary system of governance was adopted by most of these countries. Life in Commonwealth countries was imitative of British ways of living.

The face of Britain, too, has changed owing to immigration of settlers from its former colonies. A process of "Reverse Colonisation" began soon after the Second World War. Migrants from colonial countries began to settle in England, creating a diverse, multicultural land. Many writers moved from their motherland to live in Britain and write in English. They concentrated on their immigrant and 'post-colonial' experiences in their writings, thus creating a new genre of literature, namely 'post-colonial' literature.

1.2.5. Summing Up

The history of Britain in the post-war period is undoubtedly a history of decline. The Post-War literary activities were born out of these crises. This provided the writers new cultural atmosphere where they are allowed to choose between tradition and experimentalism. This literary period was more than a simple continuation of Modernism or a reaction against it. Post-war writers could not escape the shadow of either Modernism or Victorianism and tried to accommodate both in their work. Some have produced a new synthesis—which is what is really characteristic of post-modernism—while others have openly acknowledged their allegiance to either literary tradition or experimentation.

1.2.6. Comprehension Exercises

Long Answer Type Questions :

1. Trace the causes of the fall of the British Empire.
2. How and why was the Suez Canal important for the British?
3. What do you mean by 'post-colonialism'? Explain.

Medium Answer Type Questions :

1. What do you understand by the term "reverse-colonialism"?
2. What is the "Commonwealth of Nations"?
3. What do you understand by the term "decolonisation"? Discuss its significance in relation to the British Empire.

Short Answer Type Questions:

1. When did the Labour Party come in power in England?
2. When was Zimbabwe formed as an independent Nation?
3. When did Palestine get divided?

1.2.7. Suggested Reading

Briggs, Asa and Patricia Clavin. *Modern Europe 1789-Present.* London: Pearson Longman, 2003.

Lawrence, James. *The Rise and Fall of the British Empire.* London: Abacus, 2000.

Unit 3 ❐ The Cultural Context of Contemporary Literature after World War II

Structure

1.3.1. Objectives

In this Unit, the learners shall be acquainted with the cultural climate which shaped the literary works of the second half of the twentieth century. The aim of the unit is to enable the learners to understand the dominant cultural trends in the west that came to be known as postmodern. By the end of this unit, one should be able to comprehend the connections between contemporary literature and the intellectual tradition that emerged in the post-1945 western world. The material is not exhaustive but cursory in nature; hence the learners are encouraged to pursue according to the reading list appended at the end for an in-depth understanding of contemporary literature.

1.3.2. Introduction: What is 'Contemporary Literature'?

It is not an easy task to understand what is generally known as 'contemporary literature' in academia. The word 'contemporary' is problematic: we all would agree on that it 'ends' in the

present time but we may disagree on its beginning. It can be argued that the starting point of the period in cultural history depends upon myriad historical contexts. In the context of Europe, the beginning of the time frame of the 'contemporary' might be located in the end of the Second World War in 1945. Outside Europe, the scenario is often quite different. For India, the year 1947, the year of its independence, can be treated as a watershed. By the same token, it can be said that for Kenya, 1963 would be the starting point of its contemporary history as it became independent in that year. However, for several countries in the world, the 'contemporary' can start from the 1990s, when the USSR (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) dismantled at the closure of the Cold War. Since your immediate academic concern is canonical English literature, we would centre our discussion on the British/European and North American cultural context covering the period in history that starts from 1945 and continues up to 2000.

Again, 'culture' is one of the most difficult-to-define terms of all times. According to Raymond Williams, culture is a 'whole way of life.' For our understanding, we would restrict the definition of 'culture' to the dominant trends in art, primarily literature, that emerge as a corollary of the major changes in society. As you might know, though your primary focus is literary texts, you have to consider the ways in which the larger cultural frameworks shape and are shaped by those texts. It must be taken into account that literature does not 'happen' in isolation; rather, what we understand as 'literature' is in constant interaction with innumerable historical forces which affect our lives. Hence, if we want to have a reasonable understanding of literature, we need to have some knowledge of the interdependence of art, social analysis, human psychology, philosophy and politics. In case of the contemporary literature, to understand the 'context,' you have to be familiar with the concept of 'postmodernism.' Hence, our discussion would focus on the term. Concurrently, this discussion would provide you with clues to analyse contemporary literary works.

1.3.3. What is Postmodernism?

The term 'postmodernism' gained currency in the academia of Europe and North America in the 1970s and refers to the complex social, economic and cultural phenomena that emerged in the second half of the twentieth century. Now let us look at the various ways in which the term has been used by the thinkers whose works deal with the post-Second-World-War era. The widely known French philosopher and cultural theorist Jean-François Lyotard (1924-1998) in *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (1979) considers postmodernism as an intellectual attitude that tends to subvert the overarching goals of modernity. For him, the contemporary cultural sphere is postmodern in nature as the contemporary economic sphere is postindustrial in nature. Another acclaimed French philosopher and cultural

theorist Jean Baudrillard (1929-2007) in *The Illusion of the End* (1992) and the American political scientist Yoshihiro Francis Fukuyama (1952-) in *The End of History* and *the Last Man* (1992) maintain that the postmodern means a period in history in which we have reached the 'end of history.' However, this idea of the 'end of history' is different for Fukuyama and Baudrillard. For Fukuyama, western ideals of liberal democracy and freedom would finally be realised in all parts of the world in the era of the postmodern; but for Baudrillard, the postmodern denotes an era that fails to distinguish between the historical and the virtual. On the other hand, the Arab American literary theorist Ihab Habib Hassan (1925-2015) contends in *The Postmodern Turn: Essays in Postmodern Theory and Culture* (1987) that the postmodern refers to new artistic sensibilities that emerged after modernism. In a somewhat similar way, for Linda Hutcheon (1947-), a contemporary Canadian literary critic, postmodernism primarily means an increasingly self-conscious mode of art that is parodic in nature-as she discusses it in *The Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction* (1988). However, the American Marxist critic and cultural theorist Fredric Jameson (1934-) connects the emergence of the postmodern with the advancement of capitalism in the late twentieth century. Postmodernism, as Jameson argues, is said to bear the 'cultural logic of late capitalism'. By 'late capitalism' (as opposed to 'monopoly capitalism' and 'market capitalism'), he means the unprecedented fusion of science, technology and industrial production that was visible in the post-War era (1945 onwards). As computerised control dominate most of the productive forces and the global flow of capital makes inroads into almost all spheres of life, one can see a further decline of human agency and undervaluation of human labour. For Jameson, postmodern art fails to address this degeneration adequately, and at times unwittingly adds to it, because it lacks the necessary political conviction visible in previous art forms.

By and large, one may agree on the conviction that 'postmodernism' is a critical attitude as well as an artistic approach that has influenced the development of several cultural practices like literature, visual arts and theorisations upon society, art and politics that came into being from the 1950s. Parody, irony, fragmentation, playfulness, uncertainty as well as hybridity play important roles in postmodern discursive formations. These formations are believed to depart from an important artistic and cultural movement that emerged in the early twentieth century namely modernism-which you must have come across in the previous module.

1.3.4. Postmodernism/Postmodernity

From the above discussion it may appear that 'postmodernism' is a problematic category. To demystify it, first, one needs to note the way in which 'postmodernism' is distinguished from 'postmodernity.' Usually, 'postmodernism' refers to a movement in art (encompassing painting,

literature etc.) that started from the 1950s-60s and responded to 'potsmodernity;' while postmodernity denotes a historical period preceded by 'modernity,' which is again a highly contested term. Though the term 'modernity' has been familiarised to you in previous modules, some reflections upon the term is required here to make you acquainted with postmodernity. Modernity primarily refers to the period or characteristic of the 'modern'-something that pertains to what is considered recent. The German philosopher named Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), however, famously conceptualises modernity as a pursuit that is akin to the Cartesian (relating to the French rationalist René Descartes) philosophy and science that would enable human beings to master nature. In this way, modernity is inextricably linked with the Enlightenment, the pan-European philosophical movement of the seventeenth century, which was predicated upon the idea that reason and scientific pursuits can free humans from political tyranny and religious dogma. In fact, the contemporary German philosopher Jürgen Habermas (1929-) is critical of the idea of postmodernism, especially as it is conceptualised by Lyotard, and considers modernity as an incomplete (ongoing) project whose noble, emancipatory potentials are yet to be fully realised in the twentieth century.

Activity for the Learner:

Go through Habermas' "Modernity—An Incomplete Project" (1984) vis-a-vis Lyotard's *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (1979) to know about the famous debate on postmodernism between the two twentieth-century intellectuals.

In sociology, modernity is linked with industrialisation, emergence of private property and capitalism. Ferdinand Tönnies (1855-1936), a German sociologist, locates the emergence of modernity in the transition from *gemeinschaft* (community) to *gesellschaft* (society), that is to say, from a social organisation which is based on religious ties, common property and customary relations to that which is based on private property, legal contracts and freedom of thought. However, as Karl Marx (1818-1883) and Friedrich Engels (1820-1895) depict in *The Communist Manifesto* (1848), modernity is an experience of the rapid changes in the society, changes like 'alienation' and 'commodity fetishism' which are set in motion by capitalism. It is also pertinent to mention here, that the term 'modernity' was first used by the French poet Charles Pierre Baudelaire (1821-1867) in his essay 'The Painter of Modern Life' (1863), in which he considers modernity as a way of life and experience that is metropolitan, contingent, ephemeral and fashionable. For Marshall Berman (1940-2013), an American cultural critic, modernity initiated a 'maelstrom of perpetual disintegration and renewal' (*All that is Solid Melts into Air*; 1982). Overall, we can say that modernity is a

historical condition that is marked by fragmentation, speed and reformation of the 'traditional.' It is often closely connected with the monumental changes in perception of reality and expression of artistic sensibilities which were brought forth by industrialisation, capitalism, secularisation (primarily in society) as well as avant-gardism (primarily in art).

One of the earliest uses of the term 'postmodern' is found in Arnold Toynbee's *A Study of History* (1954). The British historian Toynbee depicts postmodernity as an epoch in history which begins from the late nineteenth century and continues throughout the twentieth century. It marks a decline of older human values which, as Toynbee argues, came into practice with the Enlightenment. 'Postmodernity' thus refers to both an extension of modernity and a new phase in modernity. Among various theorisations on postmodernity, there is a strong discourse that is suggestive of its continuity with, rather than break from, modernity. By and large, one may contend that theorisations on postmodernity are marked by a curious plurality. This plurality might be considered as symptomatic of the complexity in life that emerged with the changes that became obtrusive in the second half of the twentieth century. The 1950s is marked by an apparently laudable collapse of the colonies as many countries in the non-European regions became free from their European masters. On the other hand, the nuclear explosions in Hiroshima and Nagasaki that ended the Second World War threatened human existence in an unprecedented manner. In fact, the apparently benign growth of communication networks with an aim to connect the remotest of the villages to the greatest of the metropolises, is said to be instrumental in the rise of neocolonial empires that spawn new hierarchies of power in the international arena.

1.3.5. Understanding the Contemporary through Lyotard's Lens

One of the most significant theorists concerned with the contemporary, Jean-François Lyotard, argues that the economic and political spheres in the postmodern era would be driven by 'knowledge.' This knowledge is not apolitical in nature; but a commodity that would be used as a means to be powerful. The most powerful in the contemporary world would then be the ones who would own the most of the knowledge resources. Control over media and communication technologies would become the mainstay of their power. Knowledge as a commodity would only be possessed by the economically powerful sections. Hence, this knowledge-driven economy is ultimately, according to Lyotard, governed by the mores set by the powerful capitalists who own communication technologies. To critique the contemporary (postmodern) society which is governed by the owners of the commodified knowledge, Lyotard uses three important terms: 'narratives,' 'metanarratives' and 'grand narratives.' 'Narratives'

refer to the ways in which everything is comprehended in the world; while 'metanarratives' mean the sets of rules that legitimise certain narratives. For instance, our knowledge about space and the movement of stars, or the narrative of space and stars, is guided by the metanarratives of astronomy that emerged in the twentieth century. The dominant narratives and metanarratives of astronomy can ultimately be used to consolidate the contemporary grand narrative of progress and development in science. In place of the emancipatory pursuits of science and technology, which the Enlightenment thinkers championed and the modern machine age promised to bring into effect, in the postmodern era, we see money as the only telos of scientific and technological advancements. For Lyotard, this marks an unprecedented collapse of the 'grand narrative of modernity' that promised to free people from oppression and dogma. However, one may argue on the idea that to what extent we have become sceptical of the 'grand narrative of modernity' as wars are still being fought and people are still being oppressed on the basis of this grand narrative in various parts of the world. For example, when indigenous people in India are robbed of their ancient lands in the name of corporate modernising projects or the US government's 'War on Terror' obliterates millions of civilians in Iraq, we see how the illusion of emancipation that is an integral part of the grand narrative of modernity still continues to dominate human consciousness.

1.3.6. Dominant Features of Postmodernism

As it has been discussed before, the postmodern is a complex of cultural practices that emerged in the post-Second-World-War era as a response to postmodernity. And postmodernism primarily refers to the artistic movement that emerged as a part of those cultural practices. However, you may note here that there are postmodernisms as there were modernisms. Yet, we need to figure out a few characteristics of postmodernism if we want to have a reasonable idea about the contemporary culture. Another problem is that as postmodernity is not a mere reaction to (or departure from) modernity, postmodernism is also not a mere reaction to (or departure from) modernism. Nevertheless, one needs to look at postmodernism in relation to modernism. In so doing, one can come to terms with a few characteristic features of postmodernism.

It is pertinent to note that Ihab Hassan in *The Dismemberment of Orpheus: Toward a Postmodern Literature* (2nd Ed. 1982) enlists several differences between postmodernism and modernism. The list is given below:

Modernism	*Postmodernism*
Romanticism/Symbolism	Pataphysics/Dadaism

Form (conjunctive, closed)	Antiform (disjunctive, open)
Purpose	Play
Design	Chance
Hierarchy	Anarchy
Mastery/Logos	Exhaustion/Silence
Art object/Finished work	Process/Performance/Happening
Distance	Participation
Creation/Totalization	Decreation/Deconstruction
Synthesis	Antithesis
Presence	Absence
Centring	Dispersal
Genre/Boundary	Text/Intertext
Semantics	Rhetoric
Paradigm	Syntagm
Hypotaxis	Parataxis
Metaphor	Metonymy
Selection	Combination
Root/Depth	Rhizome/Surface
Interpretation/Reading	Against Interpretation/Misreading
Signified	Signifier
Lisible (readerly)	Scriptible (writerly)
Narrative/Grande histoire	Antinarrative/Petite histoire
Master code	Idiolect
Symptom	Desire
Type	Mutant
Genital/Phallic	Polymorphous/Androgynous
Paranoia	Schizophrenia
Origin/Cause	Difference - differance/trace
God the Father	The Holy Ghost
Metaphysics	Irony

Activity for the Learner:
Read Ihab Hassan's *The Dismemberment of Orpheus: Toward a Postmodern Literature* (2nd Ed. 1982; pp. 267-270) to have an idea about the features of postmodernism

Determinacy	Indeterminacy
Transcendence	Immanence

However, you should also consider the fact that often these features intersect each other in cultural practices of the twentieth century, and thus the distinction between modernism and postmodernism gets blurred. Nevertheless, the list is useful to come to terms with the ways in which the two artistic traditions coexist in the contemporary culture.

If modernism, is marked by avant-gardism, a tendency to be extremely experimental (in order to address the complex realities of contemporary world) so much so that the work of art becomes elliptical for the uninitiated, postmodernism is marked by a conscious departure from avant-gardism. Be it the 'mythic method' of W. B. Yeats, James Joyce and T. S. Eliot, the 'androgynous' writing of Virginia Woolf or the surrealist attempt to conflate dream and reality-all modernist experimentations ultimately have a strong purpose of changing the world. Postmodernism aims at undermining this grand purpose of art by being playful and comic. By making art more democratic postmodernism continues with the formal experiments initiated by modernism. Hence in postmodernism, the boundary between the high art (esoteric art) and the low art (popular art) gets blurred.

Activity for the Learner:

- Know about the Pop Art of the 1950s in the USA.
- Have a look at Jeffrey L. Koons' artwork titled *Equilibrium* (1985). Refer to Lowbrow Art movement of the 1990s.

However, the fusion between the so-called high art and low art and the corollary playfulness visible in postmodernism do not depoliticise art. According to Linda Hutcheon, the experimental use of language in postmodernism re-engages art with politics in a curious way. Talking about what she calls 'historiographic metafiction,' a type of postmodern novel that is self-reflexive and undermines the 'authority' of historical novels as well as history writing, she argues that this postmodern form of fiction problematises the accepted histories. It acknowledges the fact that history is always narrated by someone, and mostly it is narrated from the perspective of the powerful. In this way Hutcheon takes issue with Fredric Jameson's argument that postmodernism is reactionary as it does not have the necessary historical perspective. According to Jameson, this depoliticisation of art happens because of the manner in which postmodenism prioritises pastiche (a work of art that emulates the style or character of other works) over parody (an art work that subverts other works through mimicry). One may see the works of

the Guerrilla Girls of the 1980s, who fulminate against underrepresentation and misrepresentation of women in art by combining several forms of art in their works, to know about the ways in which postmodern art engages with the politics of subversion. In Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1981), one of the most significant works of the canonical British writer of the South Asian diaspora, one can find certain songs from the popular Hindi movies of the late 1960s. To illustrate the theory of Hutcheon on fiction and history, one may refer to the multiple conclusions to the narrative in John Fowles' *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (1969). By offering different endings to the narrative of Charles and Sarah, which is set in the Victorian period, the novel seems to project history as a series of multiple narratives which often problematise each other. The reader ultimately does not get any well-defined ending to the story that the novel narrates; instead the reader may delight in the play of plularity and intertextuality which other close-ended texts suppress in order to follow the conventions of history writing.

To talk about another, but related, characteristic feature of postmodernism, we may refer to the distinction between modernism and postmodernism made by the contemporary American critic Brian McHale (1952-) in *Postmodernist Fiction* (1987). For McHale, postmodernism deals with ontological questions as modernism deals with epistemological problems. In other words, modernism engages with the ways in which one can construe coherent meaning in the world of chaos, the way of knowing human life; while postmodernism doubts the very notion of human life and the world. As we find in expressionism a tendency to represent reality in a distorted way, it generates a meaning. It emphasises subjectivity as it mutilates the objects of representation in order to suit the mood of the artist. Nevertheless, the subjective perception seems to conjure up a meaning. Imagism tries to be minimalist in expression in an aim to concentrate on a particular image. Yet, it cannot be denied that the imagists seek for a particular meaning, something that has a truth claim. This very pursuit of meaning might be considered as an epistemological endeavour as it deals with knowing the world. However, in postmodern art, one finds 'misreading' and 'indeterminacy' in everything. It not only questions the validity of its artistic conviction (the strategies of representation are constantly under scrutiny) but also (through a fluid, self-reflexive, unreliable narrative) subverts the validity of the world that is believed to be external to art. Therefore, reliability of art and 'being' of reality come under examination, and this very pursuit of postmodernism might be considered to be ontological.

For instance, in Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1981), the central crisis of the protagonist Saleem Sinai (his inability to hold his body together) evokes the crisis of narration (its inability to be coherent and reliable) as well as that of India, the nation-state (its inability to come to terms with the diversity of India, the nation). Saleem's fragmented body calls into

question the administrative strategies adopted by the powerful leaders of the state that led to the violence of the Partition (1947), of the Indo-Pak War (1965 and 1971) and of the Emergency (1975-77). Hence in the beginning, Saleem significantly proclaims, "I had been mysteriously handcuffed to history, my destinies indissolubly chained to those of my country". In so doing, the postmodern fiction erases the distinction between the real and the fictional, between the personal and the political, bringing reliability of art and 'existence' of the so-called 'reality' (conventionally considered external to art) under scrutiny.

It must be noted here that by the 1980s, in many advanced industrial countries in the world-and this obviously means England and the USA along with other western countries-there was a rise of 'multiculturalism.' As the new technologies came in the western world, communication flourished and new job-markets emerged. These spaces increased immigration from various so-called 'Third World' countries into the west. To cater to this new influx of various ethnicities which came hand-in-hand with the development of new industries, the governments had to implement policies that spawned an ethics of multiculturalism. According to this new sensibility, establishment of ethnic and racial tolerance in the west became a major concern for the governments. Hence the transformation from English Literature to Literatures in English is conspicuous in the western academia from the later part of the twentieth century. Thus this ethos of multiculturalism made its presence felt in the treatment of life in literature as well as in the treatment of literature in life. Postmodern fiction and critical works often exude this collapse of culture.

Activity for the Learner:
Read Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1981) and John Fowles' *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (1969) and find out postmodern elements in them.

1.3.7. Postmodernism as a Timeless Literary Device

It must be noted here that certain features which are deemed to be postmodern in contemporary criticism can also be found in few works which appeared long back. For instance, we may consider Lawrence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* (1759-1767) which came at the time when novel was developing as a genre that would adhere to the conventional codes of realism (please refer to the previous modules). The narrator is unreliable and often directly converses with the reader thereby exuding postmodern self-reflexivity. There is a blank page (when the narrator has no words to express the beauty of Widow Wadman), black page (when the

narrator has no words to define death), and marbled pages (just to amuse the reader) deliberately kept within the text in order to present a rich texture of playfulness-a strategy that is postmodern in nature. Postmodern literary devices can also be traced in certain celebrated works that came in the period known as Modern: James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922) and *Finnegans Wake* (1939) and Virginia Woolf's *Orlando: A Biography* (1928) are works that overtly challenge easy assumptions on language, art and reality by pushing the boundaries of representation to the extreme. Thus postmodernism escapes rigid historical periodisation and appears to be a conglomeration of artistic devices. It must be noted therefore that the tendencies visible in these works gained special attention in academia particularly in the second half of the twentieth century.

1.3.8. Rise of Literary Theories

From the above discussions, it might have been clear to you that the postmodern is marked by a strong sense of scepticism. According to Lyotard, the postmodern is wrought with incredulity towards 'metanarratives,' sets of rules that legitimise and empower particular narratives at the expense of others. It can be argued that the rise of literary theories, especially the poststructuralist approaches like deconstruction and new historicism, in the western academia in the second half of the twentieth century is somewhat symptomatic of this scepticism. Propositions of Darwin, Marx, Nietzsche, Freud and Saussure already had altered the western worldview when the postmodern scepticism arrived at the literary milieu. Having its roots in those Copernican revolutions, literary theories gradually gained its ground in many Ivy League universities. Drawing upon Saussure's theory of language, the French philosopher Jacques Derrida (1930-2004) argued that nothing generates a coherent meaning as every 'meaning' is inherently unstable. This philosophical approach came to be known as 'deconstruction' and became popular in literary criticism in the 1960s through the works of the Yale School of Critics (Paul de Man, Geoffrey Hartman et al). In deconstructionist criticism, every text is marked by aporias or indissoluble contradictions. The task of the literary critic is to explore those inherent contradictions and silences which are already present within the literary texts under question. This resulted in new interpretations; and with this surge of these critical works, a new cult of literary studies started to take shape. However, if deconstruction allegedly reduced literary studies into an ahistorical, text-based criticism, new historicism ran counter to it. Drawing upon the works of another French philosopher Michel Foucault (1926-1984), new historicism (primarily in the USA) explored the ways in which literary criticism could reconnect literature and history by highlighting the 'historicity of the text and the textuality of history' (the phrase was coined by the famous American critic Stephen Greenblatt (1943-). In

so doing, new historicism, along with a similar theoretical pursuit named cultural materialism that developed in the British academia of the 1970s through the works of the Welsh Marxist academician Raymond Williams (1921-1988), considered literary works as a signifying practice that is conditioned by and enmeshed within a complex network of socio-cultural forces. In this way, this new theoretical framework blurred the dichotomies of text and history, the cultural and the material. Literature, like other elements which are produced within a particular culture, may consolidate or subvert the dominant ideology within that culture. In this way, literary studies gradually paved the way for cultural studies in the postmodern world.

1.3.9. Resurgence of Realism

You may realise that when we talk about postmodernism in fiction, we primarily talk about the formal experimentations in literature; while in case of apocalyptic, dystopian, protest literature that emerged in the mid twentieth century, we focus the themes of the works as by and large those works follow the conventional codes of realism in representation. In fact, in the postmodern world, with the rise of the Angry Young Man and Working Class Novels, one can find a resurgence of realism. If postmodernism was an extension of modernism, the trajectory of this realism can be traced back to the works of H.G. Wells and Bernard Shaw. This type of literature has a close correspondence with the widespread fear and anxiety aroused by the Great Wars resulting into unprecedented carnage. Again, dystopian works can be found in earlier times. However, the growing threat of complete annihilation that came hand-in-hand with the rise of technologically advanced warfare as well as with the development of fascists states in Italy, the USSR and Germany was instrumental in consolidation of this new 'socially relevant' works. This widespread anxiety and fear surrounding human existence had a close correspondence with the 'comedy of menace' in Harold Pinter's plays as well as with the Orwellian dystopia.

Activity for the Learner:

Read George Orwell's *Animal Farm* (1945) and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949), William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* (1954), Harold Pinter's *Birthday Party* (1957) to learn about the political satire and apocalyptic, dystopian tradition of the mid twentieth century.

The Butler Education Act of 1944 has a special significance in the historical context of the realist, protest literature of the 1950s. The act ensured two things among others: compulsory

education for those who were under 15 and government sponsorship for the underprivileged. This resulted in the establishment of what was known as the 'Red Brick universities', that is to say, the universities other than the premier ones such as those of Oxford and Cambridge. In this way, the welfare states in the United Kingdom moved towards a 'decentralisation' and 'democratisation' of knowledge and social status. The movement called Angry Young Man emerged as a consequence of this new politics which was marked by a contradiction. On the one hand, there were several 'university wits' graduating from the Red Brick universities; on the other hand, most of them were unable to find their desired jobs or the coveted social status as the upper class still looked down upon them. The 'anger' that one finds in the heroes of the works say John Osborne or Kinsley Amis thus has its genesis in a deep-rooted frustration that grew strong in the mid twentieth century. Besides, when the academic space, hitherto a prerogative of the upper class, became increasingly accessible to people from different walks of life, a new subgenre in fiction, namely campus novel, emerged. In these novels, especially those written by Kinsley Amis and David Lodge among others, the life on university and college campuses became a microcosm of the world external to it, and often it was projected as a crucible to address the problems of the 'real' world.

1.3.10. Summing Up

- To understand the contemporary cultural climate as a student of literature, an insight into the development of postmodern sensibilities is indispensible.
- An adequate understanding of modernity and modernism is required to know about the postmodern.
- Postmodernism refers to a movement in art as well as a cultural attitude that emerged in the second half of the twentieth century.
- Scepticism, indeterminacy, play and intertextuality are central features of postmodern literature.
- Postmodernity refers to a historical epoch and a socio-cultural condition.
- There was a resurgence of realism parallel to the development of postmodernism in the mid twentieth century.

1.3.11. Comprehension Exercises

Long Answer Type Questions:

1. What do you understand by the term 'postmodern'? Does it refer to anything that is 'anti-modern'?
2. Postmodernism means irreverence towards 'metanarratives.' Do you agree? Justify.
3. Discuss the basic tenets of postmodern literature.

Medium Length Answer Type Questions:

1. What is the difference between postmodernity and postmodernism?
2. Do you believe that 'modernity is an unfinished project'? Elucidate.
3. What is the difference between modernism and postmodernism?

Short Answer Type Questions:

1. Write a short note on Angry Young Man.
2. What is new historicism?
3. What is historiographic metafiction?

1.3.12. Suggested Reading List

Butler, Christopher. Postmodernism: *A Very Short Introduction*. UP, 2002.

The Routledge Companion to Postmodernism. Edited by Stuart Sim, Routledge, 2011.

The Cambridge Companion to Postmodernism. Edited by Stephen Connor, Cambridge UP, 2004.

Unit 4 ❐ The Postmodern Culture

Structure

1.4.1. Objectives

Since the historical developments of post Second World War decades have been extensively discussed in Module 1: Unit 1 and Unit 2, this particular section focuses on the cultural formations of post-war Britain and tries to find the ways in which this new culture influenced the contemporary literary trends. The postmodern cultural context attempts to rethink a number of concepts held dear by Enlightenment humanism and many modernists, including subjectivity, temporality, referentiality, progress, empiricism, and the rule of law. "Postmodernism" also refers to the aesthetic/cultural products that treat and often critique aspects of "postmodernity." This Unit introduces some of the important concepts that have been introduced by postmodernist theorists to supplant or temper the values of traditional humanism.

1.4.2. Introduction

The term postmodernism is often applied to Western literature and culture after the **Second World War (1939-1945)** when the entire world was convalescing from massive destruction

of life and properties, joblessness and the aftermath of the atomic explosion. The West experienced the gradual destruction of natural environment, immigration and over population along with the heady thrill of popular entertainments through the advent of mass media in audio-visual mode such as television (since the 1950s), home video (in the 1980s) and internet (since the 1990s). It was a time when the modernist concept of **'high culture'** suffered a shock by the emergence of **'mass culture'** articulated in films, newspaper cartoons, pop art and pop music. The term 'Postmodern' could be described in different ways: it describes a particular historical era that began after the Second World War. It is also attributed to the new developments in aesthetic genres in the decades following World War II. The term is precisely used for describing contemporary culture that influenced literary genres since 1950s till date. The relationship between contemporary culture and literature is symbiotic in the sense contemporary literature is greatly influenced by popular culture and gives way to composite genres of ***pastiche*** and ***brikolage***, whereas mass culture and advertising media adapt the narrative element from literature according to their requirements. This discussion attempts to focus on certain dominant cultural concepts that moulded literary tendencies of British literature since the 1950s.

From the mid-twentieth-century onwards Postmodernism influenced domains of philosophy, visual and performing arts, architecture and theories. The postmodern culture reacted against the formal experimentations of Modernist aesthetics. According to the American Marxist theorist Fredric Jameson postmodernism in the arts emerged "as specific reactions against the established form of high modernism" and it caused "the erosion of the older distinction between high culture and so-called mass or popular culture" (Jameson). For him, the emergence of new formal features in culture correlates with the emergence of a new type of social life and a changed economic order. **Fredric Jameson**, along with **Jean-François Lyotard** and **Jean Baudrillard**, figure as the major interpreters of the postmodern culture, though they take different theoretical stands, while analysing the spirit of the age. Lyotard interprets the multiplicity and hybridity of postmodern culture as something promising and encouraging, while Baudrillard sounds apprehensive at the obliteration of nature by culture and the replacement of the real by signs. Fredric Jameson interpreted postmodern art and culture as something that goes in tandem with the consumer capitalism of post-World War II West.

1.4.3. Lyotard and his Idea of 'Incommensurability'

Jean-François Lyotard (1924-1998) saw traits of postmodernism latent in the experimental aspect of high modernism, but he spots the difference in their perspective of dealing with post-

war culture. The chaos and flux generated by new technologies that threatened the Modernists, exhilarated the postmodernists with a promise of ever expansiveness.

- Lyotard in the essay **"Defining the Postmodern"** observes that Postmodernism does not comply with the universal notion of progress, instead it makes an appreciation of local differences, the variety of human ways of living and he suggests that there is no common measure or scale by which these local differences can be compared or standardized. Such differences are myriad in number and they are **'incommensurable**.' According to him this relation between the postmodernist work and the postmodern world is a relation of **non-measurability**.

- Lyotard's seminal work ***The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*** **(1979)** is considered to be the manifesto of the postmodernist position. In this book he interprets postmodernist art as a sign of post-war traumatic disorder and it is linked with Modernism. Both postmodern literature and art strive to work through the tradition in order to overcome that very tradition and the result is a ***bricolage***, "the high frequency of quotations of elements from previous styles or periods (classical or modern)" (Lyotard). Here Lyotard's idea comes very close to Fredric Jameson's definition of postmodern literature as a ***'pastiche,'*** which is an effort to work on the past material in order to break the spell of the canonical literature. Lyotard suggests that postmodern culture is marked by complexity for it grapples with plural realities of our present. Hence, the 'post' of postmodernity does not mean a process of "coming back or flashing back, feeling back, but of ana-lysing, ana-mnesing, of reflecting" (Lyotard).

- Lyotard's interpretation of the **'sublime'** is vital to the understanding of postmodern aesthetics. His idea of the sublime is something that exceeds calculation and understanding, it is the plurality of lifestyles, it is incommensurability. However, Lyotard makes a departure from the traditional notion of the sublime, as he suggests that this largeness does not evoke awe but a kind of voracity in society.

1.4.4. Baudrillard and his Interpretation of the 'Image'

Jean Baudrillard (1929-2007), along with Fredric Jameson interpreted the role of **Image** or **Sign** in relation to the post-industrial consumerist culture. Baudrillard was fascinated by the phenomena of ever-increasing tourism, and the frenzied simulation of consumer desire through the media and these areas form the basic tenets of his thought.

- According to him an object has four types of values: **functional value** or **use value** (when an object serves a purpose), **exchange value** (when an object gives a better service than other objects), **symbolic value** (when an object substitutes some concept) and **sign value** or **cultural commodity value** (when an object becomes a social-status symbol). He observes that capitalism destroys an object's use-value and it prioritizes that object's sign value. Thus, objects are no longer purchased for their use value, but rather for the life-styles they represent. Thus **'hyperreal'** signs gradually replace the 'real' objects. To designate this new function of signs in his determining work ***Simulacra and Simulation*** **(1981)** Baudrillard chooses the term ***simulacrum***, a word that not only denotes **'representation'** but also carries the connotation of a counterfeit.

- It is a general notion that in the world 'things' or objects come first and 'signs' are invented to denominate or signify those objects, whereas Baudrillard argues that 'signs' have now taken priority over the 'things' and things have lost their significance. He relates this change to the structural changes in post-war consumer society. In contemporary consumer society desires are stimulated by cultural discourses, where advertising media plays an important role. Advertising media decides for us what we want. Through newspaper, television, and hoardings people are guided by the images of what they desire and they process their relation to the world through those images. That is why capitalist production in contemporary time proceeds by first creating a demand through marketing and then producing the product to meet that demand. According to Baudrillard, these are not natural needs but culturally produced **'hyperreal'** needs. In this way signs precede the things before they are created and the world is recreated in the signs of our own desires. The consumer society provides a **"precession of simulacra,"** where the host of images project a lifestyle that consumers are encouraged to attain (Baudrillard).

- The supremacy of sign can be noticed in two stages: initially, the devastation of natural environment and human lives and properties in the Second World War leads to our craving for the things we have lost. We try to revive these things by creating signs. The more we try to revive the things we have lost; the more signs are created to simulate those lost things. Thus, signs come to dominate our lives. Secondly, in a consumer society the promotional advertisements create a simulated world and we are motivated as well as guided by those signs and desire things to be like the signs. This is how signs take priority over things.

In contemporary culture our sense of reality is pervaded by the world of cinema. The image, that is traditionally considered a reflection or a representation of a basic reality, now masks and perverts that basic reality and ultimately bears no relation to reality: "When the real is no longer what it used to be, nostalgia assumes its full meaning ? a resurrection of the figurative where the object and substance disappeared" (Baudrillard). Fredric Jameson makes a similar observation from his Marxist socialist orientation that the new consumer society thrives on multinational capitalism, on media or the **spectacle** (Jameson).

1.4.5. Postmodern Culture and the Erasure of Indigenous Culture

Baudrillard shared this interest in **semiotics** with his contemporary thinkers Michel Foucault (1926-1984) and Jacques Derrida (1930-2004). **Postmodernism** in literature and culture has parallels with the movement known as **post-structuralism** in linguistic and literary theory. Post-structuralism questions the foundations of language and shows its apparent meaningfulness is lost into a play of power and ideologies.

- Language thus becomes **a site of struggle** for different modes of ideologies. Baudrillard in discourse on postmodern culture echoes poststructuralist philosophers Derrida and Foucault as his focuses on the gradual overpowering of ethnic sign systems by Western signifying method.

- According to Baudrillard, the West, in order to know the entire world names and describes everything it encounters. Thus the name or the sign replaces the object. Even the things that are unknown are translated and thereby they are tamed and accommodated within the West's own signifying system. In this way through the process of colonization signs can erase a native culture by means of renaming and categorizing. Western science since the Enlightenment has translated all otherness into its own terms and thus, we get **'simulated otherness':** "the 'savages' are catalogued and analysed then artificially revived as thought real in a world of simulation" (Baudrillad). Baudrillard's concept can be posited in parallel with the seminal poststructuralist concept of 'erasure.'

1.4.6. Developments in British Literature after the Second World War

- Post World War II English fiction focused on social scene and historical events. The allegories of the war and colonialism recur in fictions of **Graham Greene (1904-**

1991) (*The End of the Affair*-1951, *The Human Factor*-1978), William Golding (1911-1993) (*Lord of the Flies*-1954) and Iris Murdoch (1919-1999) (*The Bell*-1958, *A Severed Head*-1961), questioning the moral relativity of post Holocaust Nuclear Age.

- Among the British poets, **Philip Larkin (1922-1985), Elizabeth Jennings (1926-2001), Thom Gunn (1929-2004), John Wain (1925-1994), D. J. Enright (1920-2002) and Robert Conquest (1917-2015)** in their poetry of the **Movement (1950s)** made cynically caustic commentaries on the emasculated stated of the British Empire, the joblessness of the gang of war-beaten soldiers, the young demobilized officer class and expressed their satirical disgust on the shabby middleclass provincial lifestyle. Novels of **Kingsley Amis (1922-1995)** express a similarly sceptical and unsentimental mindset of the young British intelligentsia. the Movement denoted a departure in English poetry from the Modernist tradition The poets of the Movement expressed their disillusionment about the post World War II social set up and economic drainage. The scarcity of jobs and the gradual fragmentation of the British Empire in African, South Asian and the Caribbean colonies bred a sense of dissatisfaction within the mind of the Englishmen, which found its vent through anger. Anger thus became a guiding force in the English literature of the 1950s.

- The poetry of Movement gradually transformed into The **Angry Young Men Movement** that culminated in **John Osborne's (1929-1994)** famous play ***Look Back in Anger*** **(1956). Harold Pinter (1930-2008)**, under the influence of **Samuel Beckett** and **Eugene Ionesco** portrayed people's failure to communicate. The breakdown of communication is reflected in the breakdown of language within the play. Pinter's plays ***The Room*** **(1957),** ***The Birthday Party*** **(1957)**, and ***The Dumb Waiter*** (1960) represent the comedy of menace that conveys the political terrors of contemporary history. These experimentations in the realm of British Theatre took place as a response to the **technicolour cinema**. During this time public access to television caused a retreat from experimentation into the image-generated narrativity of soap opera. That is why the idea of self-conscious theatricality aroused in the form of **Alternative Theatre** of the 1970s to differentiate theatre from film and television.

Detailed discussions on British literature of the 1950s and the 60s are given in the previous two units of Module 1.

1.4.7. Literary and Cultural Expressions of the Postmodern Era

The predominant term for literature and art produced since the 1950s is **'contemporary'** literature and art. It is an umbrella term that includes late Modernist art and literature as well. The bulk of contemporary literature grows inconsonance with the all-consuming spirit of the advertising culture. Lyotard's interpretation of the sublime as the appearance of something too large and too complex, which evokes voracity, instead of awe is well applicable here. This sense of ungraspability of the world that pervades postmodern fiction has come from the encyclopaedia, the guidebook, the dictionary, the game, which literary fiction adapted as its models. Postmodernism disrupted the linearity of narrative through flashes of **syncopation**, halts, and the narrative flow appears as irregular and random. Just as motion pictures are patchwork of different shots, literature followed a similar method in representing the work of art as a patchwork, a pastiche. Postmodern literature tends to challenge the existing literary canons, evident in the experimental techniques displayed in ***nouveau roman, antinovel, concrete poetry, total theatre***, and ***theatre of the absurd***, Other discernible features of postmodernism are composite and intermedial approaches of ***bricolage, pastiche, magic realism, science fiction, neo-Gothic*** and horror story. **Intertextuality** (cross-referencing of multiple texts), **metatextuality** (when one text critically comments on another text) and **intermediality** (the interconnectedness between literary and audio-visual media) are important aspects of postmodernism. Here are some basic characteristics of postmodern literature:

- Although postmodern literature was marked by a departure from stylistic experimentation of Modernist literature in fields of both verse and prose, it experienced major changes in the domain of narrative fiction. Narrative dominated every realm of culture. Narrative was desired in advertising, computer games, pulp fiction and film industry. In verse the Movement poetry made a conscious choice of traditional rhyme schemes and simple, terse imagery over the free-verse pattern and elaborate myth-making. Postmodernist novels were large and complex, as if trying to express the reality that itself is hard to encompass (**incommensurable**). Postmodernism in literature was not really a major shift in style, because it retained many of the stylistic aspects of modernist novel and theatre. However, it was a really significant change of perspective from Modernism. The same text of **James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922)** was interpreted two different ways by the Modernists and the Postmodernists. The Modernist perspective interpreted it as a work talking about **flux** and **chaos** posing a threat to human psyche, whereas the postmodernist perspective interpreted the same disordered narrative as **multiplicity, proliferation, open-endedness** and

hybridity. A similar interpretation is applicable to other postmodernist narratives. Postmodernist novels are marked by a chattering **polyglossary**, a plenitude of words. These 'unordered' and the 'incommensurable' states of experience no longer posed a threat to be tamed, rather aroused a hunger for variety. It is not a traumatizing ordeal, but a promise, and an exhilarating provocation. Debunking the conventions of realism and naturalism, novels of **Samuel Beckett (1906-1989)** (***Molloy***, written in**1951** and ***Murphy***, written in **1938**) Vladimir Nabokov (***Pale Fire***, written in **1962** and ***Ada, or Ardor***, written in **1969**), **James Joyce (1882-1941)** (***Ulysses***, written in **1922** and ***Finnegans Wake,*** written in **1939**), **Virginia Woolf (1882-1941)** (***The Waves***, written in **1931**), **Jean Paul Satre (1905-1980)** (***La Nausée,*** written in **1938**) are marked by the absence of a concrete plot, diffused episodes, minimal development of characters, repetitions, experiments with vocabulary, punctuation and syntax, variations of time sequence, alternative endings and beginnings.

- Interactive developments took place in the realm of poetry as well. **Concrete Poetry** fully exploited the intermedial aspect of contemporary literature. It presents each poem as a different shape through pictorial typography. This experimental genre produces 'visual poetry' on the pages, on glass, stone, wood and other materials. The modern concept of concrete poetry developed under **Max Bill (1908-1994)** and **Eugene Gomringer (b. 1925)** and was presented at an exhibition of concrete art at Sao Paolo in 1956. This led to innovation in the realm of poetry: **'emergent poetry'** (which involves cryptographic tricks with letters), **'semiotic poetry'** (which uses symbols) and **'kinetic poetry'** (where words move on the screen and are randomly arranged). Just as contemporary literature combines print media with audio-visual media, postmodern art uses the technique of bricolage, the application of text with an aesthetic purport. Through the juxtaposition of words and visuals emerged the comic strips and graphic novels that catered to the mass culture.

- The emergence of the comic strip and the graphic novel are linked with the emergence of the **Pop Art**. Pop art was in vogue in the mid-1950s in UK and USA that incorporated imagery from mass culture, advertising and comic books and mass-produced cultural objects, such as beer bottles, cheese tins and bottles of tomato sauce. By applying graphic designing or mechanical means of reproduction the pop artists challenged the tradition of fine arts. Pop art often took imagery that is currently used in advertising industry such as labels and logos. Pop art along with **Minimalism** preceded contemporary art. Its method of blending the high culture with mass culture attained a watershed during postmodernism.

- Most of the postmodernist works are culturally-induced **pastiche**. The word pastiche comes from the Italian word 'pasta', meaning 'paste'. It is a patchwork of words, sentences or complete passage from various authors or one author. An elaborate form of pastiche is a sustained work, written mostly or entirely in the style of another writer. An example of pastiche is **Peter Ackroyd's *The Last Days of Oscar Wilde* (1983)**, which is written in the style of a diary. A pastiche is a kind of literary collage inspired and influenced by the collage and bricolage of postmodern art. ***Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* (1966)** by **Tom Stoppard** is one of the most appropriate examples of theatrical pastiche. The play deals with two minor characters from Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. In this absurdist play the two characters stand behind the curtain and comment on the events of *Hamlet*, being enacted on the stage. The play is a pastiche and at the same time it involves traits of **metatextuality**, as within the play Rosencrantz and Guildenstern comment on another play *Hamlet*. Similarly, **David Lodge's** novel ***The British Museum is Falling Down* (1965)** assimilates styles of Virginia Woolf, Franz Kafka, and James Joyce within its narrative corpus. This juxtaposition of old and new styles urged Fredric Jameson to conclude that in the era of corporate capitalism and bureaucratic organization, stylistic innovation is no longer possible. One can only imitate dead styles, speaking through masks (Jameson 1965). The rise of computer-originated hypertexts offers readers a kit of text fragments to be ordered in many different configurations, which enables multiple interpretations of a text and an open-ended approach quite akin to **Roland Barthes**'s idea of **'open text'** explained in **"The Death of the Author" (1967)**.

More detailed discussions on individual texts and authors of the postmodern era are given in subsequent units of Module 1.

1.4.8. Fredric Jameson and his Idea of Consumerist Aesthetics

In the essay **"Postmodernism and Consumer Society"** the American Marxist philosopher **Fredric Jameson** observes how contemporary culture is regulated by the economic condition and nature of commercial production. According to Fredric Jameson, the most prominent features of postmodern culture are high-rise apartments, pop art, punk music and new-wave rock, commercial films and television series. This is a distressing culture shock from the elitist and academic standpoint because it represented the culture of popular TV shows and the pulp literature of *Reader's Digest*. Postmodern culture is "fascinated by the whole landscape of advertising and motels, Hollywood film, airport paperback Gothic and Romance, popular

biography, murder mystery, science fiction and fantasy novels (Jameson). Jameson defines 'pastiche' and sketches its basic characteristics this way :

- Jameson considers *pastiche* as one of the most prominent cultural forms of postmodernism. He makes a difference between 'pastiche' and 'parody'. Parody is a mockery of prevalent linguistic norms. Pastiche, like parody is the imitation of a peculiar or unique style. However it is a neutral practice of such mimicry, without parody's satirical impulse and without laughter. Thus pastiche can be called **'blank parody.'**

- The emergence of pastiche as a dominant literary genre was related to the changed economic pattern of post-World War Europe. Fredric Jameson pointed out the rise of corporate professionalism as a cause behind the changed aesthetics of postmodernism. The destruction of bourgeois individualism and the rise of corporate society had impacts on the aesthetic realm. Art is no longer the expression of a unique private world and style but an **intertextual** and **intermedial** discourse. Postmodern artists cannot invent new styles or new modes of expression. Instead, they operate as **bricoleurs**, recycling previous works and styles. It is a method of speaking through the masks of other styles. Through the continuous mixing of multiple linguistic registers and aesthetic styles, history is rebuilt through pastiche.

- According to Fredric Jameson the era following the Second World War is described as **post-industrial society** that was marked by **multinational capitalism** and media rule that influenced postmodern art and literature. The art and literature of the society reflect new types of consumption, fashion and styling changes that were incited into public mind by advertising media and television. Jameson thinks that "the fragmentation of time into a series of perpetual presents" and "the transformation of reality into images" is the aesthetics of a consumer society and this transformation is created chiefly by the advertising media (Jameson). Thus Baudrillard's and Jameson's accounts of the postmodern culture serve to dissolve the distinction between the aesthetic and the socio-economic realms by means of images. This merging can be clearly noticed in the new development in Hollywood cinema that transcends the linguistic and cultural boundaries in order to exploit international markets and through emphases on **spectacle** and special effects.

1.4.9. Postmodern Culture: A Culture of Performance

The postmodern culture is **a culture of interruption**, where past and future was made present to us in simulation. Another feature of this culture is the development of new forms of analogue and digital reproduction, in audio and videotape, which leads to the storage, retrieval and manipulation of different information. To talk of postmodernism is to imply that modernism is over and done with. However, there is never a neat demarcation line between late Modernism and Postmodernism. Postmodernism is an **ongoing process** that is connotative of simultaneity and contemporaneity.

- The ideas of motion, dynamism and performance are intrinsic to postmodern culture. **'Performance'** thus becomes an enveloping term for theatre, dance, music, circus, stand-up comedy and installation art. The relationship of performance art to postmodernism is a special phenomenon. It is taken to be an intrinsically postmodern art form. **Michel Benamou** in the essay **"Performance in Postmodern Culture"** suggests performance as "the unifying mode of the postmodern." In contemporary culture everything performs: technologies perform, art and literature perform, the prevalence of audio-visual media in the public sphere make political and social development performative.

- In contemporary literature the idea of performance has been used as a critical tool to interpret static art forms to everyday behaviour, from rituals and religious observance to political demonstration and other secular ceremonies like carnival and sports. The postmodern plurality of voices is particularly evident in the monologue performances of the 1980s and the 1990s. Hitherto English politics and economy revolved around London and British literature and culture were determined by the tastes and dialect of the Londoners. But from the 1960s onwards the regional dialects and then multicultural accents were admitted to the radio. Decades following the Second World War witnessed the emergence of regional radio and television stations and the massive use of wireless on warfare purpose.

- Hitherto English drama, literature, music, visual and plastic arts were censored and given grants by the **Arts Council of London**. But after World War II the grant-giving responsibility was distributed to regional arts councils. The de-centralisation of cultural hubs outside London led to the emergence writers and artists outside London. In the 1960s **The Beatles** were launched from Liverpool that initiated the new generation of regional literature and popular culture that was highly interactive.

Postmodernism with its deliberate mingling of high culture with mass culture offered a form of '**counterculture**'.

1.4.10. Towards a Counterculture

The **counterculture** of the 1960s celebrated new cultural forms that experimented with hippie lifestyle and a vibrant subculture, which included casual dressing, and advertisement-oriented consumerism. It was related to other socio-cultural movements such as, **Civil Rights Movement, Free Speech Movement, Women's Rights Movement** and **Gay Movement** and other anti-establishment forums. During this time wearing jeans became a unisex fashion statement, which accommodated both men and women and the trend continues till date.

- Counterculture activists highlighted the plight of the poor, environmental concerns, anti-nuclear protests, while advocating freedom of speech, right of voting for women and African-Americans, and rights for people with alternative sexuality and for the differently-able persons. Counterculture was marked by psychedelic drug-induced songs and poetry, colourful comic strips, experimental art, and cinema. Enjoyment in sex and recreational drugs such as LSD and marijuana were regarded as a symbol of freedom. London in the 1960s witnessed two parallel trends of subculture known as **'Mod'** and **'Rockers.'** Followers of these groups were British young men, who listened to Jazz, Blues and Rock music and were drawn towards pop-art. Thus, London in the 1960s became a hub of mass culture, promoting fashion, music and pop art. This period is often referred to as the **'Swinging Sixties.'**

- Counterculture was a worldwide anti-establishment discourse where artists and activists from Europe, America and Asia participated. It is also marked by syncretism, because the hippies were drawn towards Hinduism, Buddhism, the Vaishnava Cult, and other occult practices like witchcraft. Exponents of counterculture ranged from **The Beatles** in England, the American **Beat Generation** poets and critics **Allen Ginsberg (1926-1997), Jack Kerouac (1922-1969), Gary Snyder (b.1930)**, artist **Andy Warhol (1928-1987)**, singers **John Lennon (1940-1980), Joan Baez (b. 1941), Bob Dylan (b. 1941)**, and **Pete Seeger (1919-2014)**, to revolutionary **Che Guevara (1928-1967)**, environmentalist **Rachel Carson (1907-1964)** and athlete **Muhammad Ali (1942-2016)**.

1.4.11. Summing Up

The post-World War II decades experienced the wave of **decolonisation** of the African, South Asian and the Caribbean nations from the folds of the British Empire. In this phase Britain experienced massive immigration from the South Asian and African Countries that formed the **'New Commonwealth'** and British culture gradually attained a multiracial identity that led to the new genres of **postcolonial literature** and **literature of the Diaspora**. These new literary orientations will be discussed in detail in the following unit of this module.

Overall, it can be argued that in post-World War II decades of multinational capitalism, the popular angle of contemporary culture, with its thrust on the audio-visual media and marketability, contributed to a large extent in the reshaping of narrative fiction, poetry and the theatre, giving way to experimental genres of electronic literature and graphic novel. Along with new cultural practices, the interaction between European and non-European nations in post-World War II global job market added the flavour of **multiculturalism** to contemporary British literature.

1.4.12. Comprehension Exercises:

Long Answer Type Questions:

1. Analyse Lyotard's concept of 'incommensurability' with reference to postmodern culture.
2. Discuss how Baudrillard defines the role of the 'Image' in postmodern culture?
3. Analyse how does the idea of performance influence postmodern literature?
4. Discuss the general characteristics of postmodern literature with appropriate examples.

Medium Answer Type Questions:

1. Briefly sketch the development of British literature after the Second World War.
2. Briefly define the characteristics of 'pastiche' after Fredric Jameson.
3. Comment on the features of the Movement poetry with appropriate examples.
4. What is a Counterculture? Analyse the basic features of a Counterculture.

Short Answer Type Questions:

1. Write a short note on Concrete Poetry.
2. Write a short note on the role of Pop-Art in postmodern culture.
3. Write a short note on the Angry Young Man Movement.
4. Write a short note on Lyotard's concept of 'bricolage'.

1.4.13. Suggested Reading:

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Lyotard, Jean-François. *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*.

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Unit 5 ❐ Intertextuality and Experiment

Structure

1.5.1. Objectives

This Unit aims to introduce the learners to the changing nature of literature in the postmodernist milieu, look at the new developments in novels, poetry and theatre and understand the socio-political context that informed those changes.

1.5.2. Introduction

The world of art and aesthetics, including literature, saw a massive pluralist churning in Europe in general and Britain in particular, in the aftermath of the Second World War. Political and aesthetic protests against the aggrandizing march of the dominant Enlightenment discourse of Modernity, which was believed to have had held the European (middle class) society together for centuries, had long started to surface intermittently since the Romantic Movement at the turn of the nineteenth century itself. Crises-cultural, political, material, moral and metaphysical-built up throughout the nineteenth century. However, things came to a head and took a decisive turn in the twentieth century with the two Great Wars putting the final nail in the coffin of all the previously trusted age-old certainties. The result was a seemingly general disillusionment with the promises made by the dominant modernist discourse and the new emphasis was on its incursions, or, what they call the 'pathologies of Modernity.' Things started to fall apart and

the 'centre' was too feeble to hold them together. The result was the emergence of a discourse of decenterity, 'radical alterity,' difference (as well as deferral in meaning/ knowledge production, which together the later Poststructuralist thinker Jacques Derrida would refer to as 'difference'). The broad epistemological and ontological shift thus led to a celebration of plurality, heterogeneity and 'polyphony' in all spheres of European-and, following the postcolonial history and the rise of the two superpowers, global-life. Hence the curious coexistence of a liberatory anti-establishment impulse and a cultural conservatism wary of any change, or, promises of change, in the form of the new black sheep of 'grand narratives.' It was all about immersion in the local identity politics and making the marginal, 'petit' subaltern speak. The atmosphere was rife for indulgence in all sorts of experiments in the world of literature and art, including a recourse to intertextuality which today, after the breakdown of grand narratives, assumed a seemingly imperative status.

1.5.3. The Broad Postmodernist impulse

The 'post' in 'postmodernism' thus is as much about a skepticism about the efficacy of the Enlightenment discourse of Modernity in bringing any fundamental change in human nature and thereby ensuring liberty, equality, democracy and justice in an ascending historical march towards progress and enlightenment, as about an engagement with the immediately preceding Modernist aesthetic movement in the late 19th-early 20th century. While the much-lauded anti-establishment impulse in the Modernist movement showed inevitable signs of losing its liberatory potential by itself fast turning into an establishment, the discourse of Modernity, it was believed in the bleak post-WW II and post-atomic bomb European waste land, had proved largely to be a hoax that had run its course. One needed to look beyond the duping discourse of Modernity and its ideological corollaries, for instance, the metaphysically sustaining notion of a paternal and authoritative 'God,' the unified category of 'Man,' the notions of foundational 'Truths' valid across contexts and a linear, teleological, progressive movement of human 'History' from darkness to light, from barbarism to civilisation and from bondage to freedom. All these foundational axioms, in this belief system, helped in the sustenance of what Derrida would call a 'phallogocentric' universe marked by an illusory 'Metaphysics of Presence.' In the new Godless (the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche mourned the 'death' of God in his book *The Gay Science* as early as 1882), 'posthuman,' 'post historical' and 'post-Truth' world all that could sustain itself was a celebration of radical relativity free of all authoritative universalisms historically considered foundational to human existence, including that of the 'oppressive,' 'theological' notion of the 'author,' literary or otherwise. Indeed, the grand declaration of the 'death' of the author (in Roland Barthes' 1967 essay "Death of the

Author") and its replacement by the idea of 'author function' (Michel Foucault's "What is an Author," 1969), though usually read as seminal developments in the poststructuralist paradigm, are clearly consistent with the postmodernist belief-system.

History, losing its rational progressive implication, was thus regarded as a cyclical, and even an arbitrary, non-rational process that did not lead one anywhere. Nor did the new 'text,' bereft of the traditional placatory beliefs in the unity of plot, character, time and place and deprived of the nourishing presence of 'authorial intention' or even 'originality' and creativity, offer any promise of logical destination, fixity of meaning in the form of closure. Not only were History or artistic texts (literary or otherwise), in this perception, marked by a disunity, or play of various voices, perspectives and 'traces,' they were also only about the process without any definite destination as such. Form, and not content, thus has been the more favoured field of play from the modernist heyday itself. Both History and Literature-or, 'knowledge' in general, which they have been traditionally believed to produce- thus, are only about endless and multidimensional narrativity, or textuality, or 'discursivity' without any connection whatsoever with some transcendental 'Truth.' Losing the aura of originality and authorial creativity, the new artistic text was perceived to be nothing but a 'tissue of quotations,' and hence only an 'impure,' 'hybrid,' 'bastard' 'composition' (Roland Barthes) of a secondary order made out of a diverse range of already existing 'traces,' or, a 'bricolage.' In that sense, the postmodern work of art is primarily a commentary on the essentially 'narrative' nature of reality, truth and the work of art itself. Often it was conscious of its own constructed as opposed to imaginative and creative nature, a self-consciousness that would lend it what many would call a 'metanarrative' quality. By the same token, History, or the work of art as a mediated 'representation' of history, would assume a 'historiographical' status. Both metanarrative and historiography, it would be instructive to recall, are more about a 'critical' contemplation on the process of composition than about a purely 'creative' endeavour. The traditional dyadic notions of the 'creative' and the 'critical' thus gave way to a more inclusive conception of the relation of the two. Also challenged was the notion of generic purity: conception of generic codes and norms as a matter of mere convention and not as integral to the works of art, led to deliberate flouting of the norms and their 'adulterations' through a range of admixtures like parody, pastiche.

The celebration of plurality and decenterity in post-WW II period was evident all over the world. On the one hand the long historical struggles for the right to self-fashioning in several walks of life- class, race, gender, nationality and more reached their crescendo around the mid-20th century, with the Empire crumbling down, the feminist consciousness diversifying itself according to the demands of the local contexts and the working-class movements gathering

momentum in Europe and elsewhere. The rise of the culture of 'theories' in the academia, on the other and the replacement of the traditional liberal humanist attitude to art and art criticism by the more irreverent 'high theories' also attests to this passion of plurality practiced in life in the form of various modes of 'activism.' From Structuralism, Poststructuralism, Postcolonialism, new brands of Marxism and Feminism to Psychoanalysis, Deconstruction, Ecocriticism and an intimidating range of their permutations and combinations and more the critical-ideological heterogeneity has to be taken into account in any cursory account of the post-WW II narrative universe. One inevitable consequence was a challenge hurled against the Eurocentric or, even closer home, the Anglocentric history and formation of the literary canon. Many empires had been writing and striking back for some time now, the Leavisite Great Tradition not holding much water any more, and it was time for the innumerable little traditions long languishing in the peripheries to lurch into reckoning. It was an enticing carnivalesque world of textual revelry a culture that encouraged, indeed demanded, engagement with, negotiation of and drawing on several texts, genres and traditions together. Experiments and intertextuality were the ultimate hallmarks of the post-WW II British literary milieu.

1.5.4. Experiments in the Novel

The post-WW II postmodernist experimental impulse in British literature was evident across genres; yet, it was undoubtedly the most pronounced in the world of narrative fiction, or, the Novel. As Steven Connor points out in 'Postmodernism and Literature,'

> Literary postmodernism has tended to be focused on one kind of writing, namely, narrative fiction. The most influential books on literary postmodernism, such as Linda Hutcheon's *A Poetics of Postmodernism* and Brian McHale's *Postmodernist Fiction*, are devoted to postmodern fiction. It seems oddly fitting that what Hutcheon calls the "poetics of postmodernism" should turn out to be most in evidence in its fiction. One might almost say that the move from modernism to postmodernism involves a move from poetry to fiction (*The Cambridge Companion to Postmodernism*. Ed. Steven Connor. Cambridge Univ. Press, 2004, p. 62).

Since a comprehensive exploration of all aspects of fictional experimentation in Britain is beyond our scope in this write-up, we will concentrate instead on the most salient features of this tendency. The distinctive thematic and technical innovations in postmodernism are often fused together. For one example, metafiction and pastiche are often employed together to create an ambience of irony, and the component elements are not always clearly separable from each other.

The period 1945-60 in Britain saw a prolific investment in the **fantasy** mode that shifted the readers' imagination away from traditional realism. George Orwell's political dystopian fantasies *Animal Farm* (1945) and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949), Mervyn Peake's *Gormenghast* trilogy (1946-59), John Wyndham's work of science-fiction *The Day of the Triffids* (1951) and JRR Tolkien's trilogy *The Lord of the Rings* (1954-55) show various ways of questioning the rigid boundary between reality and non-reality. In many ways they anticipate the work of 1960s new wave fantasy writers, JG Ballard and Michael Moorcock. The **chronicle** form, practiced among others by writers like Anthony Powell (*The Music of Time*, 1951-75), CP Snow (*Strangers and Brothers*, 1940-70) and Lawrence Durrell (*Alexandria Quartet*, 1957-60, and *Avinyon Quintet*, (1974-85), often draws attention to the modernist notion taken by the postmodernists to an experimental extreme that not only are there more realities than one, but also, they need to be apprehended from various perspectives. It also underlines the mediatory role played by human consciousness in filtering or arranging reality in a work of art. Similar ideas about apprehension and representation of reality that rejected the Realist notions of verisimilitude or empirical realism can be traced around the same time in Samuel Beckett's "poioumenon" trilogy, poioumenon being a kind of metafiction that comments on the process of novelistic creation (1951-60). Nigel Dennis's *Cards of Identity* (1955) and *A House in Order* (1966) must also be mentioned in this context. The spirit of fictional experimentation got greater hold over the British fictional scenario in the 1960s and the 1970s, even as the realist tradition maintained its fringe existence through the works of the likes of Graham Greene. Writers like Henry Green and Wyndham Lewis, it seems in hindsight, strove to bridge the gap between the two traditions.

Irony and playfulness, as we have already indicated, are some of the defining features of the post-World War II British experimental fiction. In this too, the postmodernist writers clearly follow the footprints of the preceding modernists. Many postmodernists create a 'play' of multiple voices and perspectives (in the Barthesian sense) in a tongue-in-cheek manner to offer an ironical critique of the idea of originality. Thus, for Linda Hutcheon irony is central to postmodernist fiction. Anthony Burgess's *A Clockwork Orange* (1962), Doris Lessing's *The Golden Notebook* (1962) and John Fowles's *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (1969), for example, are marked by a self-conscious use of language, imagination and earlier literary traditions to set various perspectives against one another and thereby to comment on the unstable nature of authorial omniscience and readerly interpretation. The effect was not only a pluralisation of reality, but also a voluntary surrender on the part of the author of any 'authority' over the work of art-a veritable suicide of the traditional authorial aura. The works of the novelist-historian-filmmaker Andrew Sinclair, playwright-novelist Julian Mitchell and Christine

Brooke-Rose carried forward the experimental legacy in the 1960 and the 1970s. Many of these works are marked by the presence of **intertextuality** through which the author locates herself within a complex web of past and present works, with which s/he engages in **the forms of quotation, allusion, reference, parody, pastiche, satire, critique, irony** and so on. The wide intertextual network in British fiction from the 1960s onwards revelled in the mixing up of forms, genres and traditions in a gay experimental spirit, often erasing the perceived gap between poetry and prose, the critical and the creative, the elite and the popular, the sublime and the mundane, high art and low art.

Popular genres like fantasy, autobiography, science fiction (sci-fi) and detective fiction, and even pornography, were synthesised into one enormous fictional whole which basked in the glory of its composite nature rather than clinging on to any 'dated' notion of purity. The fast technologisation of a predominantly metropolitan culture also resulted in the increasing popularity of the technological genres and audiovisual narrative media like cinema, television which not only ate into the market of literature, but also found a place of honour in the literary works themselves. All these cultural developments further intensified the intertextual bonhomie, the intricate architectonics of transaction between the mindboggling variety of narrative codes and registers available around. It is not only the likes of Samuel Beckett, Doris Lessing and John Fowles who made the most of this rich culture texture, but also the slightly later novelists like Martin Amis, Julian Barnes, Graham Swift, Peter Ackroyd, Alan Hollinghurst and Ian McEwan who, through their experimentations carried out during the 1980 and the 1990s, kept challenging shadow lines previously held close to the heart by the English reading public. Angus Wilson's deployment of parody and pastiche in *No Laughing Matter* is yet another example of such narrative subversion.

The strategy of **metafiction** was often adopted by the likes of Lessing, Fowles, Swift, Ackroyd and Salman Rushdie (in, for example, *Midnight's Children*) to foreground the process of coming into being of the work of art in the work itself. This was aimed at drawing the reader's attention to the constructed rather than created nature of artwork, and thereby dispel the authorial aura in what Walter Benjamin long ago referred to as "the age of mechanical reproducibility." The technique of making the artificiality of the work of art or the fictionality of the work of fiction clear to the consumer is a familiar modernist in particular Brechtian device often employed to shatter the world of illusion that reader often is ensconced within. Angela Carter and Fay Walden has employed the metafictional strategy to revisit traditional literary texts, including folktales and fables, to revise certain notions about womanhood. Fowles's, Beckett's and Rushdie's works, among some others,' are examples of **historiographic metafiction** too, whereby the authors engage with actual historical figures and phenomena to

comment in a metafictional manner on history, fiction and history/ tradition of fiction together in a condensed intertextual design. Beckett in his trilogy and Lessing in *The Golden Notebook*, Fowles in *Mantissa* and William Golding in *The Paper Men* are also fantastic exponents of the technique of **poioumenon**, a type of metafiction which according to Alastair Fowler "is calculated to offer opportunities to explore the boundaries of fiction and reality the limits of narrative truth" (*The History of English Literature*, Harvard Univ. Press, 1989, p. 372). Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* is a wonderful example of his appropriation of the technique of **magic realism**, while his *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* applies yet another postmodernist alternative realist technique which Robert Scholes has described as '**fabulation.**'

Novels produced by authors belonging to non-English ethnic communities as diverse as Indian (Salman Rushdie), Japanese (Kazuo Ishiguro), Scottish (Alasdair Gray and James Kellman among others), to only mention a few, through compelling critics and people alike to revise the established British novelistic canon, offer another example of the ways in which walls, real or imaginary, were crumbling down under the severe cultural pressure wrought in by postmodernism.

1.5.5. The World of Poetry

The dazzling array of experimentations in the field of British novels in the post-WW II era often pushes the achievements in the domains of poetry and theatre, no less marked by the spirit of formal innovation, to the background. As in the more celebrated world of fiction, the experimental vein in poetry carries forward the modernist legacy most consummately represented by two different tendencies prominent in British poetry in the first half of the last century: TS Eliot's radically experimental high modernism and WH Auden's subdued pursuit of a politically informed poetry of social commitment.

The first major poetic school of the 1940s Britain, **The New Apocalypse poetry**, was marked by the combined influence of Dylan Thomas, French Surrealism and a certain form of neo-Romanticism. Some of the major practitioners of this style were WS Graham, George Baker, Vernon Watkins and David Gascoyne. Indeed, the participants in this movement preferred the personal, subjective quality of Thomas' poetry to the pronounced political rationalism of Auden's verse. This is also why it would soon come to be known as the poetry of **New Romanticism**, with poets like Henry Treece, Norman MacCaig, JF Hendry and Nicholas Moore soon joining the movement to explore ways of moving out of the apocalyptic horror that was contemporary history. The 1950s saw the emergence of a disparate group of poets gathering around Stephen Spender's journal *Horizon*, to be christened later as **The**

Movement poets. Mainly of lower middle-class origin and products of expansion of education under the regime of the Labour government, the Movement poets sought to outgrow the romanticism of the earlier generation of poets and to produce poetry marked by anti-romantic urbanity, formal discipline, presence of sardonic irony and a pervasive melancholia. The preeminent figure of the group was Philip Larkin. Then there were people as various as the poet-novelists Kingsley Amis and John Waine, DJ Enright, Donald Davie, Elizabeth Jennings, John Holloway, Thom Gunn, Roy Fuller, each one of whom cultivated a unique style of his/her own. Yet another movement emerged in 1952, namely, **The Group**, organised by Philip Hobsbawm and Edward Lucie-Smith, comprising poets like Peter Porter, Peter Redgrove, George MacBeth and Alan Brownjohn.

Ted Hughes was initially inclined to the vision of The Movement, but later on disliked their overt empirical rationalism. Hughes' poetry was conspicuously informed with the horrors and predicament of war and holocaust, cultural imperialism, effects of mass media, ecological activism. Hughes developed a poetic medium and a language that adheres to the spirit of nature, and values instinctive recognition of the relationship between man and nature. In the post-holocaust world and under constant threat of nuclear war, his poetry captures a violent and nihilistic natural world, hitherto unknown in modernist poetry, and develops a historically and politically determined response to the post-war repressive situation by objectifying the horrors and devastations of war through stark, diabolical nature images. The fresh regional flavour and culture quasi-mythicisation of savagery and animal instincts at the heart of nature, as evident in his volumes like *The Hawk in the Rain* (1957) and *Crow* (1970), would find later echoes in the works of Geoffrey Hill, Basil Bunting and RS Thomas. A different kind of regionalism-marked by industrial working-class realities in place of the Hughesian peasant life-can be traced in the late 1960s and 1970s, in the works of poets like Douglas Dunn, Blake Morrison and Tony Harrison. References to technology, images from the domain of industrial working-class culture including television and cinema, and a tone of colloquial ruggedness mark the work of these poets. Here are a group of poets displaced from the marginal locations of their origin-Dunn from Scotland and Harrison from Midlands for example-who were eager to engage with marginality in its various ramifications-social, cultural or geographical. A more radical school of **neo-modernist** poets sought to find affinity with the contemporary developments in postmodernist and poststructuralist cultural theories. Poets like Christopher Middleton, Roy Fisher and JH Prynne experimented with metanarrative strategies-so common in the world of fiction-in their work, which was clearly distinct in theme and form from the **social realism** of Dunn, Morrison and Harrison.

Regionalism took the form of foregrounding the right to regional self-fashioning in the works of two successive generations of Northern Irish poets. The most notable of the first generation were Seamus Heaney, Michael Longley and Derek Mahon. Heaney, for one instance, sought to develop a novel language of poetry in *Death of a Naturalist* (1966) to express his problematic sense of Irishness. The regional consciousness of the second generation of Northern Irish poets, most notably Paul Muldoon, Tom Paulin and Ciaran Carson, took the form of a strong interest in orality as practiced in the contemporary Irish vernaculars and dialects, as opposed to the historical problems central to the work of the first generation. The 1970s and the 1980s were also marked by a sense of plurality in poetry in terms of voices from non-metropolitan cultural spaces within Europe and beyond and emergence of a substantial number of woman poets. The contributions of notable woman poets of the likes of Medbh McGuckian, Anne Stevenson, Denis Riley and Wendy Cope, and postcolonial poets of the stature of David Dabydeen, John Aggard, James Berry, Grace Nichols and so on effectively challenged the established canon of British poetry.

Another form of experimentation came in the form of Craig Raine's **Martian school of poetry**-named so after Raine's poem "A Martian Sends a Postcard Home"-which made startling use of images and similes, of ironies, twists and parodies to help the reader acquire an alternative perspective of the available reality. The other notable Martian poet, alongside Raine, was Christopher Reid. Another group of poets including James Fenton, Andrew Motion and Peter Reading makes deftly uses verse to produce a new narrative poetry from the perspective of the alien, or the outsider, as in Blake Morrison's *The Ballad of the Yorkshire Ripper* (1987).

1.5.6. The Theatrical Turn: The Page and the Stage

The theatre industry went through a volatile phase immediately after the Second World war. Many theatres had been destroyed; many of them were forced to shut down because of acute shortage of actors and managers; and most importantly, they faced steep competition for their share of the market from the still young technological visual medium of the cinema, whose popularity increased in leaps and bounds. Yet another technologised mode of entertainment that would later give the traditional theatre a run for its money was the television.

The British theatre scenario in the 1940s and the early 1950s were dominated by the mainstream tradition of the **West End theatres**, who catered to their predominantly conservative middle-class audience the so-called **well-made plays**. Well-made plays, originating in the late-19th century French theatre, were largely non-experimental performances

that observed the time-tested values like those of unities of time, place and action. Some of the most popular practitioners of this craft were Noel Coward, JB Priestley and above all, Terence Rattigan, whose *The Winslow Boy* (1946), *The Browning Version* (1948), *The Deep Blue Sea* (1952) were some of the more successful productions of the time. The more experimental verse-plays by TS Eliot and Christopher Fry also constituted a parallel tradition. However, the real challenge to the West End tradition came in the mid-1950s in the form of two traditions that sought to respond more realistically to the mood of the time- one of the **minimalist absurdist drama** inaugurated by Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* (1955) and the other of the **socially critical theatre** initiated by John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger* (1956). The former of these emergent traditions was marked by a spirit of radical formal experimentation and departure from the tradition of drawing-room naturalism, displaying an increasing minimalism in plot, character, dialogue and action. The stark formal brevity and invocation of post-holocaust horror, claustrophobia and existential crisis in Beckett's plays are shared by a host of playwrights in this tradition, most notably Harold Pinter and Joe Orton. *The Birthday Party* (1958), *The Caretaker* (1960), *The Homecoming* (1965) of Pinter's are examples of **theatre of menace** marked by the Pinteresque emphasis on violence and impossibility of communication in a slightly surreal atmosphere. Influenced by Antonio Artaud's 'theatre of cruelty,' these plays indulged in scathing satire directed at the contemporary decadent middle-class society. Orton's carnivalesque **black comedies** like *Entertaining Mr. Sloane* (1964) and *What the Butler Saw* (1969), along with those by NF Simpson and David Rudkin, add a farcical sexual dimension to these Pinteresque inventions.

Osborne's *Look Back in Anger*, on the other hand, set up a series of plays that dramatised the pent-up frustration of a generation of working class and lower middle class 'Angry Young Men' with the prevailing socio-political system. The exhibition of raw emotion, sexual frankness and rancour against middle class value-system, insignias of the **Angry Young Men phenomenon**, led critics to invent for such plays the category of **kitchen-sink drama**. Other practitioners of this genre were Shelagh Delaney (*A Taste of Honey*, 1958), Brendan Behan (*The Quare Fellow* [1954], *An Giall* [1958] and *Richard's Cork Leg* [1972]) and Arnold Wesker (*Chicken Soup with Barley* [1958], *Roots* [1959] and *I'm Talking About Jerusalem* [1960]). John Arden effected a combination of the features of this drama with some formal innovations introduced by Bertolt Brecht in the preceding decade. His historical plays *Serjeant Musgrave's Dance* (1959) and *Armstrong's Last Goodnight* (1964) thus are marked by a thematic and formal radicalism to be imitated by several later left-wing playwrights. Some of the most notable in this tradition of **parable-plays** would be Edward Bond, Howard Brenton, Howard Barker, David Hare, David Edgar and Peter Griffiths. Some of them, like David

Edgar and David Hare, and Caryl Churchill were noted practitioners of **Agitprop theatre** in the 1980s, carrying radical social messages from the perspectives of various marginal identity categories- like feminists, black people, and those of various homosexual orientations.

There were Tom Stoppard and Alan Ayckbourn later in the 1970s through to the 1990s who brought in intelligent repartee-based wit to critically comment on the prevailing political scenario. The works of Peter Nichols, David Storey and Simon Gray in the 1970s are marked by a new social realism that would often remind one of GB Shaw. Irish dramatists of the likes of Brian Friel, Tom Murphy and Martin Mcdonagh, belonging to the last two decades of the last century, concentrated on small-town provincial life in a form that combined comedy with serious social content.

1.5.8. Comprehension Exercises

Long Answer Type Questions:

1. Discuss the impact of the postmodernist and poststructuralist developments on British literary culture in the second half of the twentieth century.
2. A self-conscious engagement with intertextuality and metanarrativity is central to British fictional experiments in the post-WW II period. How far would you agree? Discuss.
3. Give a critical account of the development of various schools and movements in poetry in post-WW II Britain.
4. How did British theatre in the second half of the twentieth century move through various experiments? Discuss critically.
5. Decenterity, radical alterity and plurality are some of the hallmarks of the anti-establishment post-War British literary mindset. How far would you agree?

Medium Answer Type Questions:

1. Write a short note on the Angry Young Men phenomenon in drama.
2. Write a short note on **Theatre of Menace**.
3. Which group of poets formed the New Apocalypse Poetry group? What were the major characteristics of poetry emerging from this group of poets?

Short Answer Type Questions:

1. What do you understand by the term 'kitchen-sink dramas?'
2. Who were the Movement poets?
3. What do you understand by the term 'metanarrative'?

1.5.9. Suggested Reading

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Module - 2
British Poetry

Unit 6 ❐ English Poetry: 1945 -2000

Structure

2.6.1. Objectives

In this module, you will be briefly introduced to the historical context that gave rise to prevalent poetic sensibilities post the Second World War. You will be reading about the various groups and movements that were dominant in English poetry during the period from 1945 to 2000, and study their main features.

2.6.2. Introduction

In this unit, we will try to understand how poetry in Britain developed in the wake of the Second World War, and after. Did this war inform literary sensibility of the age to the extent that the First World War did? To what extent was the poetic output of the age a continuation or divergence from the movement of Modernism? How did the British poets of this time react to Postmodernism? What are the major trends in British poetry that developed during the

course of fifty-five years? These are some of the questions that we will try to find an answer to in this unit.

2.6.3. A Brief Historical Context

The Second World War came to an end in 1945. The year marked the defeat of the Axis powers, namely, Germany, Italy and Japan, in the hands of the Allied powers, led by Britain, France, the Soviet Union, the U.S. and China. While Britain rejoiced at the victory of the Allied powers, the war had produced tectonic shifts in the balance of world power. Britain had already been impoverished by the First World War -the second war brought it to the brink of economic collapse. The U.S. emerged as the new world leader. So while Britain won the war, it lost its leading position to the U.S.

While it is but obvious that an event of the magnitude of this war would affect the literary sensibility of the age, it is also relevant that we consider the effect of the World War that preceded this one. The violence and chaos of First World War nurtured the nihilistic and existentialist trends of Modernism -by the time of the second World War, the violence and chaos, while still traumatic, somewhat lost its power to shock. At the same time, it brought the war closer to home for the British civilians who were directly affected by bombings and air raids. The end of the war exhausted British resources and led to an economic slump. Welfare measures introduced by subsequent governments did not fulfil their promise, while the working class, educated in the newer universities, entered the intelligentsia.

Activity for Learners :

Re-read the following poems and try to understand the differences in tone and style:

"The Hollow Men" by T.S. Eliot (1925)

"September 1, 1939" by W.H. Auden (1939)

"Fern Hill" by Dylan Thomas (1945)

2.6.4. The New Romantic Movement of the 1940s

The **New Apocalypse Movement** of the 1930s, named after the 1939 anthology The New Apocalyse evolved into the Neo-Romanticism of the 1940s, influenced largely by the works of the Welsh poet, Dylan Thomas.

David Gascoyne, Henry Treece, J.F. Hendry, Nicholas Moore, Norman MacCaig, Vernon Watkins were some important members of this group which rejected the rationality and perceived classicism of Auden. Their poetry, like Thomas', was personal and sensitive, and sought to understand the violence and chaos of the modern world.

2.6.5. The Movement

The 1950s were dominated by The Movement, a loosely affiliated group of poets whose literary sensibility was moulded greatly by Britain's loss of position in the world order after the war. They advocated resurgence of "Englishness" in the literary output of the day as a way to regain some sense of relevance in the wider scheme of things and a firm sense of national identity. For the Movement poets, Modernism was foreign and Postmodernism too American, while neo-Romanticism was overtly rhetorical. Centred around **Stephen Spender's** journal *Horizon*, **Kingsley Amis, D.J. Enright, John Waine, Elizabeth Jennings, John Holloway, Thom Gunn, Donald Davie** were important members of this group, with Philip Larkin being the towering figure amongst them. The influence of Modernism on this group lay in its strident rejection of it. The tone of their poetry sought to be urbane, civil and decorous. Their work was deemed conservative by subsequent generations of poets.

Philip Larkin (1922 -85), a librarian by profession, is the most recognised poet of The Movement. Also, a novelist, Larkin's first collection of poems was The North Ship (1945), followed by The Less Deceived (1955), The Whitsun Weddings (1964) and High Windows (1974). Larkin vigorously promoted the idea of "Englishness" while rejecting foreign influences.

Activity for Learners

Read the following poem by Philip Larkin to understand his direct approach, unsentimental treatment of nature and departure from Modernism.

Aubade

by **Philip Larkin**

I work all day, and get half-drunk at night.
Waking at four to soundless dark, I stare.
In time the curtain-edges will grow light.
Till then I see what's really always there:
Unresting death, a whole day nearer now,
Making all thought impossible but how

And where and when I shall myself die.
Arid interrogation: yet the dread
Of dying, and being dead,
Flashes afresh to hold and horrify.

The mind blanks at the glare. Not in remorse
-The good not done, the love not given, time
Torn off unused-nor wretchedly because
An only life can take so long to climb
Clear of its wrong beginnings, and may never;
But at the total emptiness for ever,
The sure extinction that we travel to
And shall be lost in always. Not to be here,
Not to be anywhere,
And soon; nothing more terrible, nothing more true.

This is a special way of being afraid
No trick dispels. Religion used to try,
That vast moth-eaten musical brocade

Created to pretend we never die,
And specious stuff that says *No rational being*
Can fear a thing it will not feel, not seeing
That this is what we fear-no sight, no sound,
No touch or taste or smell, nothing to think with,
Nothing to love or link with,
The anaesthetic from which none come round.

And so it stays just on the edge of vision,
A small unfocused blur, a standing chill
That slows each impulse down to indecision.
Most things may never happen: this one will,
And realisation of it rages out
In furnace-fear when we are caught without

People or drink. Courage is no good:
It means not scaring others. Being brave
Lets no one off the grave.
Death is no different whined at than withstood.

Slowly light strengthens, and the room takes shape.
It stands plain as a wardrobe, what we know,
Have always known, know that we can't escape,
Yet can't accept. One side will have to go.
Meanwhile telephones crouch, getting ready to ring
In locked-up offices, and all the uncaring
Intricate rented world begins to rouse.
The sky is white as clay, with no sun.
Work has to be done.
Postmen like doctors go from house to house.

2.6.6. The Group

Simply calling themselves The Group, a group of poets arose from **Philip Hobsbaum's** writing workshops in 1952. The Group lacked a common manifesto-they would gather together to read their poems to each other and heralded the subsequent popularity of writing workshops. Along with Hobsbaum, other important poets include **Edward Lucie -Smith, Peter Porter, Peter Redgrove, George MacBeth, Alan Brownjohn.** The Group inherited **The Movement's** rejection of Modernism and were anthologised in *A Group Anthology* (1963).

2.6.7. The American Influence and Continuation of Modernist Trends

While The Movement and The Group poets adopted a strong anti -Modernist nationalistic stance, there were poets who continued the Modernist trend and welcomed foreign influences. Prominent amongst these poets was **Ted Hughes** (1930 -1998) who was married to the famous American confessional poetess, Sylvia Plath. His poems spoke of the primal savagery of the natural world -his animals are anthropomorphic, cruel and elemental, mirroring the effects of the wars on human psyche. His imagery is bare and stark, and invites influences from Modernism and America. Some of his important poetry collections include *The Hawk in the Rain* (1957), *Crow: From the Life and The Songs of the Crow* (1970), *Moortown* (1979) and *Birthday Letters* (1998).

Geoffrey Hill (1932 -2016) continued the Modernist legacy into the post -war period and is considered to be the successor to Eliot's poetic tradition. A poet who was also a literary critic, he grappled with the very idea of language itself being fraught by violence inflicted by man. He combines classical references in his works with more recent allusions. His famous works include *For the Unfallen: Poems 1952 -58* (1959), *Canaan* (1996), *The Triumph of Love* (1997), *Without Title* (2006), *A Treatise of Civil Power* (2005), amongst others.

Modernist poets from pre -war decades such as **Hugh MacDiarmid, David Jones, Lynette Roberts** continued their work after the war and recorded their impressions of the war through their poetry. **Charles Tomlinson** and **Christopher Middleton** also wrote in the Modernist vein during the 1950s and 1960s.

The post-war period also saw a concurrent assertion of regional identities beyond perceived notions of London centred 'Englishness', as exemplified most famously in the works of the Northumbrian poet, **Basil Bunting** whose famous long poem, the autobiographical yet impersonal *Briggflatts*, published by Fulcrum Press in 1966, was written in the Modernist style.

Activity for Learners

Read this poem by Ted Hughes. Try to link the premeditated cruelty of the modern world that Ted Hughes seeks to convey through the depiction of a predator's perspective.

Hawk Roosting

By **Ted Hughes**

I sit in the top of the wood, my eyes closed.
Inaction, no falsifying dream
Between my hooked head and hooked feet:
Or in sleep rehearse perfect kills and eat.

The convenience of the high trees!
The air's buoyancy and the sun's ray
Are of advantage to me;
And the earth’s face upward for my inspection.

My feet are locked upon the rough bark.
It took the whole of Creation
To produce my foot, my each feather:
Now I hold Creation in my foot

Or fly up, and revolve it all slowly -
I kill where I please because it is all mine.
There is no sophistry in my body:
My manners are tearing off heads -

The allotment of death.
For the one path of my flight is direct
Through the bones of the living.
No arguments assert my right:

The sun is behind me.
Nothing has changed since I began.
My eye has permitted no change.
I am going to keep things like this.
(https://allpoetry.com/Ted-Hughes)

2.6.8. War Poetry

While the war poetry of the Second World War was not as prolific as that of the first one, two poets who deserve a mention in this area are **Keith Douglas** and **Alun Lewis**, the former of whom was admired and endorsed by Ted Hughes. While war poets of the first war such as Wilfred Owen, Siegfried Sassoon, Rupert Brooke and Robert Graves, had the job of reporting on the harsh realities of war to the public back home, the Second World War brought the conflict closer home, with the Blitz and the air raids directly affecting the Londoners. The Second World War, consequently, saw a diminished role of the poet-reporter, with the general public experiencing the horrors of the war from their doorsteps.

Keith Douglas (1920 -44) wrote in what he called the 'extrospective' style, focussing on external impressions of things around him, rather than his internal thoughts and feelings. His inspiration for poetry was Isaac Rosenberg, a poet of the First World War. Douglas died early, killed in action in the war he sought actively to participate in, but left behind a considerable body of work for the short time span of his life, including his memoir, Almien to *Zem Zem*. His famous poems include "How to Kill", "The Knife", "Villanelle of Spring Bells", "Cairo Jag", "Desert Flowers", "Aristocrats: I Think I Am Becoming A God", "Simplify Me When I am Dead", amongst others.

Alun Lewis (1915 -44) was a Welshman who wrote in Englis. A soldier who seemingly committed suicide while stationed in Burma, his poetry dealt with themes of death and isolation, and sought to find some meaning in the desolation and chaos of war. His well known poems include "Postscript: For Gweno", "All day It Has Rained", "Goodbye", "Must", amongst others.

Activity for Learners

Read the following poems by Keith Douglas and Alun Lewis. Try to relate the poems with the themes that we discussed. Read poems by Wilfred Owen and other First World War poets to compare and contrast.

Simply Me When I am Dead

(Keith Douglas)

Remember me when I am dead
and simplify me when I'm dead.

As the processes of earth
strip off the colour of the skin:
take the brown hair and blue eye

and leave me simpler than at birth,

when hairless I came howling in
as the moon entered the cold sky.

Of my skeleton perhaps,
so stripped, a learned man will say
"He was of such a type and
intelligence," no more.

Thus when in a year collapse
particular memories, you may
deduce, from the long pain I bore

the opinions I held, who was my foe
and what I left, even my appearance
but incidents will be no guide.

Time's wrong-way telescope will show
a minute man ten years hence
and by distance simplified.

Through that lens see if I seem
substance or nothing: of the world
deserving mention or charitable
oblivion,

not by momentary spleen
or love into decision hurled,
leisurely arrive at an opinion.

Remember me when I am dead
and simplify me when I'm dead.

https://allpoetry.com/Simplify-Me-When-I'm-Dead

Postscript: For Gweno
(Alun Lewis)

If I should go away,
Beloved, do not say
'He has forgotten me'.
For you abide,
A singing rib within my dreaming side;
You always stay.
And in the mad tormented valley
Where blood and hunger rally
And Death the wild beast is uncaught, untamed,
Our soul withstands the terror
And has its quiet honour
Among the glittering stars your voices named.
(https://allpoetry.com/Alun-Lewis)

2.6.9. The Underground

Michael Horovitz's anthology *Children of Albion: Poetry of the Underground* (1969) celebrated a new group of poets who works stood contrary to the conservatism and parochialism of The Movement. Inspired by Blake and the American Beat Generation, the Underground poets were drawn to performative aspects of poetry, brining it out from the pages of the book to live performances at festivals, gatherings, cafes, clubs and venues. **Adrian Henri, David Chaloner, Andrew Crozier, Ian Hamilton Finlay, Roy Fisher** were some of the poets associated with this counter -cultural experimental trend in English poetry.

Activity for Learners

Watch popular Underground poet, Adrian Henri, perform one of his poems to the accompaniment of music in this YouTube video:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m0GUbAImHuw

2.6.10. Individuals, Margins and Contemporary Trends

Medbh McGuckian, Liz Lockhead, Anne Stevenson, Sylvia Kantaris, Carol Rumens, Denise Riley and **Wendy Cope** are some of female poets who gained prominence during this period, voicing the pre -occupations and concerns of the women of the age who had gained a new sense of power after the war.

Though **Seamus Heaney** (1939 -2013), one of the most famous poets of contemporary times, was Northern Irish, he was more imbued in his Gaelic -Irish identity, once proclaiming on being anthologised in a book on contemporary British poetry:

> Don't be surprised if I demur, for, be advised
> My passport's green.
> No glass of ours was ever raised
> To toast The Queen.

Craig Raine's poem "A Martian Sends a Postcard Home" (1979) lent its name to the **Martian School** of poetry which dealt with the idea of being a outsider within a community. Contemporary poets such as **Michael Hoffman, Gyln Maxwell, John Ash, Simon Armitage** and **Tony Curtis** have continued along their individualistic poetic styles into the present times.

2.6.11. Summing Up

You may have noticed while reading this unit that post -1945 English poetry is rather difficult to categorise under the single umbrella of a specific movement. Just like other literary forms of the age, poetry too, followed multiple strands of influences and innovations. Though broadly starting with two distinctive trends of Modernism and anti-Modernism, individual poets or smaller groups of poets, too, brought their own individualistic styles to poetic sensibility. The idea of "Englishness" broadened its London -centric horizon and continues to further push boundaries.

2.6.12. Comprehension Exercises:

Long Answer Type Questions:

1. Discuss the major literary movements that immediately followed the Second World War. To what extent were these movements influenced by Modernism?
2. How did Britain's loss of position after the Second World War affect its poets? How did this find expression in the poetic output of the times?

Medium Length Answer Type Question:

1. Discuss the war poets of the Second World War. How were they different from the war poets of the First World War?
2. Discuss how the Underground poets challenged the prevailing notions of poetry through their works.

Short Answer Questions:

1. Name three members each of **The Movement** and **The Group**.
2. Name two important poets of the post-1940s generation who continued along the strain of the Modernist poets of the earlier generation.
3. Name a post-Second World War 'regional' poet and his important work.
4. Name three post-Second World War poets who welcomed American influences in their work.

2.6.13. Suggested Reading

Corcoran, Neil. *English Poetry Since* 1940. Routledge, 2013.

Falci, Eric. *The Cambridge Introduction to British Poetry: 1945 -2010*. Cambridge UP, 2015.

Larissy, Edward, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to British and Irish Poetry: 1945 - 2010*, Cambridge UP, 2016.

Marcus, Laura, Peter Nicholls, editors. *Cambridge History of Twentieth Century English Literature*. Cambridge UP, 2004.

Unit 7 ❐ Philip Larkin: “Church Going” and “The Whitsun Weddings”

Structure

2.7.1. Objectives

This Unit aims to introduce you to Philip Larkin as a poet, all the while situating him against the poetic movements that emerged in the post-World War II era. We shall analyse his poetic styles while focusing on two of his major poems- “Church Going” and “The Whitsun Weddings,” with specific emphasis on his thematic components and stylistic features.

2.7.2. Introduction

Philip Larkin was born in Coventry, an industrial Midlands town in 1922. Being born into an

orthodox family with a father who worked as the city treasurer, Larkins have often looked back at his childhood as uneventful, dispelling any romantic association to it by calling it a period of "forgotten boredom." He was introduced to modern writers like D.H. Lawrence and Alduous Huxley through his father's library. As a boy happy with his day dreaming and escapist fantasies, Larkin considered schools to be an intrusion on his private reveries.

Larkin went to St. John's College, Oxford to study English and finally graduated in 1943. He failed his army medical exam and did not have to go for war-service. However, this meant that his time spent at Oxford was during this period of uncertainty of war, and the kind of austerities and restrictions imposed on the civil society during that time; and the people he met during this phase of his life shape his ideologies to a great extent. Larkin later talked about this period saying that due to instability of life itself, material aspirations had seemed immaterial. This consciousness of limited horizons, of bitter realism, impermanence of time is a constant in Larkin's writing.

Larkin worked as a librarian his whole life. In 1944 Larkin was invited to submit a collection to a publisher and there came The North Ship with thirty poems. Larkin also completed two novels, *Jill* (1946) and *A Girl in Winter* (1945) during this time. He only returned to poetry after moving to Belfast in 1950. His breakthrough only came after 1955, once he had found a suitable publisher in George Hartley from the Marvell Press. His next collection, The Less Deceived was an immediate success and was instrumental in establishing his reputation as a leading poet in Britain. His next two collections, *The Whitsun Wedding* (1964) and *High Windows* (1974) were well received. Larkin edited the prestigious *Oxford Book of Twentieth Century Verse* which was published in 1973.

He was also honoured with the Queen's Gold Medal for Poetry in 1965. Larkin though was expected to succeed John Betjeman as the Poet Laureate, the prospect never appealed to him. He published two more books of prose in the subsequent years, namely, *All What Jazz?* (1961-1971), a collection of jazz reviews that came out in the *Daily Telegraph and Required Writing: Miscellaneous Pieces* (1955-1982), a collection of book reviews and other short pieces. He died on 2nd December, 1985.

2.7.3. Philip Larkin and 'Movement Poets'/Poetry

Larkin's rise in the mid-1950s coincided with the emergence of a group of poets dubbed the 'Movement.' Many of the members who belonged to this group of poetry had been friends

from their student days at Oxford and Cambridge in the 1940s. The publication of an anthology from the group entitled *New Lines* in 1956, to which Larkin was a contributor marked a decisive moment in modern poetry. They emphasised that the poetry of 'Movement' will focus on intelligence as a prerequisite for creativity and this is reflected in the careful, probing thoughtfulness in most of Larkin's poems.

The poetry of 1950s marked a notable shift in taste, as was evident in the works of Philip Larkin, Kingsley Amis, John Wain, Thorn Gunn, Donald Davie and others of the generation. The 'Movement' was an attempt to bring poetry out of the stupor it had fallen into in the post-war era. The post-war austerity of England, had led to certain reactions against the social Utopianism of the 1930s. They rejected the overwhelming influence of fascism and totalitarianism and the neo-Romantic excess of the 1940s. More than social realism or rhetorical richness, the focus was shifted to directness of thought, rational meaning and prosaic familiarity of expression. In 1953, Stephen Spender, who was one of the leading 1930s poets had claimed that England was experiencing 'a rebellion of the Lower Middle Brows.'

While there was not any conscious effort on part of the members to define the characteristics of the Movement writers, most of them came from lower-middle class background. They represented an emerging intelligentsia in England whose origins lay not in the Establishment but in provincial grammar schools with sights set firmly on academic success. Anthony Hartley, a reviewer in *The Spectator*, found in the work of these writers a similar tone, 'cool,scientific and analytical ... distrustful of too much richness or too much fanaticism, austere and skeptical ... Complication of thought, austerity oftone, colloquialism and the avoidance of rhetoric - these provide somecommon ground and common dangers'. The 'Movement' marked a period of conservatism and retrenchment in poetry. However, they were met with criticism as well. Poet, Charles Tomlinson, who belonged to the same generation, was critical about movement poets and felt that they were "disablingly timid in their parade of ordinariness and modesty and their aspirations were too limited." Donald Davie, one of the most notable 'Movement' poets, censured himself and the group for their 'pusillanimity' in their attitude to their readers.

Larkin came into the British poetry scene at a time when England was undergoing radical social changes. Ironical verses rooted in nostalgic provinciality of post-war England yet unsentimental in his approach became typical of Larkin's poetic style. The Movement poets urged for a mixture of rationality with subjective feelings and a focus on the realism of the self and outside world in their usage of imageries and diction. Donald Davie in "Remembering the Movement," *Prospect* (Summer 1959), defines it as:

> We were deprecating, ingratiating. What we all shared to begin with was a hatred for writing considered as self-expression; but all we put in its place was writing as self-adjustment, a getting on the right terms with our reader (that is, with our society), a hitting on the right tone and attitude towards him. (as quoted by Bernard Bergonzi in "Discovering Davie")

Philip Larkin saw poetry of his age as forbiddingly academic and abstruse, thus frightening away the common reader. He himself had a simpler conception of poetry, which he thought was a matter of emotion to which ordinary reader could respond to with pleasure. His poetry works through debts to Hardy, Yeats and Auden while bringing out his own characteristic note. His flat monologues in his poems, like, 'Life is first boredom, and then fear,' 'They fuck you up, your mum and dad,' 'Books are a load of crap,' (quotes from "Dockery and Son", "This be the Verse," "A study of Reading Habits" respectively) filled with so much negativity and often explicit, demythologizes the idea of life and jolts the reader out of complacence.

Yet Larkin is considered to have portrayed the most authentic picture of contemporary post-war England. Larkin's poetry remarkably conveys the life of ordinary people. They speak of dreary routines of ordinary existence, the dreams paraded by never ending advertising hoardings which promise images of a better life and the inability of common man to grasp any of them at all. He talks about faith and ideologies which have escaped the grasp of man and life still lived on hope. To talk about the outside landscape, Larkin's *The Whitsun Weddings* gather remnants of Lincolnshire's open countryside, agricultural fields; but juxtaposes them with glimpses of a growing industrial city of Sheffield with polluted canals, scrap-metal yards, municipal parks and playgrounds. The 1950s and 1960s England that we see in *The Whitsun Weddings* and *The Less Deceived* is one which is going through urban-renewal, looking at a changing scape of suburban housing, where the drudgery of industrial life with all its ugliness stands together with the tranquility of the rural countryside. And Larkin sets about to contemplate a confluence of both.

He focuses on individual's struggle to adopt themselves in circumstances which are beyond their control. On the one hand, the individual finds himself lost in the impersonality of the crowd, his ideologies swamped by the masses, and on the other there is his constant struggle to ascertain his individuality, rise up above the rest to prove his dreams and desires. A recurring motif is the usage of time. Set against the rush of modern living is the silence of the countryside or cathedral, where the individual is able to recover a perspective which reaches beyond the immediacy of the present moment.

2.7.4 "Church Going"

2.7.4.1. Text : Church Going

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

Move forward, run my hand around the font.
From where I stand, the roof looks almost new-
Cleaned or restored? Someone would know: I don't.
Mounting the lectern, I peruse a few
Hectoring large-scale verses, and pronounce
"Here endeth" much more loudly than I'd meant.
The echoes snigger briefly. Back at the door
I sign the book, donate an Irish sixpence,
Reflect the place was not worth stopping for.

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

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

A shape less recognizable each week,
A purpose more obscure. I wonder who
Will be the last, the very last, to seek
This place for what it was; one of the crew
That tap and jot and know what rood-lofts were?
Some ruin-bibber, randy for antique,
Or Christmas-addict, counting on a whiff
Of gown-and-bands and organ-pipes and myrrh?
Or will he be my representative,

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

A serious house on serious earth it is,
In whose blent air all our compulsions meet,
Are recognised, and robed as destinies.
And that much never can be obsolete,

Since someone will forever be surprising
A hunger in himself to be more serious,
And gravitating with it to this ground,
Which, he once heard, was proper to grow wise in,
If only that so many dead lie round.

Glossary

sprawling : spread out over a large area

reverence : deep respect for someone or something

lectern : a tall stand with a sloping top to hold a book or notes, from which someone, typically a preacher or lecturer, can read while standing up

hectoring : talking rudely

snigger : laugh in half-suppressed, typically scornful way

pyx : the container in which the consecrated bread of the Eucharist is kept

dubious : not to be relied upon or trusted

brambles : a prickly scrambling shrub of the rose family

ruin bibber : somebody who's addicted to ruin

randy : sexually aroused or excited

myrrh : a fragrant gum resin obtained from certain trees and used in perfumery, medicines, and incense

2.7.4.2. About the Poem

The first draft of Larkin's "Church Going" was dated 24 April 1954; the final version that was ultimately published in *The Less Deceived* was completed in July, 1954. "Church Going" is a nod to Larkin's love for ecclesiastical architecture and his reverence for spaces which become integral to human life. Larkin does not appear to be concerned with the religious significance of churches; rather the place's real significance lies on its existence as a witness to life which goes on despite the ravages of time.

"Church Going" is often considered to be a poem about movement- a theological contemplation which moves from skepticism and doubt to faith and trust. While it reads like a monologue because of its first person narrative, we should not conflate the poet with the poetic personae that he creates. Since, the Movement poets wanted to break down the elitist hierarchy of Modernist poetry, Larkin uses a rather demotic language which sometimes reflects

Hardy's simplicity of diction and thought. But it still requires emphasis, that Larkin does pay attention to the psychological complexities of modern man.The poem moves from present to past, and ultimately ends on a hopeful affirmation about the continuity of life.

2.7.4.3. Critical Analysis

Lines 1-9 :

The narrator only enters the church after making sure that it is bereft of human presence- "there's nothing going on." The popular phrase "nothing going on" once again a reminder that "church going" as a practice is itself fading away and there is nothing of significance going on in the churches anyway. The next few lines which denote the simplicity of the church at once establishes Larkin's primary objective to showcase the passing of time with flowers which have gone brown and the silence which encompasses the church. The reader should note that the emptiness of the church resonates with the idea that religious places are rarely well frequented by commoners apart from Sunday services. The usage of sound and imageries presented in such juxtapositions, be it the "thud" of closed door or the continuous evocation of silence and stillness is marked by the literary device of 'synesthesia' which presents ideas in such a way that they appeal to more than one sense like- sight, smell and touch. The flowers are depicted as "sprawlings" and this robs the church of the sense of orderliness and discipline that it is supposed to reflect.

At the end of line 4 Larkin very strikingly uses the literary device of enjambment, with the word "cut" left hanging at the end of the line. Enjambment is when one line flows into another without punctuation to keep the sense flowing. While the following lines further the speaker's disinterestedness, referring to the sacred objects of the church with casual carelessness- "brass and stuff," they also emphasise the vastness and silence of the place. "Brewed God knows for how long" once again is a juxtaposition of the sacred with the banal, considering how unserious the continuous evocation of God has become.

Lines 10- 18:

The second stanza follows the last line of the fast, and the speaker is more concerned with whether the church roof has been restored. His signing of the book and leaving behind an Irish six pence is less in show of reverence and just a casual gesture. There appears to be a rejection at the very last line of the stanza where he mentions that it has been a mere wastage of time to have stopped at the church. "Hectoring large scale verses" would refer to larger inscriptions from the Bible. The speaker's rather tongue in cheek approach in depicting the

interior of the church has quips from King James' Bible "here endeth" refers to the end of the altar.

Lines 19-27 :

There seems to be a rising conflict in his mind about his church visits. While he is not a devout Christian, he does visit churches often enough and he wonders what he is seeking from a place which appears meaningless to him. He contemplates churches falling completely out of use and a few remnants being showcases as tokens of the past. While he supposes that religion will fall out of fashion, superstition will not, and the dilapidated churches will become grazing ground for sheep but places people will avoid considering it to be unlucky.

Lines 28-36 :

The speaker paints a picture of women of questionable intent who might come to visit the churches in future and bring their children to touch "particular stones." He wonders whether superstitions will also follow a casual death like "belief" or faith and what remains beyond that.

Lines 37- 46 :

While the church falls more into ruins, the purpose of its existence seems to be more at question, slowly getting lost in overgrown weeds. The speaker wonders who will be the last to seek this place out for what it was. Perhaps an archaeologist or an antique hunter, looking for remnants of "gown-and-bands and organ-pipes and myrrh" that can still be used for Christmas decorations. Or, it might be someone like himself looking for answers in a desolate place.

Lines 46- 55 :

The future representative who comes to visit the church will be bored and uninformed, yet knowledgeable about the about the "ghostly silt," the dispersed dirt which covers the "cross on the ground" signifying the holiness of the place. The term "ghostly" has been used consciously to refer to allude to Christian faith in the Holy Spirit versus the superstitions of disbelief. Yet the place holds certain significance. The ground has been held together by this dirt that he is now tending to. He understands the significance of its existence not merely as a spiritual concept, but also as a physical building. The Church becomes symbolic of the life cycle itself-birth, marriage and death and becomes the only steadfast presence against separation which modern world has degenerated into. The speaker still carries forward the initial disdain of the first few stanzas debating the significance of the church building, as he refers to it as a "barn,"

a building devoid of its religious connotations, simply being referred to in terms of its vastness, despite it being "accoutered" in its holiness.

Lines 55-64 :

It is despite everything "a serious house," maybe not relevant in modern world because of its religious significance, rather that stands as a witness to the compulsions of life, that recognizes the coming of life and robbing of it. This cycle of life is something that will never grow obsolete. "Church Going," moves from scepticism to affirmation in the speaker's discovery of a 'hunger in himself to be more serious'. In an age without religious faith, the church is simply the object of superstition. But because it has been for so long associated with our most deeply moving moments in life? birth, marriage and death? it signifies our need to ritualise and memorialise. It is 'proper to grow wise in' because, as the 'suburb scrub' around it deteriorates further, it acts as the symbol of our deepest desire: a need to preserve. The paradox of time is that it both erodes and preserves.

2.7.4.4. Key Themes

"Church Going" develops a typical persona of bored disinterestedness that Larkin often uses in his poems. The poem begins on a conversational, anecdotal note and moves on to a deeper contemplation with the language changing into being more thoughtful and reflective. The speaker, not quite knowing why, stops to visit an empty church, but makes it a point for the readers to know that the church is void of human presence; he would not have entered otherwise. His depiction of the church's typical accoutrementsis with a sense of apathy (we are told offhandedly about 'some brass and stuff/Up at the holy end') that hides a more layered question about the meaning of religion itself and its significance when it is not associated with human contact. The empty church ground thus becomes an uncomfortable stop, a place that 'was not worth stopping for.'

The poem separates the significance of churches as architectural specimen which might gain historical paucity and be retained 'chronically' as items of historical interest; versus it being a religious institution which has gradually gone redundant as people like himself lose interest in it. Larkin relates religious faith to superstition itself, which must die a gradual death and only a crumbling edifice of the structure will remain, its purpose lost in history.

He contemplates about its final visitor as the church falls into disuse: someone with an esoteric interest in church architecture, perhaps; or an enthusiast of ruins, or someone sentimentally trying to summon up the ceremoniousness of a church-service. More appropriate

than all these would be someone like the speaker himself, who, under no illusions about the church containing any residue ('silt') of the divine, nevertheless makes his way there deliberately because it preserved for so long the rites associated with three fundamental moments in life: birth, marriage and death. Unable to evaluate the significance of the church, he yet knows that 'It pleases me to stand in silence here.' Amidst the endless flux and ephemerality of life, the church stands as a monument to all that is most 'serious' and enduring. It is because it houses the most crucial moments of our lives, the church has a stabilising and harmonising ('blent') influence in reminding us that the choices we make in life and our conduct of it are not to be taken lightly. Larkin emphasises that here lies the relevance of the church. It is in this particular function of the church, that it can never become obsolete, 'Since someone will forever be surprising/ A hunger in himself to be more serious.' In representing this 'seriousness.' the church, or whatever physically remains of it, will always be the proper place 'to grow wise in' if only because the presence of so many dead is a sobering testament to life's fleeting transitoriness.

Yet he is struck by the uncanny silence, 'tense, musty, unignorable' and is compelled to make a tedious joke: 'Brewed God knows how long'. Though he pretends to be callous in his ways, he cannot get out of the customs he is part of and thus clumsily dutiful, he removes his cycle-clips as a sign of respect. So he does what everybody is tempted to do in an empty church: mounts the lectern, reads out loud and is startled by the echoes which 'snigger briefly'. The word 'snigger' does a lot of work here, for it is not the echoes which 'snigger' but the speaker's attitude which is sniggering.

Like a nervous schoolboy, his attitude is actually one of uneasy scepticism and cultivated disdain: he pretends an indifference he does not really feel, evidenced by his conventional if 'awkward' reverence and his embarrassment at hearing his own voice. His dismissive reflection that it was not worth stopping to visit the church is insecure. It has disturbed him more than he cares to admit and he is forced to fathom out his true motives for stopping, to discover that the place means more to him than he was at first prepared to concede.

Our sense of a particular personality emerges from Larkin's control of his language, a language which allows modern colloquialisms ('some brass and stuff'; 'God knows') to coexist easily with more elevated vocabulary such as 'accoutred' and archaisms like 'blent.' We start off in the idiom of familiar conversation and easy anecdotal style, as if launching out on a story, 'Once I'm sure there's nothing going on…,' until the sentence is concluded with the emphatic weight of the repeated vowel in 'thud shut', given two thudding stresses by the speaking rhythm which imitate the bang of a closing door. Now we are inside the church, and the listing of 'matting, seats, and stone, / And little books' has the cinematic quality of a roving camera.

This lengthy second sentence is segmented into short phrases (marked by the semi-colons) as the eye takes in details indiscriminately. This inconsequentiality continues until we reach the deliberate gravitas of 'I peruse a few /Hectoring large-scale verses,' where the pomposity of 'peruse' and 'Hectoring,' by contrast with the preceding everyday diction, mimics the rhetorical grandeur of the verses which he reads aloud. The incident is closed at the end of the second stanza with an end stopped line whose formality is clinched by its regular iambic metre.

As the poet defines his experience more scrupulously, the diction begins to shift towards a more thoughtful and resonant language. Having portrayed himself as ignorant about churches, the speaker nonetheless knows about 'parchment, plate and pyx' even though there is an obvious contempt for 'one of the crew/That tap and jot' (felt in the derisive 'crew') and the 'ruin-bibber, randy for antique.'

The poet's representative is to be found 'tending to this cross of ground' (churches are built in the shape of a cross), meaning that he is both drawn towards it and, in honouring it, takes due care of it ('tending'), particularly because he has had to make his way to it through 'suburb scrub,' the dishevelled conditions of contemporary life. He begins to value the church because 'it held unspilt/So long and equably what since is found/Only in separation' (which prepares us for the later word 'blent') as if the church is a vessel for a precious liquid it keeps undisturbed. As the speaker (and his 'representative') finds himself 'gravitating' to the site of the church because of its 'seriousness,' so we find the language gravitating towards a more abstract level and meditative tone. The clipped brevity of the phrases in the first stanza graduallyexpands into the assured, flowing rhythm of the final stanza as the poet reaches certainty.

So, on closer reading, the poem is far from being an expression of snide cynicism about the importance of churches as it seems to be at its opening. The 'church' may indeed be 'going' (the title contains a characteristic pun) but our need for it will survive. The church may represent an illusion: the music of the 'small neat organ' only obscures the more eloquent 'unignorable silence' of eternity and the superstitions which might succeed the church express a yearning in man for the transcendent and the mystical which the poet insists are illusory (simples do not cure a cancer). But the poet is neither as 'bored' nor as 'uninformed' as he pretends to be: he is thoughtful, probing, and imaginative. He surprises himself by his hunger to bemore serious, to find a permanent value in human life, to find that its incidental accidents and compulsions are in fact magnificently 'robed as destinies.' The poem ends with an affirmation of faith in man's integrity and a refusal to drift into a cynicism that depreciates human life.

2.7.5. "The Whitsun Weddings"

2.7.5.1. Text : The Whitsun Weddings

The Whitsun Weddings

That Whitsun, I was late getting away:
  Not till about
One-twenty on the sunlit Saturday
Did my three-quarters-empty train pull out,
All windows down, all cushions hot, all sense
Of being in a hurry gone. We ran
Behind the backs of houses, crossed a street
Of blinding windscreens, smelt the fish-dock; thence
The river's level drifting breadth began,
Where sky and Lincolnshire and water meet.

All afternoon, through the tall heat that slept
  For miles inland,
A slow and stopping curve southwards we kept.
Wide farms went by, short-shadowed cattle, and
Canals with floatings of industrial froth;
A hothouse flashed uniquely: hedges dipped
And rose: and now and then a smell of grass
Displaced the reek of buttoned carriage-cloth
Until the next town, new and nondescript,
Approached with acres of dismantled cars.

At first, I didn't notice what a noise
  The weddings made
Each station that we stopped at: sun destroys
The interest of what's happening in the shade,
And down the long cool platforms whoops and skirls
I took for porters larking with the mails,
And went on reading. Once we started, though,

We passed them, grinning and pomaded, girls
In parodies of fashion, heels and veils,
All posed irresolutely, watching us go,

As if out on the end of an event
  Waving goodbye
To something that survived it. Struck, I leant
More promptly out next time, more curiously,
And saw it all again in different terms:
The fathers with broad belts under their suits
And seamy foreheads; mothers loud and fat;
An uncle shouting smut; and then the perms,
The nylon gloves and jewellery-substitutes,
The lemons, mauves, and olive-ochres that

Marked off the girls unreally from the rest.
  Yes, from cafés
And banquet-halls up yards, and bunting-dressed
Coach-party annexes, the wedding-days
Were coming to an end. All down the line
Fresh couples climbed aboard: the rest stood round;
The last confetti and advice were thrown,
And, as we moved, each face seemed to define
Just what it saw departing: children frowned
At something dull; fathers had never known

Success so huge and wholly farcical;
  The women shared
The secret like a happy funeral;
While girls, gripping their handbags tighter, stared
At a religious wounding. Free at last,
And loaded with the sum of all they saw,
We hurried towards London, shuffling gouts of steam.
Now fields were building-plots, and poplars cast

Long shadows over major roads, and for
Some fifty minutes, that in time would seem

Just long enough to settle hats and say
I nearly died,
A dozen marriages got under way.
They watched the landscape, sitting side by side
-An Odeon went past, a cooling tower,
And someone running up to bowl-and none
Thought of the others they would never meet
Or how their lives would all contain this hour.
I thought of London spread out in the sun,
Its postal districts packed like squares of wheat:

There we were aimed. And as we raced across
Bright knots of rail
Past standing Pullmans, walls of blackened moss
Came close, and it was nearly done, this frail
Travelling coincidence; and what it held
Stood ready to be loosed with all the power
That being changed can give. We slowed again,
And as the tightened brakes took hold, there swelled
A sense of falling, like an arrow-shower
Sent out of sight, somewhere becoming rain.

Glossary:

dismantled : destroyed to pieces

Pullmans : railway carriages

2.7.5.2. About the Poem

This poem was a part of a collection with the same title *The Whitsun Weddings* that was published in 1964.Whitsun, or Whit Sunday, is the seventh Sunday after Easter (Pentecost), deep into spring, when people often marry. This may explain why Larkin saw so many wedding parties during an actual train ride in 1955, which gave him the idea of the poem.

2.7.5.3. Critical Analysis

Lines 1-10 :

The opening of the poem, is characteristically Larkin. While conversational it remains rhythmically firm, announcing the anecdotal mode and quickly establishing the sensation of the city's hurrying bustle dropping away with the train's departure. In the "river's level drifting breadth," Larkin merges the colloquial with the archaic as he creates an image of continuity between sky and city and water that the train itself mimics. This becomes the central image of the poem, the form of an unfolding movement that connects distinct locations and points of time.

Lines 20-30 :

The initial fantasy of the pastoral landscape in the opening lines of this stanza, fades into a grittier reality with the 'floatings of industrial froth.' The smell of grass competes with the stale smell of the cloth seats inside the train carriage. Such pungent realism goes a long way in setting the stage for the plausible yet fantastic coincidence of coming upon a sequence of wedding parties in the following stanza.

Lines 30-40 :

This is the first stanza where the wedding parties make their appearance. At first, the speaker doesn't even realize that all the commotion he can hear is caused by wedding guests, thinking it to be usual crowd of railway stations. When he does take notice, he is taken aback by the sheer number of weddings that seem to be taking place. There is disenchantment from the usual importance that weddings seem to hold.

Larkin's reference to the girls 'in parodies of fashion, heels and veils / all posed irresolutely,' not only serve to turn them into caricatured proto-types, ones he could not differentiate from porters in the first place, but further establishes how weddings with their usual pomp holds no interest for the poet.

Lines 30-60 :

Larkin's characteristic disdain which often turns even individual characters to types, again make way in this stanza as he depicts fathers having "seamy" foreheads; "mothers" being "loud and fat," "an uncle shouting smut," and women in perms, gloves, and fake jewellery. This is what people are grotesquely reduced to and the speaker describes the "success" of the weddings as both "huge" and "wholly farcical"- these are momentous occasions, but they also seem vacuous and pretentious when seen through Larkin's scepticism.

Larkin's genius for abstracting from experience is heightened in these three stanzas, in which his talents so brilliantly serve the narrative of a simple discovery: that each unique wedding party is in truth like all the other wedding parties gathering that day, a perception only the poet realizes, because he is in the privileged position of witnessing each one. He is the single consciousness of the poem; just as sky and Lincolnshire and water meet along the visual line of the river, so all the Whitsun weddings meet along the train-line and the line of consciousness that belongs to the poet, a paradoxical still point moving through time and space.

To even a casual reader of the social satire at which Larkin excels, the frowning children, the proud fathers, the sentimental girls are all genuinely funny, but their depiction also displays their humanity, common with the poet's own and therefore, 'Free at last, / And loaded with the sum of all they saw, / We hurried towards London.' What they have seen, the poet too has seen; and as "they" become "we" in the collective hurrying, they join him, and so are joined to him.

Larkin's writing to borrow from Foucault, "functions as a procedure of objectification and subjection" where he turns the individual into something he can describe and analyze, whilst trying to maintain individuality. In Larkin's poems, however, whole sections of people blend together.

Lines 70-80

It is in these two last stanzas that Larkin creates a kind of heightened platform for the drama of his statement "There we were aimed" (the opening sentence of the final stanza). It's a dramatic moment in the speech-act of the poem, which bridges the gap between the poet and the rest of the wedding goers and the newly married couples as well, because all of their lives seem to be 'contained' in this shared moment of gazing out of the train window and watching the landscape change.

The second to last stanza contains one of Larkin's most typical modernist influence echoes in: 'I thought of London spread out in the sun, / Its postal districts packed like squares of wheat…' The train, now "aimed" at its London destination, becomes an arrow; and whose arrow could it be, on a day of so many weddings, but Cupid's? Cupid's arrow, which changes indifference to desire, carries a valence greater than even the god can know: for what begins as indifference and turns to love also turns to new forms of neglect, of difficulty, of disappointment: 'And as the tightened brakes took hold, there swelled / A sense of falling, like an arrow-shower / Sent out of sight, somewhere becoming rain.'

2.7.5.4. Key Themes

"The Whitsun Weddings," one of Larkin's best poems, is an example of how feeling and belief can be brought together, or more precisely, how the discovery of certain feelings can validate an acceptance of traditional ideas. Throughout his poetry Larkin is often drawn strongly towards traditional forms of life, but without the final conviction that they can apply to him in any usual way.

"The Whitsun Weddings" roots us at once in time- 'That Whitsun' and manifests a concern with time as 'I was late getting away'. Larkin sets the train in a context of precise calculation be it- 'One-twenty,' 'three-quarters-empty,' appropriate to this central symbol which is both poetically and literally a vehicle in motion rather than a fixed mark.

The speaker's presence is significant here yet remains unobtrusive, and gradually disappears as the poem proceeds. With the speaker less prominently in view, the scene itself can be made more compellingly present for the reader and can reveal more persuasively the life that stirs surprisingly within ordinary lives and conventions (and makes us ask what we mean by the word 'ordinary'). Larkin almost disappears from the poem, but he remains in it enough to provide a sense of personal discovery which the reader shares. The poem begins with him, and we never quite lose the authenticating sense of an observer, while being drawn out into a fresher and deeper sense of the life outside him, with its poignant mixture of beauty and banality.

No overtly religious setting appears in Larkin's poem, even though its title refers to both a holy day and a sacrament. Faithful to his own vision and the values of his age, Larkin places us 'out on the end of an event': his brides and grooms emerge from cafes and banquet halls rather than from churches. The altar is a distant irrelevancy, implied only in the imaginary 'religious wounding' seen by young girls. "The Whitsun Weddings" would seem to testify not only that art serves life, but that life serves a time untainted by transcendent impulses.

The ending exemplifies the way in which the experience of a specific occasion in Larkin can broaden into a rich sense of life as a whole, and the way in which the sense of the fertility of these arriving marriages becomes one which the poet imaginatively shares: the sense of falling, of life-giving rain, belongs to the poem itself with its visualisation of outside landscape, as well as the marriages it is describing.

2.7.6. Poetry of Philip Larkin: Stylistic Features

The stylistic features of Larkin's poetry show his use of traditional resources which are frequently modified and varied. His poems are usually stanzaic ? that is, they are composed of stanza

units of a regular length. However, to avoid the monotony of repeating identical structures, Larkin uses various techniques to overcome the rigidity of the stanzaic form. Almost invariably, for example, his stanzas run on from one to another so that the formal stanza divisions are blurred by a surging continuity. This tension between formal regularity and freedom is fundamental to Larkin's stylistic achievements.

However, a more complex rhyme-scheme, combined with larger stanza units, generally reflects a complex development of thought in a poem. This can be seen, for example, in "Church Going," "The Whitsun Weddings." Larkin manages the easy naturalness of his voice so flawlessly that one hardly notices the rhyming structure ABABCDECDE in "Church Going," a kind of shortened sonnet (the quatrain is Shakespearean, the sestet Petrarchan). Keats invented this stanza for his summer odes, and Larkin's formal allusion evokes the summer season, its redolent promise and pastoral sweetness. Just as Keats never loses sense, in the summer odes, that abundance comes from the process of mutation, of organic breakdown, in Larkin there is never any sweetness without much sour.

Because it is so rooted in the phenomena of our everyday lives, Larkin's poetry seems to be full of concrete things -be it the remnants of a Church or the scenes from a moving train, which Larkin assembles into lists in "Church Going" and "The Whitsun Weddings," But a closer look at the poems shows how frequently if unobtrusively Larkin exploits the capacity of language to render feelings and impressions vividly and completely. Broadly speaking, images are comparisons: what is asserted is a similarity or identity between things and by comparing things in this way the poet is able to communicate to us his particular idea or state of feeling.

In "Church Going" he identifies the abiding importance of churches as marking the place where 'all our compulsions meet, /Are recognised, and robed as destinies'. "The Whitsun Weddings" concludes with the procreative image of rain to suggest how the couples' futures lie before them waiting to burst into life. It is often the case that as the speakers of the poems become more reflective and ratiocinative during the course of the poem, they have increasing recourse to the language not of abstract thought but of concrete imagery and symbolism.

"Church Going" begins on a note of casual ease with the colloquial language of conversation: 'some brass and stuff/ Up at the holy end' creates for us a speaker who is slightly bored, uninformed and incurious. But by the end of the poem, the diction is more formal and elevated, suggesting how the speaker's attitude has shifted from scepticism to absorbed thoughtfulness. This movement from the colloquial to the elevated is quite common in Larkin's poems, representing the way in which their speakers are gradually absorbed in an unexpected train of thought which began with a triviality they were inclined to dismiss.

We are constantly aware in reading Larkin's poems of an individual presence speaking to us directly. We are addressed by a recognisable voice which reveals to us a particular sort of character who shares with us his thoughts and feelings. The majority of the poems are written in the first person so that we are directly confronted with the shifts and turns, inflexions and nuances of a whole personality. It is dangerous to assume that the character speaking these poems is always Philip Larkin himself. Rather, Larkin creates different sorts of characters (personae) in his poems, almost as an actor assumes masks to play different parts.

In this sense, the poems are monologues uttered by a character who reveals something of himself to us. How does Larkin convince us of the identity of the speaking voice? Much depends on its naturalness, so that we easily identify with a voice that sounds familiar. The tone is affable and inviting, anecdotal in relating situations and experiences which are ordinary and commonplace: a train journey or a visit to a church. The poems deal with familiar emotions: nostalgia, regret, disappointment, loneliness, occasionally even happiness. And the voice tracks, with sinuous fidelity, the twists and turns of thought, the shifting of emotions. In its hesitations and qualifications, assertions and retractions, it sounds thoroughly reasonable, urgent but careful in its sifting for the truth. We trust the voice because it sounds like our own; it is ourselves to whom we listen, our own hopes, doubts, fears, our own quizzing of life. In Larkin's poems we hear the voice of the common man in the mid-twentieth-century: rational, tentative, not easily taken in but still enchanted by dreams, lonely but compassionate, querulous but wanting to be grateful.

2.7.7. Summing Up

Larkin remained one of Britain's most popular poets post-World War II. A cynicism fitting to the age was only softened by his skepticism. While known for his satiric stanzas, what remains in our mind is how he portrayed the changing social scene of a modern England. What shines through is his tender observation of life with all of its complexities. Small though it is, Larkin's body of work has "altered our awareness of poetry's capacity to reflect the contemporary world," according to *London Magazine* correspondent Roger Garfitt. A.N. Wilson drew a similar conclusion in the Spectator: "Perhaps the reason Larkin made such a great name from so small an oeuvre was that he so exactly caught the mood of so many of us… Larkin found the perfect voice for expressing our worst fears." (as quoted in poetryfoundation.org)

2.7.8. Comprehension Exercises

Long Answer Type Questions :

a) Would you consider Philip Larkin to be a poet of the 'Movement?' Give reasons for your answer.

b) Discuss Larkin's poetic style with reference to the two poems in your syllabus.

c) Why do you think Larkin becomes a true representative of British sentiment in the post-World War II era?

Medium Answer Type Questions :

a) "Church Going" allows the reader to get a glimpse of Larkin's skepticism. Do you agree? Discuss.

b) Do you think Larkin takes an anti-romantic stance in "The Whitsun Weddings?" Discuss with reference to the poem.

Short Answer Type Questions :

a) Name any two volumes of Larkin's poetry?

b) What do you understand by 'Movement Poetry?'

c) Name any two of Larkin's contemporary poets.

2.7.9. Suggested Reading

Amis, Kingsley. *Memoirs*. Hutchinson, 1991.

Bergonzi, Bernard. "Discovering Davie." PN Review, Vol. 19, Issue 2, Nov 1, 1992.

Dyson, Brian (ed.). *The Modern Academic Library: Essays in Memory of Philip Larkin*. Library Association, 1998.

Scofield, Martin. "The Poetry of Philip Larkin." *The Massachusetts Review*, vol. 17, no. 2, 1976, pp. 370-89. *JSTOR*, http://www.jstor.org/stable/25088642. Accessed 22 July 2023.

Unit 8 ❐ Ted Hughes: "Crow's Fall" and "Hawk Roosting"

Structure

2.8.1. Objectives

This Unit aims to introduce the learners to the poet Ted Hughes and aspects of his poetry with special focus on "Crow's Fall" and "Hawk Roosting."

2.8.2. Introduction

Ted Hughes was born in Mytholmroyd, Yorkshire, in 1930. His father, William, was a joiner who had fought in the First World War, and his mother, Edith was a tailor. The stories of the War filled Hughes' childhood imagination. Hughes was very fond of hunting, fishing, and swimming with his family. He attended Burnley Road School before moving to Mexborough, and then went to Schofield Street Junior School. In Poetry in Making, he mentioned that he

was really fascinated by animals, collecting and drawing toy lead creatures. When he has living in Mexborough, he explored Manor Farm at Old Denaby. His earliest poem "The Thought Fox" and earliest story "The Rain Horse" were written recollecting this area. Hughes went to Mexborough Grammar School, where many teachers encouraged him to write poetry. His teachers Miss McLeod and Pauline Mayne played an important role to introduce him to the poets like Hopkins and T. S. Eliot.

For two years he did military service. In 1951 Hughes started studying English at Pembroke College, but in his third year, he switched to Anthropology and Archaeology. After Graduation he worked in different places, and met Sylvia Plath, a great American writer, and married her. He published his first collection of poems, "The Hawk in the Rain" in 1957, which was judged by the poets W. H. Auden, Stephen Spender, Marianne Moore, and won Somerset Maugham Award. Ted Hughes has his style and his poems are always very powerful with their language and themes. Animals and birds are the primary metaphor in his poetry and he often showed a relationship between man and Nature. After his first collection became popular, he continued to published many other collections— *Lupercal* (1960), which won Hawthornden Prize, *Recklings* (1966), *Wodwo* (1967). Sylvia Plath committed suicide in 1963, and Hughes was greatly affected by the death. In 1969, another tragedy happened in his life as Wevill, with whom he was living, committed suicide with her daughter. In 1970, Hughes married Carol Orchard and until his death they stayed together. He published *The Life and Songs of the Crow* in 1970 which also became very popular. Then he wrote many other things, for instance, the critical work "Shakespeare and the Goddess of Complete Being" (1992), Adaptations and Translations such as *Tales from Ovid* (1997) etc. He wrote 88 poems on his relationship with Plath in "Birthday Letters" (1998), which became very popular. On 28th October 1998, Ted Hughes died by a fatal heart attack.

2.8.3. Ted Hughes and his Poetry

Ted Hughes occupies a significant place in the History of English poetry. Although Hughes is dealing with nature, he is not really a nature poet the way we understand Wordsworth or Coleridge or Keats as the poets of the nature. Hughes is very much modern and belongs to the Movement Poetry and his poems are suffused with symbols, images, and metaphors, or more specifically, dark images. So, he can be compared with the modern poets like Eliot or Yeats, but not much with the Romantics. There is always a predominant sense of darkness, loneliness and numbness in his poems, which are also the characteristic aspects of the age in

which he is writing. The world after 1950s has changed a lot because of the two world wars. The frustration, hopelessness, darkness of the world reflected in the literature of the age. Hughes also tried to capture all those things in his poetry.

Hughes published his first poem "The Little Boys and the Seasons" in 1954 under the pseudonym Daniel Hearing, which perhaps suggests that his attitude would be different from the other poets of the age, and would be providing something serious, something dark through his poetry. Dr. N. M. Shah in his article "Ted Hughes and his Poetry" says—

> Poet, like the witch doctor among primitive people, is a healer of the illness of a community. The same is true of Ted Hughes. It was the opinion that the western civilization is plagued with an incurable illness" (135). So, the poet believed that it was his duty to cure the society from its incurable disease- "from the effects of the western civilization which knows nothing but hollow materialism." (135)

Hughes' poetry often portrays the hollowness of the western civilization and thus his poetry is marked by a sense of restlessness, darkness and violence which is often symbolized the animals or the birds. According to Ted Hughes -

> I prefer poem to make an effect on being heard, and I don't think that really a case of them being simple because for instance Eliot's poems make a tremendous effect when you hear them, and when I first heard them they did, and when I was too young to understand very much about them they had an enormous effect on me, and this was an effect quite apart from anything that I'd call you know, understanding, or being able to explain them, or knowing what was going on. It's just some sort of charge and charm and a series of operations that it works on you, and I think quite complicated poetry, such as Eliot's, can do this on you immediately. (Shah 135)

It can remind us of the Romantic poet Shelley who wanted revolution and wanted his poetry to spread his words which would have an effect on the common individual and thus the revolution would come. Poets, for him, are the unacknowledged legislators of the world and they have some duty to perform.

The beauty of Ted Hughes' poetry lies in the way he is dealing with nature- in his content and also in his language. And with those tools, he is creating a world of his own. Hughes is very much a modern poet as he feels the pain and sufferings like a modern man and his poems have all the qualities of modern poetry- his style, structure, his run-on lines, images, symbols, metaphor- everything proves him as one of the greatest modern poets.

2.8.4. Ted Hughes and the World of Animals

Animals always play a significant role in the poems of Ted Hughes, as they are used as the metaphor for the poet's philosophy of life. He has portrayed the animals as extremely dominating, powerful, and dauntless in any circumstances. According to Pier Paolo Piciucco, "He mirrors himself in animals and studies them in order to spot common elements enabling him to intersect the two distinct natures: his human spirit and the animal soul" (Concilio and Maria, ed. 188). Hughes uses animal imagery to suggest the inner self of human beings, and in his world of the animals, violence is also a very significant part. He has portrayed the violent nature of the animals and used the animals as weapons to express human nature and their concerns.

Most of his animal poems are collected in *The Hawk in the Rain* (1957), and Lupercal (1960), and we will understand a few poems from these collections to know about Hughes' dark, violent animal world. Thought Fox, written in the early stage of Ted Hughes' poetic career and published in the collection *The Hawk in the Rain*, is a very significant poem about the journey of writing a poem or the creative journey of a writer. The poem starts with- "I imagine this midnight moments forest:/ Something else is alive." So, the very first sentence of the poem begins to create the setting of the poem- it's midnight; it's dark, it's a forest. The poet himself mentioned that this was the first "animal" poem writtem bu him, but this poem is not only about darkness, loneliness etc., but also about the creativity and imaginative power of the poet. And here the animal is also not a very brutal or violent kind of animal- it is a fox, which is approaching slowly through the darkness, through the coldness, through the loneliness, and its nose touching the twigs and the leaves of the forest delicately, tenderly. So, we can very well sense or picturize the atmosphere or the setting of the poem which is the characterize feature of Ted Hughes. The poet has very purposefully used the words like "midnight," "loneliness," "darkness," "shadow" etc. in order to the world of his own. However, the fox is quite invisible at the beginning, but gradually it emerges out of the mysterious world. The fox is, of course, symbolic- it is the metaphor of creativity or poetic imagination or ideas which comes out of mysterious places like the dark, mystical forest. At the end of the poem the fox has come out of the forest clearly, and also the "blank page" of the poet is now printed- the poetic imagination or ideas has now found their expressions on the page. The poem ends with–

> Till, with a sudden sharp hot stink of fox
> It enters the dark hole of the head.
> The window is starless still; the clock ticks,
> The page is printed.

The poem "The Jaguar" is another significant poem which is included in the collection *The Hawk in the Rain*. The Jaguar picturizes not the forest, but a zoo- which is again a world of the animals, not natural, but artificial. The poem shows a different type of nature of the fierce, dangerous, wild animals. The daunting animals who roar in the forest are trapped in the cages and passing their days with lazy movements. The phrases like, "The apes yawn," "Fatigued with indolence," "tiger and lion lie still," "painted on a nursery wall" etc. suggest that the wild animals are spending a totally different life in the zoo. These animals are exhausted as they cannot go out of the cages and every single day, they are maintaining the same routine. But the poet is also giving a contrasting picture when he introduces another wild, ferocious, and fearless animal- the jaguar. The crowd is mesmerized when they stand before the jaguar's cage and witness the fierce show of the animal. The poet says, "At a cage where the crowd stands, stares, mesmerized, / As a child at a dream, at a jaguar hurrying enraged…" The jaguar is like it is in the wild and shows its natural instincts. The poem symbolizes human nature through the animals- different types of behaviors within a human being- as ferocious as the jaguar, or sometimes as exhausted or bored as the caged lion. The jaguar is standing for hope, freedom, and optimism for all the human beings in a frustrated, exhausted, and corrupted world. So, Ted Hughes is again bringing his animal world back in this poem, although in a different manner to show their diverse nature, and his typical words, "shriek," "stinks," "prison," "darkness," "fierce," "blood" etc. always suggest or indicate the peculiar world that he always wanted to create.

"The Hawk in the Rain" is another masterpiece by Ted Hughes which is published in the collection with the same title. Here, the poet does not portray the animals in the forest or in the zoo, but the animal bird, Hawk. And the world he is creating is not a very peaceful kind of world, but violent world drenched with rain and the hawk is witnessing everything from above. The hawk is a perfect bird in this world because it is not like the nightingale or the skylark of the Romantics. Here in this poem, we can also get the typical words and images of Ted Hughes, for instance, "drown," "hallucination," "heart's blood," "upside - down" etc.

So, Ted Hughes is, of course, a nature poet, but his nature is dominated or controlled by the animals and the birds or the animal instincts. His treatment of the nature is completely different from that of the Romantics. His world is not as beautiful or serene or blissful as the world of Wordsworth. His world is violent, dark, fearful and shadowy, where the jaguars or the hawks are ruling over. In an interview Hughes says, "My poems are not about violence but vitality. Animals are not violent; they are so much more completely controlled than men…?" (Shah 135)

2.8.5. Text: "Crow's Fall"

Crow's Fall

When Crow was white he decided the sun was too white.
He decided it glared much too whitely.
He decided to attack it and defeat it.

He got his strength up flush and in full glitter.
He clawed and fluffed his rage up.
He aimed his beak direct at the sun's centre.

He laughed himself to the centre of himself

And attacked.

At his battle cry trees grew suddenly old,
Shadows flattened.

But the sun brightened-
It brightened, and Crow returned charred black.

He opened his mouth but what came out was charred black.

"Up there," he managed,
"Where white is black and black is white, I won."

Glossary :

charred : burnt and black

2.8.5.1. About the Poem

Crow: From the Life and Songs of the Crow is a collection of poems by Ted Hughes about the character Crow, first published in 1970 by Faber and Faber, and the collection holds a very significant place in the life of Hughes. Hughes wrote the poems mostly between 1966 and 1969, after quite a non-productive period following the death of Sylvia Plath. The poet

himself called this collection his masterpiece and this was one of his most controversial works. Actually, the idea of writing this collection of poems was much broader than the published text. He wanted to write an epic folk-tale, but after the deaths of two very important persons of Hughes' life - Assia Wevill, who had an affair with Ted Hughes, and her daughter Shura in 1969 - he was unable to finish the project and published the selected poems with the title *Crow : From the Life and Songs of the Crow.* In 1972 the collection was reprinted with seven more poems. Then in the next year another edition was published with the addition of three more poems. And then after quite a few years, in 1997 he rearranged the collection including some more poems, and also removing some others. Hughes borrows many elements for this collection from Christian mythology. Since there are many poems in the collection which can be considered as an attack against Christianity, Crow was highly controversial.

2.8.5.2. Critical Analysis

In "Crow's Fall," the poet is talking about a crow which was white in colour, and also elaborates how it changes into black. The misfortune of the crow also suggests that one should remember one's limit and should not transgress it. The crow was white, but it occurred to him that the sun brighter than him. So, out of jealousy, he decided to attack the sun and it had fallen turning "charred black." So, the foolishness and over ambition of the bird led him to his downfall.

Lines 1 - 3 : In the first three lines, the poet has introduced a white crow, and in this very first stanza, the ambition of the bird is clearly evident. The crow had white feathers, so it was not a common bird - it had mythological associations. The colour white can suggest the purity of the bird; that it was in a pure state. However, it looked at the sun and understood that the sun was shining brighter - it was glaring much more brightly or whitely which was obvious. But it made the bird envious and at once decided to have a competition or a battle against the sun. He was determined to attack it and, of course, defeat it. And in this way the crow could show the world that it was more powerful and beautiful than the sun. This battle between the crow and the sun might refer to the story of Satan. If the sun is the symbol of the God, the crow is obviously indicating towards Satan. Like Satan, the crow has also transgressed its limit and tried to defeat the sun to prove its power. But at the end we can also witness the failure of the crow. Similarly, we also know the fate of Satan and the fallen angels in the Bible.

Lines 4 - 6 : The crow has started its preparation for the attack. He is getting the strength and he "clawed and fluffed his rage up." The stanza shows the anger, jealousy, and determination of the bird that he would surely defeat the sun. The third line is very powerful as it suggests that the crow is not at all afraid of the sun and its brightness. He is pointing his beak directly at the

centre of the sun. so, he is ready for the battle. “Direct” is the key word here which provides all the power in the sentence.

Lines 7 & 8 : Just before the attack he is laughing at the centre. This laugh perhaps suggests the over confidence of the crow - the self-belief of the bird that he will surely win the battle. And then he attacked.

Lines 9 - 12 : Then the great battle has begun but as soon as the battle has started, the trees have started to grow old, and there are shadows everywhere. As the crow has gone nearer to the sun, the sun has been hidden for sometimes by the crow’s body, and that's why the trees look like they have grown old for the shadows around them. But this happened temporarily. The sun has again started getting brighter and brighter, and the beauty and the truth is established. The crow is defeated and so is his ridiculous determination and over ambition. It comes back “charred black.” So, the purity, anger, jealousy, determination, hollowness - everything has turned into “charred black.”

Lines 13 - 15 : The crow has opened its mouth perhaps to say something, but all it could come out was again “charred black.” So, all the whiteness has turned into blackness. Finally, the poem is ending with the words of the crow itself. Even after the fall, he still believes that he has own. He still cannot differentiate between black and white. But, actually the arrogance of the over reacher crow is defeated completely, not the brightness of the sun.

2.8.5.3. Key Themes

“Crow’s Fall” by Ted Hughes is poem about arrogance, over confidence, hollowness and jealousy, and also the defeat of all of these. The title of the poem is also very appropriate as it refers to the Biblical allusions. The crow’s fall clearly indicates Adam's fall, who also transgressed his limits and after falling into the trap of the Satan, he ate the forbidden fruit, and then we witnessed his fall from the heaven. Whereas the foolishness and the lack of judgement of the crow can be associated with Adam, the arrogance, the sense of superiority, anger - these the qualities of the bird. The attack of the crow can also be considered as the metaphor of human desire of conquering everything - the nature, the world. The Crow has always been referred with “he.” and not with “it” which might also suggest personification - that the bird is being compared with human being and their never-ending desire. The poem is extremely symbolical because not only “Crow’s Fall,” but the whole collection is full of Biblical imagery. The crow, the sun, the fall - everything has their associations with Christianity. The poem is also marked by a typical energy or vitality which can be found perhaps in every poem of Ted Hughes. The sun is always powerful and bright, but the crow is also full of energy and determination. It is

not afraid of pointing its beak directly at the centre of the sun. The key words of the poem - "glare," "attack," "clawed," "fluffed," "rage" etc. suggest the indomitable power of the bird who is ready for the attack. The poem is also providing the typical images of Ted Hughes or rather I would say, black images. Always the atmosphere of Hughes' poetry is very gloomy and dark. "Crow's Fall" starts with the usual brightness of the sun, but this brightness is also the source of the darkness in the poem. The crow is envious only because of the sun's whiteness, and prepares for the attack which results in the blackness at the end. When the crow has attacked, the trees have suddenly grown old because of the shadows created by the bird. This also suggests that the sun is the source of life and without the brightness of the sun, the life on the earth is not possible. So, this is obviously the foolishness of the crow to have a competition with the all-mighty sun. At the end of the poem, we find the defeated crow with the image of "charred black". The bird is no longer white - it is burnt, it's black. This particular image has created all the blackness and darkness in the poem because it is not simply black - it's charred black. It is like the burnt coal. The poem has a visual effect, and we can clearly visualise the events and the objects of the poem — the rage of the bird, the trees growing old, the charred black crow. We can create these pictures in our mind and this is the power of the poet. His poems are not only black or dark or gloomy, but the readers can still visualize the darkness, and can sense the extreme power which is coming out of the darkness in the forms of crows or foxes or hawks or other animals. The tone of the poem is extremely energetic which anticipates the plight of the crow. The poem ends with the ignorance and also the arrogance of the crow because even after the defeat, and even after losing all the whiteness, the bird is still not feeling guilty of his deed — he is still within his concept of superiority.

The poem is written in free verse which is a very common aspect of Hughes' poetry. The poem has 15 lines with different lengths and Hughes always has the tendency to use run-on lines to create the mood and the atmosphere of his poetic world. The poem has few small stanzas, but it can be divided into two sections - the preparation of the crow for the attack and then the attack and the fall. The poet has also used literary devices like anaphora which can be found in the lines 3,4,5 which are beginning with "He." And "He" is also referring to personification. The crow, from the very opening line, has been personified. The tree is also personified in the poem as it is said that the trees are growing old. And the most significant literary device in the poem is the metaphor - the whole poem is metaphorical and symbolical. So, "Crow's Fall" is very much a modern poem as it has all the characteristics and the images of the modern poetry.

2.8.6. Text: "Hawk Roosting"

Hawk Roosting

I sit in the top of the wood, my eyes closed.
Inaction, no falsifying dream
Between my hooked head and hooked feet:
Or in sleep rehearse perfect kills and eat.

The convenience of the high trees!
The air's buoyancy and the sun's ray
Are of advantage to me;
And the earth's face upward for my inspection.

My feet are locked upon the rough bark.
It took the whole of Creation
To produce my foot, my each feather:
Now I hold Creation in my foot

Or fly up, and revolve it all slowly -
I kill where I please because it is all mine.
There is no sophistry in my body:
My manners are tearing off heads -

The allotment of death.
For the one path of my flight is direct
Through the bones of the living.
No arguments assert my right:

The sun is behind me.
Nothing has changed since I began.
My eye has permitted no change.
I am going to keep things like this.

Glossary :

buoyancy : the ability to float in water and other fluid

Creation : God's creation

2.8.6.1. About the Poem

"Hawk Roosting" is included by Ted Hughes in his second collection of poems, *Lupercal*, which has been published in 1960. Hughes is already an acclaimed poet with his publication of the first collection *The Hawk in the Rain* (1957). "Hawk Roosting" is, as we can understand, one of his earlier poems where he has used animals to suggest the human instinct and nature. In this poem hawk is the first person speaker, who is speaking primarily about instinctual actions. The poet has actually created a monologue of a hawk in the poem. The hawk has been presented here as something very powerful, almost like the God, who can kill and eat anything he wants. The poem is marked by a tension between the natural world and the human world.

2.8.6.2. Critical Analysis

Lines 1 - 4 : In the first stanza, the readers can find the hawk sitting on the top branch of a tree, closing his eyes, like he is in meditation. It is his roosting time. He is sitting peacefully and not afraid of anything around him. He in in secured place from where he can observe the whole forest. Then in the third line, we can get his physical features - "hooked head and hooked feet" shows the sharpness of the hawk's beak and claws. So, it is not like other common, beautiful birds - it is dangerous and can kill anything. In the fourth line, the reader can sense the confidence and the power of the hawk who says that he can kill anything perfectly even in sleep. So, from the very first stanza, it is evident that the poem is written from the perspective of the hawk and in first person "I."

Lines 5 - 8 : Now, in the second stanza, the hawk is listing the advantages of sitting on the highest branch of a tall tree. The air is buoyant and the sun's ray is also good on the top. And most importantly, this is a perfect place to inspect or observe the earth and to find the prey. Everything is convenient for the hawk and how easy life is for him.

Lines 9 - 12 : Like the first stanza, here also the reader can find the physical descriptions of the hawk. Its feet are locked on the branches and the bird is in a safe position. So, the sharpness of the feet is being emphasized. In the second line, "Creation" is written with the capital letter to suggest the God - everything is God's creation. And it is also the same God who took all His time to create the hawk. But now the role is reversing - the hawk has now become all powerful. The last line is extremely powerful when the hawk says, "Now I hold Creation in my foot." This is the arrogance - this is the supremacy of the hawk. He is now

equal to the God. This arrogance can be compared with the arrogance of the crow in the other poem "Crow's Fall."

Lines 13 - 16 : The hawk is now flying slowly and talking about his power. He says that he can kill his prey anywhere he wants because everything belongs to him. He is the God. And the bird does not have deception or sophistication. Its manner in very straight forward - just to tear off the heads. The poem is now gradually becoming more powerful and violent.

Lines 17 - 20 : The first line in this stanza is the continuation of the previous stanza which also talks about death. The hawk is very much God-like, and he is very certain about his work. He is the one who will decide who is going to die and who is going to live. There is no need of any arguments or anything because he is all powerful.

Lines 21 - 24 : The last stanza also shows the determination and arrogance of the hawk. It does not want to change itself or anything - whatever he is doing is right according to him and he wants to continue in the same way. From the beginning of the Creation nothing has changed till now because the hawk has not allowed to change. The first line of the stanza is again showing the superiority of the bird - the sun is setting and it is now behind the hawk. So, the poem ends with the ego and arrogance of the hawk— he is like the God, the creator of the universe.

2.8.6.3. Key Themes

"Hawk Roosting" is again a very powerful and violent animal poem by Ted Hughes, which portrays the hawk as equal to the God. Hughes remarked on this poem— "The poem of mine usually cited for violence is *Hawk Roosting*, this drowsy hawk sitting in a wood and talking to itself. That bird is accused of being a Fascist, the symbol of some horrible genocidal dictator. Actually, what I had in mind was that in this hawk Nature was thinking. Simply Nature."

The poet has created a monologue of the hawk who is sitting peacefully and observing everything like the God. The title "Hawk Roosting" is also very significant because it provides the calm and composed picture of the hawk, yet the comments of the bird are so powerful, violent and arrogant. From the very first stanza, the bird has been portrayed as a cold-blooded murderer, who can kill his prey even in sleep. The image of the hawk is also not very beautiful in this stanza — "hooked head and hooked feet" is suggesting the physical strength of the bird. Then the hawk continues to show his powers and from the beginning, the hawk has been personified as he is also the narrator of the poem. In the third stanza, the power and arrogance of the hawk has reached to the peak — he is destroying the very order or the hierarchy of the

universe. The God has created the universe where hawk is a small part. But now, the hawk says - "Now I hold Creation in my foot." The Capital "C" is the ultimate creator, the God, but He is or the whole Creation is now under the feet of the hawk. He says that his manner is simple to tear off the heads and he would decide whom to kill and whom to spare.

The power and the violence of the poem is coming out of the language and the images Hughes is using. Images like "tearing off heads," "locked upon the rough bark," "bones of the living" etc. suggest the theme of the poem which is extremely violent and cruel. The key words and the phrases of the poem are - "perfected kills," "Creation," "tearing off," "allotment of death" etc. which has created the dark and bloody atmosphere in the poem. Death and blood are at the heart of the poem. This is a typical unromantic animal poem by Hughes, which is marked by the violence and cruelty and everything is being established by the language. There is repetition of some words, for instance, "hooked" appears twice in the first stanza, the word "kill" is also repeated in the poem, which strengthens the power of the hawk and also the theme of the poem. The "I" in the last sentence of the poem has permanently established the power and superiority of the hawk - he is the God and he wants to keep things as they are.

The poem has six quatrains and written in free verse. The tone of the poem is a little peaceful at the beginning as the hawk is closing his eyes and speaking in drowsy, but it is getting stronger and violent as the poem progresses. "Hawk Roosting" is very much similar to the other poem "Crow's Fall," because both the birds are extremely arrogant and are trying to prove their superiority. When the hawk is saying, "The sun is behind me," we are at once reminded of the crow who wants to prove the sun inferior.

2.8.7. Summing Up

So, Ted Hughes is one of the very few English poets who have written with so much power. In this chapter, we have started with the biographical details of the poet, and then moved on to his poetic career - the themes of his poetry, his own style and so on. I have also taken a few of his poems as references to understand the world or the environment Hughes wanted to create. Then, the two poems which we have in the syllabus - Crow's Fall and Hawk Roosting, have been analysed extensively with thematic explanations and critical comments. And lastly there will be some questions on the two poems.

2.8.8. Comprehension Questions

Short Answer Type Questions:

1. Why did the crow decide to attack the sun?

2. Why has the poet used capital letter in the word "Creation" in Hawk Roosting?

3. Why did the trees grow old in " Crow's Fall ?"

Medium Answer Type Questions:

1. Explain the image - "charred black"

2. What does the poet mean by "The sun is behind me?"

3. How could the hawk "rehearse perfect kills?"

Long Answer Type Questions :

1. Write the significance of the title "Crow's Fall."

2. "I am going to keep things like this" - Explain.

3. Write an essay on the images used by Ted Hughes in Crow's Fall and Hawk Roosting.

2.8.9. Suggested Readings

Concilio, Carmen, and Maria Festa, editors. *Word and Image: In Literature and the Visual Arts*. Mimesis International, 2016.

Shah, N M. Ted Hughes and His Poetry. *International Journal of English Literature and Social Sciences*, vol. 6, no. 5, IJELS, 2021.

Gifford, Terry. Ted Hughes. *Routledge*, 2009.

Unit 9 ❐ Seamus Heaney: “Digging” and “Casualty”

Structure

2.9.1. Objectives

This Unit introduces the learner to Seamus Heaney as a poet with special emphasis on two of his poems, ‘Digging’ and “Casualty”.

2.9.2. Introduction

Seamus Heaney (1939-2013) is one of the greatest voices of the 20th century in the English language. Heaney wrote volumes of poetry and edited several anthologies. He also published several works of criticism. Heaney was a professor of poetry and he taught at the universities of California and Harvard and also served as Oxford Professor of Poetry. Heaney was raised in Northern Ireland and belonged to an agricultural family. He remained attached to his rural roots throughout his poetic career and his poem ‘Digging’ is a celebration of his heritage and heartfelt appreciation of the legacy of his family. He admires the legacy that his forebears bequeathed to him and commemorates it by using his tool of choosing, the pen to craft a poem

that eminently acclaims that legacy. Therefore, the poem draws on the themes of tradition, history, legacy and time.

Seamus Heaney, being born in a Roman Catholic family in Northern Ireland remained particularly aware of the religious and political divisions of his country which subjected the society to violence and continuing conflicts. He navigated the fine line between his responsibility as an articulate member of society to express his opinions and his freedom as an artist to write what he wanted to. Therefore, Heaney's poems are never overtly political but they express the anguish caused in society and its effects on humanity. A defining factor of Heaney's poetry is his rural background which anchored him as a poet. Even though Heaney travelled and lived outside his native Mossbawn, the life he lived there remained an immutable and significant part of him despite his physical distance. This has been an oft-occurring theme in his oeuvre. Heaney was ever keenly aware of his Gaelic heritage, its cultural and political significance and wove it in his poetry seamlessly. Heaney was one poet who, which remaining popular with the general reading public, was admired by the critics.

Throughout his illustrious career Heaney wrote several volumes which include *Wintering Out* (1973) and *North* (1975), *The Haw Lantern* (1987), *Selected Poems, 1966-1987* (1990), *Opened Ground: Selected Poems, 1966-1996* (1998), *District and Circle* (2006) won the T.S. Eliot Prize. In 2000 he published a definitive translation of *Beowulf*. As a prolific critic, Heaney was known for his prose writings as well. His *Finders Keepers : Selected Prose, 1971-2001* (2002) won the Truman Capote Award for Literary Criticism.

He won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1955 for "*for works of lyrical beauty and ethical depth, which exalt everyday miracles and the living past.*" His nobel acceptance speech begins with a wistful and poetic recollection of his childhood days spent in his rural home. His poetry incorporates the everyday, political issues of Ireland, nature, bucolic tradition, memory within a larger historical frame to speak of humanity and human destiny. Heaney's work is a celebration of humanity as it transcends adversities through the power of poetry. As the poet himself said in his Nobel acceptance speech that it lies in poetry's power "to persuade that vulnerable part of our consciousness of its rightness in spite of the evidence of wrongness all around it, the power to remind us that we are hunters and gatherers of values, that our very solitudes and distresses are creditable, in so far as they, too, are an earnest of our veritable human being."

2.9.3. Text: “Digging”

Digging

Between my finger and my thumb
The squat pen rests; snug as a gun.

Under my window, a clean rasping sound
When the spade sinks into gravelly ground:
My father, digging. I look down

Till his straining rump among the flowerbeds
Bends low, comes up twenty years away
Stooping in rhythm through potato drills
Where he was digging.

The coarse boot nestled on the lug, the shaft
Against the inside knee was levered firmly.
He rooted out tall tops, buried the bright edge deep
To scatter new potatoes that we picked,
Loving their cool hardness in our hands.

By God, the old man could handle a spade.
Just like his old man.

My grandfather cut more turf in a day
Than any other man on Toner's bog.
Once I carried him milk in a bottle
Corked sloppily with paper. He straightened up
To drink it, then fell to right away
Nicking and slicing neatly, heaving sods
Over his shoulder, going down and down
For the good turf. Digging.

The cold smell of potato mould, the squelch and slap
Of soggy peat, the curt cuts of an edge
Through living roots awaken in my head.
But I've no spade to follow men like them.

Between my finger and my thumb
The squat pen rests.
I'll dig with it.

Glossary :

squat pen : a fat stubby fountain pen

turf : grass and the surface layer of earth held together by its roots

squelch : make a soft sucking siund such as that made by treading heavily through mud

soggy : wet and soft

2.9.3.1. Analysis of the Text

Between my finger and my thumb

The squat pen rests; snug as a gun.

'Digging' is an autobiographical poem. Seamus Heaney was raised in County Derry in Nothern Ireland. He belonged to an agricultural family. His father, in addition to being a cattle dealer owned and worked on his farm. Heaney, being intellectually endowed, won a scholarship and travelled to the city. Thus he was removed from the life of farm labour to one of intellectual pursuit. The poet spoke of his journey as being shifted from "the earth of farm labour to the heaven of education." Even though the poet physically shifted from his Mossbawn home, psychologically he remained permanently rooted to his childhood home, his Gaelic heritage, his rural working class origins and the beauty of that life. In this poem Heaney celebrates those connections. The poet is an intellectual. His instrument of choice is the pen which is as potent as a gun for the poet. The burly pen sits comfortably in the poet's hand. The poet devotes an entire stanza to express his comfort and ease with the instrument of his choice. He is as comfortable and skilful which his tool as is his father with his spade. The poet will use his instrument of choice which reposes in his hand skilfully to express himself.

Under my window, a clean rasping sound
When the spade sinks into gravelly ground:
My father, digging.

As the poet sits contemplating with his pen in his hand, his father engages in productive physical labour beneath his window. While poet has chosen his pen, his father has retained the spade and works the earth. The poet's father is accomplished at his work for the poet mentions a 'clean rasping sound' as his father digs through the tough gravelly soil. It is a simple but arduous task. However, the father's quiet dedicated work ethic captures the poet's attention. The use of the present tense in the simple and continuous forms suggests an ongoing activity, that of working with the land to gain sustenance. Thus the poet stays indoors drawing inspiration for his poetry from the acts of his father, out in the garden, working through the earth.

I look down
Till his straining rump among the flowerbeds
Bends low, comes up twenty years away
Stooping in rhythm through potato drills
Where he was digging.

The poet looks down and observes his father toiling in the garden, tending to the flowerbeds. The scene makes the poet recall a memory from twenty years back where his father was working in the fields tending to rows of planted potatoes. The poet is full of admiration for his diligent and assiduous father. The father has been working in the same manner over the years. The poet shifts from the present to the past tense. He writes, 'he was digging', to indicate the shift from observing his father at work at present to a similar memory from the poet's childhood. This demonstrates that the father has been labouring in the same manner for the past two decades, following the same pattern, as if working to a rhythm. The poet recalls his father planting and harvesting potatoes which is the staple of Ireland indicating the father's attention to crucial aspects of living as he draws forth sustenance from the land to nurture his family.

The coarse boot nestled on the lug, the shaft
Against the inside knee was levered firmly.

The poet has carefully observes the simple act of digging and invests a quotidian act with significance. The poet is aware of the technicalities associated with digging. The poet's father being a skilled workman rests his well-worn boot on the lug of the spade's shaft and while

maintaining his balance and uses his weight to drive the blade of the spade through the hard, stony earth. The father's boot is in poor condition as he as used those pairs of boots for strenuous labour on the farm for several years.

The poet's father is a dedicated, sturdy workman...

He rooted out tall tops, buried the bright edge deep
To scatter new potatoes that we picked,
Loving their cool hardness in our hands.

The poet is still dwelling on the childhood memory he has retrieved which he uses to ruminate on his father"s work ethic and his ties to the land. The poet recalls that his father dug into the potato drill and then harvested the larger potatoes. The poet's father drove the bright sharp rim of the spade to scatter the potatoes that were picked by the poet and his siblings. Till now, the poet had remained a keen, disinterested observer but unobtrusively the poet implants himself in the memory as an active participant, no longer observing from the outside. However, as Heaney was the eldest of nine children and grew up in his family farm, so the lines may as well draw on actual experiences where he and his siblings participated in agricultural work with their father. He recalls being delighted along with his siblings as they held the cold hard potatoes in their hands after removing them from the earth. This feeling of holding potatoes can be compared to the feeling the poet has as he holds his pen.

By God, the old man could handle a spade.
Just like his old man.

This stanza, like the opening stanza is composed of two lines and emphasises an individual," in this case the speaker's father's, comfort with and skill at wielding the tool of his choosing. The poem opens with the poet expressing confidence in the tool he has selected for himself, the pen, which defines his outlook to life. His father, on the other hand is a farmer tilling the land. Each individual is accomplished in his own field just as the poet is adroit in his. The poet's attitude to his father is refreshing as he is neither condescending nor elitist. Instead, the poet expresses his sincere appreciation and pure admiration for his father's capabilities. The depth of the poet's admiration can be gauged from his exclaimation 'By God.' He honours his forebears and his poem can be read as a tribute to them and their legacy. Here the poet's attitude to agricultural workers is similar to that of Wordsworth. For, instance Wordsworth spoke admirably of a girl toiling away in the fields in 'The Solitary Reaper'. The poet's deep approbation towards his father's abilities almost reaches veneration and he recalls his grandfather

working with his tools in a similar fashion, with equal skill and proficiency. Expertise with farmwork and the mastery in wielding tools relating to country life became a familial legacy for the poet, a legacy he chose not to inherit. The poet records with great enthusiasm that his forebears, his father and grandfather, who flourished in the countryside achieved mastery over their craft. Even though he did not follow in their footsteps and chose to wield a pen instead of a spade, the poet proudly celebrates his legacy speaking of the dignity of labour. He is deeply appreciative of his family tradition and he will contribute towards it differently, by composing panegyrics to that life and legacy.

My grandfather cut more turf in a day

Than any other man on Toner's bog.

The poet continues to express his admiration for his grandfather travelling farther back into family history. He recalls his grandfather working in the fields, again gigging through the hard earth, doing more work in a day than any other man. The grandfather is accomplished in his chosen area of work and this glimpse from the past buttresses the post's opinion of his family bring skilled at work. The grandfather is digging for peat also known as turf, which is an organic layer in soil containing partially decomposed plant matter, extracted for use as fuel and fertiliser. The grandfather is a competent, powerful worker who is able to laboriously dig out more peat than any other man. The grandfather digs not to make flower beds or to harvest potatoes. The poet associates him with the lard labour of digging out fuel which will be used for cooking and heating the home. While the poet's father invests some time in decorative purposes by working on flowerbeds, the grandfather is more interested in the hard practicalities of life. By mentioning 'Toner's Bog' the poet is localising the poem, situating his family history with certain specific locations. As peat is found in marshes and bogs, this may be a real or even a representative area to mine peat. The poet demonstrates that the apparent humble act of digging nurtures supports life and ensures its continuation.

Once I carried him milk in a bottle

Corked sloppily with paper.

The poet recalls a time when he carried milk in a bottle to the place where his grandfather was digging for peat. The poet silos into another memory where he shares space with his grandfather. It is interesting to note that the poet actually witnesses his grandfather toiling away at the bog which indicated that even at an advanced age the grandfather retained his strength, his work ethics and kept working extracting the peat from the marsh. The grandfather takes a brief break to drink the milk, lovingly brought to him. The bottle of milk has been sealed in a

cursory, slovenly manner and stoppered with paper. The poet's family is not financially well off and they do the bare minimum that practicality demands. The scene puts the poet and the grandfather in one frame. The grandson of the peat-digger will grow to become a renowned poet but shall remain grounded in his rural childhood and celebrate that life through poetry. That will be the poet's contribution to family tradition.

He straightened up
To drink it, then fell to right away
Nicking and slicing neatly, heaving sods
Over his shoulder, going down and down
For the good turf. Digging.

On observing the poet, the poet's grandfather stopped his work, took a brief break from his gruelling work to ingest his sustenance. Then, immediately he returned to working arduously, digging the turf, extracting the peat. The poet notes that the grandfather is a resilient strong man. He is not one who indulges in long moments of respite. He is completely invested in the work he is doing and wishes to make optimum use of the time given to him. The grandfather does not take the time to chat with his grandson or grant himself a much earned rest. Instead he quickly returns to the rhythm of this work to hack away at the peat deposit. The poet observes that the manual process of peat extraction not only requires punishing labour but also a mastery of the right technique. The grandfather knows where to strike, cut, slice with consummate skill. The grandfather flings away the upper layer of the peat (sods) away over his shoulder and digs further down for the good quality peat which will make good fertiliser or good fuel depending on requirement. The enjambment in the lines enact the difficult and hard activity of digging through the earth in a continuous, steady fashion to gain sustenance for the family. The line, 'going down and down' not only speaks of the grandfather's constant actions on the bog but it also reflects the unbroken family tradition of working the earth assiduously, skilfully to draw sustenance from it.

The cold smell of potato mould, the squelch and slap
Of soggy peat, the curt cuts of an edge

The speaker remembers the empirical feel of potato farming and peat harvesting. The experiences that cause him to reach back into history are sill visceral for the poet. The poet's childhood memories are vivid. He can still smell the mound of recently harvested potatoes. He recalls the sound as peat, after being dug out is flung on the muddy bog. He even recalls the

sound that was made when his grandfather cut out the peat. The laborious work done by his forebears forms an important part of his memories and his worldview.

Through living roots awaken in my head.

But I've no spade to follow men like them.

The poet's roots clearly lie in the land where he was raised, the land that grounds his poetry. As he recalls the harvesting of roots (from) the land and the acts of digging that nurtures his family, he is fondly remembering his own roots, his heritage, his family traditions, his legacy , of which he is proud, which defines his identity as a poet. Despite his deep admiration for the capabilities of his forebears he does not partake of that legacy. He accepts it, is highly appreciative of it, but does not follow his father literally in that particular line of work. The words 'men like them' illustrate the pride the poet takes in being descended from strong, dedicated workmen. He holds them in the highest esteem, is keenly aware of his family tradition but decides not to contribute to it like his father did. His tool of choosing is not the spade.

Between my finger and my thumb

The squat pen rests.

I'll dig with it.

The poet does not regret distancing himself from his family's line of work. He decides to contribute to his family legacy, in his own way, through the pen, instead of the spade. He will 'dig' as well, but metaphorically. This does not make him an outsider to his family, nor does he reject his family traditions by not taking his place after his father in digging the earth. He will not dig using a spade instead he will use a pen which he can wield with equal comfort and confidence to unearth wisdom. Just as his forebears tilled the earth to draw sustenance from it, he will use his pen to compose poetry to draw sustenance from it.

2.9.3.2. Critical Appreciation

Seamus Heaney celebrates his heritage and his chosen vocation as a poet locating his experiences within the overall frame of history and memory. The poem opens and concludes, echoing similar thoughts to indicate the cyclical nature of time and the value of family tradition and legacy as it binds generations together. The poet's celebration of his legacy is not a submission to an established way of being. Though he deeply admires the ties his family had to the land, working it and drawing sustenance from it, he prefers to contribute to that legacy through poetry. The poet takes full ownership of his vocation and ties his chosen way to the

agricultural tradition of his family. The poet uses the metaphor of the tool, the pen and the spade to symbolise an entire way of life and the value system associated with it skilfully weaving them in the same vein, where poetry celebrates the dignity, even beauty of physical work described in vivid detail.

The poem opens with the poet affirming his chosen vocation by pronouncing his faith in his tool of choosing, the pen, which he holds comfortably in his hand. He hears a rasping sound as his father works in the garden digging through the earth saturated with pebbles. The rasping sound arises from the metal of the spade cutting through the stony soil. The poet recalls two memories, one, his father's and another of his grandfather cutting through the earth, harvesting potatoes and peat. Both men are endowed with considerable strength and skill. The poet expresses admiration bordering on wonder at the capability of his forebears to labour ceaselessly through the years, dig through the earth. The poet's evocative recollection of childhood moments spent in the company of his father and grandfather labouring away in the field, illustrates the value he places on those memories and the family history being formed in those moments. The poet's images are vibrant, visceral and, even though mined from the distant past, feel freshly minted as the poet is still able to feel the cold hardness of the potatoes and the squelch of the newly dug peat. The poet recalls the olfactory, tactile sensations, the sounds and sights he experienced as a child on the farm. Therefore, the poet is aware of his roots and embraces them but chooses not to build his identity entirely on inherited family legacy. The post values family tradition, anchors himself and his poetry to his childhood memories but consciously builds his identity as a poet. He admits he is different from his forebears but only in selecting his tool. He chose the pen while they preferred the spade. However, he has the greatest admiration for their work ethic and capability. The poet explores man's relationship with the earth and how it is harnessed to nurture one's family. Even if he is removed from the rural world, his heart is anchored to it and continues to inspire his poetry.

The poet uses a combination of conversational and poetic language to ruminate on profound themes like history and legacy. Heaney uses enjambment to meld various timelines, to stress the continuity of actions and to suggest the organic unity of memory which though made up of recollections of different events becomes a single whole. The poet rarely uses rhyme, rather relies on assonance and run-on lines to craft cadence and music in his composition. The structure of the poem reflects the theme of the poem moulding it into a unified whole. The stanzas are of two, three, six or more lines depending on the requirement of the thought. Therefore structure has been subordinated to ideas. The first and the final stanza, for instance, affirm the poet's identity, which is why they have been ket as separate stanzas and they reflect each other.

2.9.4. Text: "Casualty"

Casualty

I

He would drink by himself
And raise a weathered thumb
Towards the high shelf,
Calling another rum
And blackcurrant, without
Having to raise his voice,
Or order a quick stout
By a lifting of the eyes
And a discreet dumb-show
Of pulling off the top;
At closing time would go
In waders and peaked cap
Into the showery dark,
A dole-kept breadwinner
But a natural for work.
I loved his whole manner,
Sure-footed but too sly,
His deadpan sidling tact,
His fisherman's quick eye
And turned observant back.

Incomprehensible
To him, my other life.
Sometimes, on the high stool,
Too busy with his knife
At a tobacco plug
And not meeting my eye,

In the pause after a slug
He mentioned poetry.
We would be on our own
And, always politic
And shy of condescension,
I would manage by some trick
To switch the talk to eels
Or lore of the horse and cart
Or the Provisionals.

But my tentative art
His turned back watches too:
He was blown to bits
Out drinking in a curfew
Others obeyed, three nights
After they shot dead
The thirteen men in Derry.
PARAS THIRTEEN, the walls said,
BOGSIDE NIL. That Wednesday
Everyone held
His breath and trembled.

II

It was a day of cold
Raw silence, wind-blown
surplice and soutane:
Rained-on, flower-laden
Coffin after coffin
Seemed to float from the door
Of the packed cathedral
Like blossoms on slow water.

The common funeral
Unrolled its swaddling band,
Lapping, tightening
Till we were braced and bound
Like brothers in a ring.

But he would not be held
At home by his own crowd
Whatever threats were phoned,
Whatever black flags waved.
I see him as he turned
In that bombed offending place,
Remorse fused with terror
In his still knowable face,
His cornered outfaced stare
Blinding in the flash.

He had gone miles away
For he drank like a fish
Nightly, naturally
Swimming towards the lure
Of warm lit-up places,
The blurred mesh and murmur
Drifting among glasses
In the gregarious smoke.
How culpable was he
That last night when he broke
Our tribe's complicity?
'Now, you're supposed to be
An educated man,'
I hear him say. 'Puzzle me
The right answer to that one.'

III

I missed his funeral,
Those quiet walkers
And sideways talkers
Shoaling out of his lane
To the respectable
Purring of the hearse...
They move in equal pace
With the habitual
Slow consolation
Of a dawdling engine,
The line lifted, hand
Over fist, cold sunshine
On the water, the land
Banked under fog: that morning
I was taken in his boat,
The Screw purling, turning
Indolent fathoms white,
I tasted freedom with him.
To get out early, haul
Steadily off the bottom,
Dispraise the catch, and smile
As you find a rhythm
Working you, slow mile by mile,
Into your proper haunt
Somewhere, well out, beyond...

Dawn-sniffing revenant,
Plodder through midnight rain,
Question me again..

Glossary :

weathered : worn by long exposure to the atmosphere

waders : high waterproof boots

peaked-cap : headgear worn by the armed forces of many nations

indolent : wanting to avoid activity or exertion

plodder : a person who walks doggedly and slowly with heavy steps

2.9.4.1. Analysis of the Text

He would drink by himself…

Having to raise his voice

The poem is Heaney's response to the massacre of Bloody Sunday which occurred on 30 January, Sunday in 1972 in the city of Derry in Northern Ireland. In 1971, the government implemented a law by which the authorities could imprison anyone without trial. On 30 January people, all Irish Roman Catholics, gathered to take part in a civil rights march to protest against governmental arbitrariness. The British paramilitary troops opened fire indiscriminately on the unarmed demonstrators killing thirteen on the spot and severely injuring one citizen who died later. A number of demonstrators were injured. Though the British government ordered inquiries, no individual was held accountable for the murders. The incident led to an increase in support for the Irish National Army. The poem was written in this context. Seamus Heaney was painfully aware of the deep faultlines in Irish society, its religious and political divisions and as a poet he did not shy from his social obligations as a voice of the people. The poet's response is a personal one but that personal emotion is symbolic of the pain of an entire community deprived of the normal trajectory of life, subjected to ceaseless violence.

The poem opens with the poet speaking of his friend who enjoyed consumption of alcohol. For him, drinking was not a social activity rather a personal pastime. He would consume alcohol by himself and communicate to the staff present about his requirements. The poet says he would raise a 'weathered thumb.' The epithet indicates that the man in question was not a sophisticated member of society, rather plebeian and honest about his requirements. He raises the same rough hands to gesture to the keepers of the tavern about his alcohol of choice. He is such a regular customer that the employees can cater to him without him having to speak his requests. Therefore this is a man who consumes alcohol in an unfettered manner, a habit which will causes his doom.

Or order a quick stout…

Of pulling off the top;

The poet's friend would also order the alcohol of his choice by raising his eyes. A stout is a kind of dark beer. If slight hand gestures and facial expressions did not work, then he would mime his requirements quietly, in an unobtrusive manner in a 'dumb-show,' using a combination of gestures and expressions to convey his expectations to the staff of the establishment he was in.

At closing time would go…

But a natural for work.

The poet's friend was given to excessive indulgence in the consumption of alcohol. He would stay on in the establishment of his choosing till the tavern closed for the day. Then he would leave the establishment in waterproof boots and a peaked cap and walk into the all enveloping night of the dark as it rained. The man did not have a successful career, in fact wasn't even employed. He lived on the benefits handed out by the government for those without work. However, he had the capabilities and traits of a good workman. He was naturally inclined for work. The poet's friend thus emerges as an unemployed working class man, given to excessive consumption of alcohol, possessing the right qualities for work but lacking the ability to find gainful employment.

I loved his whole manner…

And turned observant back.

The indulgent poet loved his friend entirely despite his frailties and shortcomings. The poet preferred the honest, genuine nature of his friend despite his excesses. The poet amusingly mentions the mannerisms of his friend. He knew how to walk firmly, being sure-footed but also sly. His impassive, withdrawn manner, his caution, tactfulness and a keen eye all made him the person the poet adored. He never attracted attention to himself, remaining unassuming and modest. A detailed description of his friend allows the audience to relate emphatically with the person being described, so the poet's pain can be touchingly conveyed.

Incomprehensible

To him, my other life.

The poet states that his literary life was beyond the comprehension of his friend. Therefore the moments the poet spent with his friend was completely unconnected with his life as a literary

master and observant critic, a professor in the academia. The poet's friend belonged to a social and intellectual circle that was utterly removed from the poet's literary life. While the poet inhabited both spaces with ease, the literary aspect was beyond the intellectual capacity of his friend. The friend also couldn't comprehend why a celebrated poet would associate with an unemployed man with such genuine amicability.

Sometimes, on the high stool…

He mentioned poetry.

The poet sometimes spotted his friend sitting on a high stool at the tavern busy arranging tobacco into a cigarette or into square shapes, too preoccupied to look at the poet. In between arranging tobacco into cigarettes he would stop and speak to the poet briefly about poetry.

We would be on our own…

Or the Provisionals.

The poet and his friend would spend most of their time by themselves, ever deep in conversation, enjoying every moment that they spent with each other, enacting the jovial camaraderie that they felt off every moment gifted to them. The thoughtful poet, to avoid appearing patronising would carefully shift the topic of conversation to matters of that were within the grasp of the friend. He would speak of commonplace matters like eels, horses, carts and the Provisionals. The Provisionals were the dominant group with the Irish Republican Army that wanted to free all of Ireland from all forms of British rule. The split from the IRA occurred in 1969 when the larger group of members broke away and formed the Provisional Irish Republican Army. They were a paramilitary group who wanted to end British occupation of Northern Ireland. They became the dominant faction while the others were called 'officials'.

But my tentative art…

Out drinking in a curfew

This stanza section of the poem explains why Heaney wrote the poem. The political and security troubles in Northern Ireland occurring due to the conflict between the provisionals and the government resulted in the imposition of a curfew. However, the friend being addicted to alcohol decided to ignore security restrictions placed on the citizens and went out to pursue the normal tenor of his way. However, he was 'blown to bits.' He died in a violent explosion which ripped apart his body.

Others obeyed, three nights…

His breath and trembled.

Everyone else obeyed the dictates of the state and preferred to stay within their homes abiding by the restrictions imposed on civil life. The poet's friend went out three days after a momentous, history-defining act which occurred on 30 January 1972 and came to be known as Bloody Sunday. Thirteen men who had participated in a protest march in the city of Derry were shot down by British Paramilitary forces. Several others were injured. An incident like this stunned everyone in society. Every citizen was terrified and 'held their breath.'

It was a day of cold…

Like blossoms on slow water.

The second part of the poem commences with a detailed description of the funeral held for the victims of Bloody Sunday. The imagery crafted in the poem underscores the effect the incident had on Irish public life. The poet saturates the stanza with images of frigidity, the opposite of life. The iciness of the day is met with agonising silence of the mourners. The people are stunned and overwhelmed about the sudden violent incident. The priests performing the ceremony have been reduced to their garments, the surplice and the soutane, the habit they wear while performing ceremonies, in this case a mass funeral. The day has not been blessed with even an iota of sunshine. The wind is cold, formidable, with incessant rain lashing the day. The city has no respite from the dreadful situation. Instead, the mourners are greeted with a slew of coffins that seem to flow down the entrance of the cathedral. The coffins have been compared to flowers floating on slow moving water.

The common funeral…

Like brothers in a ring.

There is a common funeral for all the victims of Bloody Sunday. It appears that the band which has been hired to play at the funeral have been unrolling their notes. Gradually all the mourners felt that they were being trussed and bound together till they felt that they were all part of the same social circle, all being equally affected by the violence instead of being onlookers experiencing a public grief.

But he would not be held…

Whatever black flags waved.

However, the poet's friend could not be stopped from participating in his everyday activities despite the warnings of his family and the threats and 'black flags' shown to him. Therefore no

amount of persuasion whether it be from his relatives or from any other source could make him change his mind.

I see him as he turned…

Blinding in the flash.

The poet imagines a situation where he saw his friend on the fateful night. He re-imagines the night of the tragedy. His friend was in that place in the area where the bomb went off. His face mingled with remorse and terror. The poet thinks how the last moments of his friend's life must have been before he was 'blown to bits.' His friend's face was still recognisable. Then he stared down that murderous glare, the dazzling flash caused by the explosion. That was the moment of conflagration which consumed the life of the poet's friend.

He had gone miles away…

Of warm lit-up places

The poet's friend had travelled miles to his favourite establishment. He consumed alcohol 'like a fish,' being addicted to it. He partook every night. Therefore he naturally went to places, the establishments that were warm, well-lit and prepared to cater to his requirements. The poet uses the metaphor of the fish with respect to his friend drawing on the idiom. Taverns become like lures for the friend therefore he is attracted to them.

The blurred mesh and murmur…

In the gregarious smoke.

The poet describes the atmosphere at the tavern. The ambience is hazy due to enormous amount of smoke within the establishment. There is a great deal of conversation occurring within the establishment. The atmosphere is sociable and there is a general amicability and geniality. The blurred ambience within the tavern is reflective of the lack of clarity within the Irish citizenry as they are unable to find any solutions to the vicious cycle of violence and remain adrift in the quotidian.

How culpable was he…

Our tribe's complicity?

The poet asks how much was his friend at fault for ignoring the curfew? To what extent can the friend be held responsible for his own demise? The Irish citizenry seems to be complicit in the situation by not all becoming dissidents to the system. Instead they acquiesce to the system

and become unwitting collaborators. Therefore everyone becomes complicit by giving in to the illegitimate demands of the system.

'Now, you're supposed to be…

The right answer to that one.'

The poet recalls an exchange he has with his friend before his death. The friend credited the poet with depth of understanding and discerning perception as he was educated. He asked the poet to come up with the right answers. The friend expected the poet to know solutions to the problems they discussed.

I missed his funeral…

Purring of the hearse...

The poet avoided his friend's funeral, unable to accept the reality of his unnatural violent passing. He vividly describes the funeral his friend possibly had. People would quietly walk next to the hearse. Onlookers standing at the sides would softly comment on the situation. People would emerge out of the residential lane like shoals of fish and gather around the hearse to pay their respects.

They move in equal pace…

Of a dawdling engine

The people moved slowly at the friend's funeral at an even pace matching each other. They amble at the funeral like a slow, wasteful engine. Their presence and slow march with the deceased's remains is their way of expressing their condolences.

The line lifted, hand…

I was taken in his boat

The poet recalls a fishing trip he took with his friend on a cold sunny morning. He recalls the scenery as the land remained covered with fog in the early morning. He went on his friend's boat and held the fishing line.

The Screw purling, turning…

I tasted freedom with him.

The poet, now recalling his memories is in a meditative state ruminating on the true meaning of the moments he spent with his deceased friend. The poet understood the true meaning of

freedom in the company of his friend. The liberation experienced in those moments is what filled him with jouissance and the those moments turned into a treasured memory.

To get out early, haul…

Somewhere, well out, beyond...

The poet reminisces about the fishing trip with his friend. The simple act of waking up early, getting the fishing gear together, hauling off the boat, gaining a catch helped the poet to fall into a meditative rhythm and find meaning in life. He found true joy in those moments working slowly through each measure of life's moments. He recalls his friend, now deeased. Perhaps his spirit has now reached its resting place, the 'proper haunt.' It is a place beyond the edge of the known world, beyond mortal ken.

Dawn-sniffing revenant…

Question me again.

The poet addresses his deceased friend as a revenant. A revenant is a re-animated corpse which has returned from the dead to haunt the living. The friend's memories would continue to haunt the poet's consciousness. The poet's friend is a dawn-sniffing revenant. Therefore the memories return to the poet in the first hours of the day and make him meditate on the unknowable aspects of life and its meaning. His friend returns wearily ambling at midnight through the rain just as he would stroll away in the 'showery dark' after the tavern closed at night. The poet wants his friend to ask him questions again, to make him think, challenge his intellectual perception. There is a deep despair and woe that marks the poet's final appeal. His friend would only remain in memories and a valued part of the poet's life would only belong in the past.

2.9.4.2. Critical Appreciation

"Casualty" is a poem of pain and loss situated within the historical frame of contemporary Irish experience. The poet takes ownership of his position in society as an artist with social and moral obligations. This poem is the poet's reaction to the death of thirteen people who were fired upon by British armed forces as they took part in a protest march as well as the death of his friend which precipitated as a result of Bloody Sunday. The poem can be read as an elegy where an individual instance of loss becomes emblematic of the lament of an entire community of people subjected to imperialist oppression and state-induced violence. The common tenor of life is disrupted by the repressive machinery unleashed upon ordinary citizens exacting a terrible human cost. Every life lost in the ensuing conflict has a traumatic impact on

the lives of all those it was connected with. The poet mourns the loss of a single individual, his dear friend, who simply followed the natural trajectory of his quotidian existence, only to be destroyed by the catastrophic conflagration of violence unleashed by a combination of forces far greater beyond a community's ken, forces that were overarching and ultimately sinister. The poet speaks of a society being lacerated by unbridled violence engaged in by, in this context, the imperialist forces which demand absolute obedience to their foisted laws and codes, however illegitimate. Therefore, even the slightest deviation by unconcerned innocent civilians is responded with the strongest show of force.

The poet vividly describes the manners and vicissitudes of his friend, how he remained at the tavern, being a regular customer. The staff communicated with him non-verbally. The poet's friend was not a successful person in life, being on the dole. However, he was a wonderful human being who commanded the poet's love and indulgence. The poet fondly recalls every aspect of his friend's life, his frailties, his genial equanimity, his attempts at being an accomplished raconteur with the amused poet attempting to divert conversation to other topics which included discussions about the Irish Provisional Army. Therefore, no conversation can truly veer away from the political ambience within which every aspect of Irish life is enacted. Therefore, the poet unobtrusively inserts references to the IRA and Bloody Sunday of 1972 to situate the poem within the political reality prevailing at the time of its composition. The hearty conversation between friends is touched by the threat of real and immediate violence. The atmosphere is pregnant with fearful possibilities that can rip apart the normal flow of life. The poet speaks of the ambling course of life which abruptly takes a horrific turn. The poet writes

The lines, "His turned back watches too…Out drinking in a curfew" set up an opposition which shocks the reader into acknowledging the calamitous situation where generations remain imprisoned within the spiralling vortex of violence. The sudden change in the subject matter in the lines underscores the abruptness of the dreadful attack on life and its irreparable effect on society. The poet's friend refused to be confined in by the restrictions imposed after the attack on peaceful Irish protesters. The poet expresses sad reality of the situation, where passage of a few moments transforms everything engendering incurable pain and suffering. The poet assesses the impact these unnatural deaths have on the rest of society. The poet is more interested in the impact of such incidents, which is why he gives an evocative solemn description of the funerals, the intensification of the conflict, the pain which the community comes together to share in the 'packed cathedral.' However, life continues as there seems to be a hardening of feelings towards violence. The Irish establishment seem to accept the violent disruptions in life and simply wish to exist disregarding the injustice, pain and trauma, unconsciously and perhaps unwittingly becoming collaborators. The poet mentions that his friend violated his

'tribe's complicity.' Therefore the poet is critical of himself and the other Irish citizens who are resigned to the violent reality, the deprivation of dignity and accept the overlordship of the British. The haziness in the bar is akin to the haziness that has crept in the thought process of the Irish who refuse to cultivate the clarity required to properly perceive the situation. Therefore, the poet asks how much at fault was his friend when he refused to adhere to the unspoken rules of general resignation. There are no easy solutions to be found and there seems no attempt to accommodate or negotiate as every expression of dissidence is met with unforgiving violence. In the final stanza the poet's grief is juxtaposed with happy memories of his friend which finally culminates in him questioning the reality he finds himself in, where nothing seems to harmonise. Instead murderous ambush on life had become an aspect of contemporary Irish life with no possibility of redemption. The poet describes his friend's funeral in detail but in a nonchalant tone. His refusal to attend the funeral is a reflection of an understandable inability to comprehend the full import of the cycle of traumatic experience, particularly its impact on an interpersonal level. The poet wistfully recalls a fishing trip with his friend. But then he is left with anger, even a paralysis of feelings as there are no solutions to the situation, no answers to seek. The elegy concludes on a note of deep despair.

2.9.5. Critics on Heaney

In *Professing Poetry: Seamus Heaney's Poetics* (2009), Michael Cavanagh opines that Heaney establishes his relationship with other poets and draws on their influence in a manner that s 'softens the direct connection by insisting on unconscious intellectual formation'. His poetry has influences from Keats to Yeats, yet Heaney never acknowledges any direct influence in is work. Instead the other poets like him become 'unconscious inheritors.' Here Heaney is not unlike in professing an impersonal poetic tradition as theorised by T.S.Eliot. Cavanagh states that Heaney believes that 'poetry's sources run deeper than any one source can account for, and poetry therefore is more culturally sanctioned than it would be if it came from a single person.' Therefore, Heaney expresses 'a kind of affirmation of poetry as an ongoing and essentially changeless cultural phenomenon. Its ultimate defense is its longevity: it was always there, and it will remain.' (pp 29-30)

In his Introduction to *Seamus Heaney: Modern Critical Views*, Harold Bloom is of the view that Heaney's poetry incorporates the voice of Ireland's mythic past and explores the poet's relation to it. Heaney hails Northern Ireland, especially its rural landscape as the 'outback of my mind.' As poems like 'Kingship' show, Heaney acquires the 'authentic authority of becoming the voice of his people.' Speaking of Heaney's poetry Bloom says that all 'lyrics

and meditations practice a rich negation, an art of excluded meanings, vowels of the earth almost lost between guttural consonants of history.' (pp12)

Helen Vendler in her illuminating and comprehensive study *Seamus Heaney* (2000), discuss Heaney's work as art. She traces Heaney's trajectory as a poet through his different volumes from *Death of a Naturalist* (1966) to *The Spirit Level* (1996). Vendler evaluates Heaney's poetry by looking at the themes and genres the poet used as he evolved. Vendler discusses the moral attitudes of the poet as is reflected in his poetry. It is an insightful and sympathetic study of the poet's aesthetics and individual poetics given his unique position as a Northern Irish poet who enjoyed immense popularity on both sides of the Atlantic. Vendler also explores the poet's response to the violence and political unrest that affected his native Northern Ireland. Vendler surveys eleven volumes of poetry and makes her own incisive observations in Heaney's language, diction and use of cadence as a poet as well as his ability of craft and use symbols which pervade his work. Heaney's ability to create and use the diverse and immense linguistic sources is a point of exploration for Vendler. The book is an excellent and exhaustive commentary on Heaney's work which investigates the impact of biographical, societal and historical elements on it.

Commenting on "Casualty" Harold Bloom in his critical evaluation in Seamus Heaney observes that the 'muted elegy' "Casualty" which cunningly blends the modes of Yeats's "The Fisherman" and "Easter 1916" concludes in a funeral march giving us the sea's version of Heaney's vowel on earth.'Bloom then quotes the funeral march which the second section of the poem opens to highlight his point. Bloom goes on to observe that even "as the slain fisherman's [the poet's friend] transcendence fuses with Heaney's catch of a poem to send the poet also "beyond" as Heaney revised Yeats's ambition by having written an elegy as passionate as the perpetual night of the Troubles' [political conflict in Northern Ireland]. (Bloom: 13)

Helen Vendler in her illuminating and comprehensive study *Seamus Heaney* (2000), discusses how Heaney's poetic craft and inventiveness with regards to form an expression allows him to approach the political conflict of Ireland from an entirely novel perspective. Vendler opines that 'thematic elements do not by themselves make for memorable poetry.' Therefore, the power of poetry and the poet's capability lies in his ability to convey the existing in a new language. According to the poet is influenced by the prevailing socio-political conditions of his contemporary society, however, he must search and use is own inventive language and poetic craft to express himself, something Heaney's genius allows him to achieve.

In 'Pap for the Dispossessed': Seamus Heaney and the Poetics of Identity,' David Lloyd argues that Heaney's poetry constructs a 'resurgent politics of identity' which 'attempts to

contain and interpret the Northern Ireland conflict outside of colonial and class paradigms' (1993,3). Lloyd's arguments regarding Heaney are scattered in his *Nationalism and Minor Literature* (1987) and A*nomalous States: Irish Writing and the Post-Colonial* Moment (1993). Lloyd uses the postcolonial framework to interpret Heaney's poetry. He situates poetry within the framework of politics and cultural theory unlike Vendler. He takes a critical view to the lyric form which originated in English Literature that was used as an ideological tool to oppress the Irish. Lloys frames is discussion of Heaney within the context of Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland and the faultlines caused by the partition. He situates Heaney's position in a previously colonised state even though Heaney belongs to Northern Ireland which is a part of the UK. He critiques Heaney as a post-colonial subject unable to decolonise himself from the imperialist impositions of the UK. Thereby, Lloyd erroneously implements the postcolonial critique while discussing Heaney's poetry.

2.9.6. Summing Up

Seamus Heaney celebrates his rural legacy in his poems owning his chosen profession of a poet while remaining anchored to his agricultural roots and admiring his forebears. Heaney seamlessly weaves various of contradictory strands into the poems splicing the proletarian, rural heritage of his family with his intellectual standing and pursuit. His attitude towards his father and grandfather remains one of deep appreciation and sincere admiration despite his conscious decision to remove himself from that life. The poet reaches far back in time relying on history and memory to present his perspective. Heaney uses an intensely personal experience to fashion his statement on history, time and legacy. The poet affirms and owns his traditions while with equal conviction he owns and affirms his identity as a poet. He sees himself as one, who despite not following his family occupation retains their work ethics, their values and traditions and he will continue that tradition in his own way. He affirms that he too will dig, but with his pen, which sits snugly in his hand just as the spade reposed perfectly in the hands of his forebears. "Casualty" which happens to be Seamus Heaney's response to the Bloody Sunday of 1972 is an intensely personal poem mourning the dath of his fiend due to the esuing conflict between the IRA and the British government. The poet's lament makes the pain, the loss, the suffering of the mass of the Irish people immediate and intimate. It is not only a general grief expressed over a prevailing situation, but that societal grief has been made deeply personal and poignant in the poem.

2.9.7. Comprehension Exercises

Long Answer Type Questions:

1. How does Heaney explore the themes of history and memory in 'Digging?'
2. Evaluate 'Digging' as an autobiographical poem.
3. What is the historical context to the poem "Casualty?"
4. How does the poet weave the personal and the historical within the poem "Casualty?"

Medium Answer Type Questions:

1. How does the poem collate the intellectual life of a poet with the plebeian life of his family?
2. How do you think the personality of the poet is expressed in 'Digging?' Has the poet been able to resolve the dialectics pervading the poem?
3. How does conflict intersect social and personal dialogue in the poem "Casualty?"
4. Comment on Heaneyvs craftsmanship as he juxtaposes the intense personal grief he felt at the loss of his friend with the public tragedy of Bloody Sunday?

Short Answer Type Questions :

1. What is the poet's attitude to the situation he removed himself from?
2. What legacy does the poet celebrate in 'Digging?'
3. How is the poet different from his ancestors and to what extent is he similar to them?
4. How does the poet use memory- personal and historical, to frame his elegy "Casualty?"

2.9.8. Reading List

Bloom, Harold. *Seamus Heaney*. Chelsea House Publishers. 2002.

Cavanagh, *Michael*. *Professing Poetry: Seamus Heaney's Poetics*. The Catholic University of America Press. 2009.

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Lloyd, David. *Nationalism and Minor Literature: James Clarence Mangan and the Emergence of Irish Cultural Nationalism.* London, University of California Press, 1987.

Lloyd, David. *Anomalous States: Irish Writing and the Post-Colonial Moment.* Durham, Duke University Press, 1993.

Vendler, Helen. *Seamus Heaney*. Harvard University Press, 2000.

Unit 10 ❐ Carol Ann Duffy: “Text” and “Stealing”

Structure

2.10.1. Objectives

This Unit introduces the learners to Carol Ann Duffy and discusses her mediation of contemporary era in postmodern terms through her poetry.

2.10.2. Introduction

Carol Ann Duffy is an important voice in the contemporary British literary scene. She was born in 1955 in Glasgow, Scotland in a working class Roman Catholic family. Her nomination to the position of the Nobel laureate from 2009 to 2019 demonstrates that she is a representative voice in contemporary British society. Duffy has written poetry on gender issues, climate change and other poems of topical interest to British society. Duffy’s poems are written in a conversational style where she uses simple language to express her opinion on complex issues.

2.10.3. "Text": The Text

Text

I tend the mobile now
like an injured bird
We text, text, text
our significant words.

I re-read your first,
your second, your third,

look for your small xx,
feeling absurd.

The codes we send
arrive with a broken chord.

I try to picture your hands,
their image is blurred.

Nothing my thumbs press
will ever be heard.

2.10.3.1. About the Poem

The poem "Text", part of Carol Ann Duffy's poetry collection *Rapture* (2005), discusses the mediation of relationships in the contemporary era through the use of mobile phone texts, hence the name of the poem. Duffy won the T.S. Eliot Prize for *Rapture*. Duffy's collection of poems read like a poetic frieze tracing the evolution of a romantic relationship through a series of poems from the initial rapturous states to despondency and resignation. Carol Ann Duffy, who had remained the British poet laureate from 2009 to 2019, and identifies as being part of the LGBTQ+ community, had garnered inspiration for her poetry collection from a homosexual relationship. However, *Rapture* reflects an inclusive approach to different forms of romantic expression. The poem "Text" is a conversation that occurs through modern technological

tools that is sans the warmth of a real conversation occurring with interlocutors physically present. Even language, instead of being an organic flow of utterances becomes reduced to lines of code and voiceless conversation, as the poet rues, as she seeks meaning within the linguistic categories and symbols sent over advanced communication systems. The natural act of conversation which can strengthen the bond between two human beings descends into absurdity. The technologically mediated connection becomes an act of distancing oneself as the physical distance reinforces a psychological distance.

2.10.3.2. Analysis of the Poem

I tend the mobile now
like an injured bird

The poem opens with a reference to an indispensable instrument of contemporary existence, the mobile which has radically transformed the lived experience of humanity across the globe. Though the poem was written in the United Kingdom and published around 2005 with the collection *Rapture*, the issues regarding mobile phones in contemporary existence is as pervasive in advanced nations as it is in developing societies. The reference to the mobile phone in the first line itself attracts the reader's attention as it situates the poem with the gamut of contemporary life and sets the expectation that the rest of the poem will deal with the effect, inimical or otherwise, of advanced technology in life. The poet 'tends' to the mobile phone, in other words, cares for the mobile phone which has been compared to an 'injured bird'. Therefore, a gadget now commands as much attention and care as the kindness a human being would bestow upon an injured and vulnerable creature. This reflects the transference of care and consideration to an electronic device. The poet laconically, sarcastically and with wit comments on the evolution of human values in an increasingly technocratic world.

We text, text, text
our significant words.

The texting option in the mobile phone has become the only manner of conversation, ironically, as the interlocutors talk without uttering a single word. The palilogia in the lines emphasise this strange phenomenon. The poem becomes a commentary on the manner of communication in the contemporary world where important conversations are reduced to certain signs on a screen stripped of the emotion of the human voice. The repetition of the word 'text' conjures up the picture of a constant inscription of electronic linguistic categories.

I re-read your first,
your second, your third.

The poet, deprived of the comfort and warmth of an actual human conversation now resorts to reading the received texts several times to simulate the feeling of a conversation. However, this form of communication has become an effective way of sending out messages and the poet is unable to revert back to the geniality of an actual conversation. Therefore all the poet, or the speaker here can do is to read the texts and extract from the supposed emotions and solace that words on a screen can provide.

…look for your small xx,
feeling absurd.

As conversation and emotion has been reduced to certain codes and symbols on the screen the act of showing affection, in this case, kisses, has to be denoted with 'xx' where each x represents a single kiss. The entire exercise becomes preposterous and farcical as two letters on a screen may convey an intent but can never convey the feeling of actually experiencing a token of affection received from a lover. Therefore, the poet may seek that warmth and show of love but can only be left feeling unfulfilled by the absurdity of the situation

The codes we send
arrive with a broken chord.

Words exchanged between lovers diminish into codes, shorn off their human touch, detached from the tenderness, intimacy and endearment of an actual loving verbal exchange. When such replies are exchanged, they appear to have the effect of broken chords. Chords, in music, are multiple notes played together to give the effect of harmonic unity. In a broken chord, the different notes which constitute a chord are played rapidly one after the other. Conversation had already been reduced to mere codes, but now they are received in broken forms in continuous progression, devoid of harmony, or unity, flickers of code-clusters transmitted to a distant screen.

I try to picture your hands,
their image is blurred.

The poet attempts to reconstruct in her mind the image of her beloved, thinking of the hands that type the message but is unable to. It is, as if, the interlocutors have been disembodied,

which is why it becomes difficult to imagine the person behind the screen typing in the codes and transmitting the message. The image of the lover's hand is blurred as it becomes difficult to picture the actual human being whose thoughts are being conveyed through the mobile phone to the speaker-poet.

Nothing my thumbs press
will ever be heard.

In the final lines, the poet sarcastically and despondently conveys the reality of convenient communication through the use of advanced technology. Her sharp acuity, tempered with dejection and resignation brings to the fore the facts of contemporary life. The poet too types in replies and messages hoping for a meaningful conversation, however, the poet's feelings do not find expression she types lines on a screen. She has to confront the disembodied, voiceless conversation, whereby the message conveyed by the words are not spoken and she will never hear them.

2.10.3.3. Critical Appreciation

The poem presents a succinct, humorous and sardonic perspective on contemporary existence mediated by the advanced technologies of the twenty-first century. Even though the poet has chosen to focus her attention on the mobile phone as it has become ubiquitous in contemporary life almost as an extension of the human body and mind, the mobile phone can be seen as a metaphor for other technical devices that regulate, mediate and ultimately shape human life and relationships in the world. However, the poet rues that disembodied interactions that have become the manner by which thoughts are exchanged. Interactions, even between lovers are now void of warmth, affection and reduced to flickering codes transmitted over complex communication systems. Even attempts to imagine a human presence at the other terminal fails, the image of a human hand is obscured, tokens of affections and emotions are reduced to certain accepted markers and the feelings conveyed remain voiceless, unspoken and signs on a screen.

There is no alternative to human interaction which occurs in person. Global experience with the pandemic has underscored that reality. Despite the advancement of technology, which promote and encourage communication, it becomes a business-like endeavour as all feelings and emotions have been inadvertently stripped off it. The digital realm is no replacement for an embodied and embedded presence in tangible reality. No degree of technological progress can replace an actual human conversation that occurs within a shared physical space. Therefore,

the poet is left dejected at the conclusion of the conversation and any attempt to simulate an actual conversation in the imagination results in failure. The poet emerges from this interaction, not feeling happier but with a sense of increased mental distance form her lover who seems to have disintegrated into a haze.

The poem is of fourteen lines but it is not structured as a sonnet, it is a lyric of seven couplets mostly unrhymed. The rhyme scheme in the poem is quite unconventional as words from disparate couplets rhyme, for instance, "bird" and "words" in lines 2 and 4; "absurd," "blurred" and "heard" in lines 8, 12 and 14. Despite the couplet form the rhymes are distributed across couplets without evenly following a regular structure. The poem is written with a combination of Iambic trimeters and dimeters. There are anapaestic and trochaic variations which gives the poem an interesting metric structure. The poet uses simile in the first couplet to emphasise the affection that humanity is bestowing upon an inanimate object. The poet uses palilogy when underscoring the activity of texting. She says "text, text, text." The emphasis is carried on through the anaphora. The poem ends with a cryptic epigram.

The stanzaic structure, the short meters and the use of conversational language in the poem seems to replicate the act of texting. The stanzas are end stopped. The structure of the poem gestures to the limitations of using texts as a communicative form. A semblance of fabrication permeates this mode of communication as it is anything but an organic, enjambed way of conversation. Technology only allows communication, but can never truly serve as a replacement for actual conversation and the physical presence of the beloved.

2.10.4. "Stealing": The Text

Stealing

The most unusual thing I ever stole? A snowman.
Midnight. He looked magnificent; a tall, white mute
beneath the winter moon. I wanted him, a mate
with a mind as cold as the slice of ice
within my own brain. I started with the head.
Better off dead than giving in, not taking
what you want. He weighed a ton; his torso,
frozen stiff, hugged to my chest, a fierce chill

piercing my gut. Part of the thrill was knowing
that children would cry in the morning. Life's tough.
Sometimes I steal things I don't need. I joy-ride cars
to nowhere, break into houses just to have a look.
I'm a mucky ghost, leave a mess, may be pinch a camera.
I watch my gloved hand twisting the doorknob.
A stranger's bedroom. Mirrors. I sigh like this - Aah.
It took some time. Reassembled in the yard,
he didn't look the same. I took a run
and booted him. Again. Again. My breath ripped out
in rags. It seems daft now. Then I was standing
alone among lumps of snow, sick of the world.
Boredom. Mostly I'm so bored I could eat myself.
One time, I stole a guitar and thought I might
learn to play. I nicked a bust of Shakespeare once,
flogged it, but the snowman was the strangest.
You don't understand a word I'm saying, do you?

2.10.4.1. About the Poem

'Stealing' is a poem where the speaker is a perpetrator of several misdemeanours. She commits unlawful acts not for material gain but to seek thrill and meaning by engaging in pointless futile acts that break the law but do not amount to serious crimes. The speaker is a cynical, almost nihilistic being who has given up on the possibility of seeking meaning and value in life. She revels in senseless, even absurd acts like stealing a snowman and then ultimately destroying it. The poet depicts an individual completely isolated from humanity, removed from all life-affirming forces of society and spiritually utterly depleted.

2.10.4.2. Analysis of the Poem

The most unusual thing I ever stole? A Snowman.

This poem is a dramatic monologue. The speaker opens the poem echoing a question asked of her, gaining a moment to ruminate on the most singular item she stole. The speaker is

sharing confidences with the listener for she discusses her unlawful acts in a relaxed, composed and casual tone bordering nonchalance. The first line which is also a confession of recurrent acts of robbery immediately arrests the reader's attention. The speaker is a repeat offender. She commits acts of thievery regularly. Misdemeanours are an acceptable part of her quotidian existence. The equanimity with which she speaks of her unlawful acts demonstrates her complete desensitisation to the acceptable mores of civil society, a desensitisation she seems to wear as a mark of accomplishment. This indicates alienation from society and the positive, life-affirming opportunities that society may provide. The emphasis on 'most unusual' indicates that the speaker is no ordinary felon wishing for material profit from said acts. The speaker steals only unusual items as the answer to the question indicates; in this case, a snowman. A snowman has no sublunary worth. Its value is entirely emotional. Whoever built the built the snowman experienced a sense of achievement. It was a source of joy to the children who played around it. By stealing the snowman the speaker is attempting to usurp the happy memories of those for whom, this temporal object was a symbol of delight and celebration. The snowman has no material value. The speaker will not gain any monetary reward from this strange venture. The speaker's needs are emotional; there is a subliminal need for psychological affirmation.

Midnight. He looked magnificent; a tall, white mute

beneath the winter moon.

The speaker comes upon the snowman at midnight. The language here transforms from the casual conversational style to one that is lyrical and poetic. Thus, the speaker is not without ability to appreciate the joys of life or the beauty that is found in commonplace objects or objects that are moulded from easily available seasonal materials, in this case snow. The snowman is valuable not for what it is, a rudimentary sculpture of snow, but what it represents, a celebration of life. Probably the snowman is the result of the work of a group of persons sharing their joys. This is in direct contrast with the condition of the speaker who is out for a solitary walk in the middle of a winter night, preferring to forsake the warmth and comfort of one's home in such extreme weather conditions. The speaker admires the snowman, an unsophisticated elementary ephemeral installation as something spectacular, impressive and masterly as it glittered in the darkness of the night beneath the light of the moon. The admiration of the speaker is reflected in the shift from conversational to poetic language when she refers to the snowman.

I wanted him, a mate
with a mind as cold as the slice of ice
within my own brain.

The speaker feels a strange kinship with the snowman. For her, the snowman is not an object to be possessed or traded away. The speaker wishes to establish a bond with this object which she personifies. The snowman is a "mate," a companion, a friend with whom the speaker wishes to form a connection. This desire further denotes the speaker's loneliness and isolation from society. She is unable to seek or even desire to form an attachment with another human being. A rudimentary installation of snow put together by others is what attracts her attention and she steals it to form a connection with it. Her isolation from society is definitive and complete, therefore she not only shies away from human contact and conversation but even does not build a snowman for herself, choosing to take an item that others have invested with their sense of accomplishment and delight. Ironically it also shows the speaker's yearning for a vestige of lingering human warmth. The speaker imagines the snowman with mind like her own, thereby projecting her idea of a good companion onto a transient object of snow. The speaker acknowledges that her mind is "cold as the slice of ice," which illustrates her emotional distance from humanity and society in general. She is emotionally frigid, remote and unsociable. So, she feels a kinship towards the snowman as the object is a tangible reflection of her psychological state. The scene brings together the arctic condition of the weather, the gelid condition of the speaker's mind with the hiemal snowman which is a manifestation of the two.

I started with the head.
Better off dead than giving in, not taking
what you want.

The speaker begins by dismembering the snowman to carry it back home. There is no hurry with which the speaker proceeds with her act. The speaker calmly and logically plans the removal of the snowman. The dismantling of the snowman, though seems violent, is actually is done so it may be properly re-assembled later. The speaker, after carefully reflecting on the existence of the snowman identifies with its glacial characteristics. Not only is this contrary to her desire for human warmth, it also emphasises her seclusion and estrangement from humanity. It is not that the speaker had given up fighting for life entirely despite her alienation. She has not discarded her fighting spirit. She has the residues of a rebel in her. She is of the opinion that death is better than not fulfilling the wants of existence which for her translates into stealing as it alleviates the pain of isolation. Therefore, for the speaker, acquiring, by even by unsanctioned

means what she desires, becomes a crucial aspect of her existence. She feels isolated to such an extent that her energies consciously pour into unproductive acts which only bring partial and transitory fulfilment. It strengthens her alienation and creates the need to repeat such actions to renew fulfilment.

He weighed a ton; his torso,
frozen stiff, hugged to my chest, a fierce chill
piercing my gut.

The speaker lifts the massive installation of snow and feels its actual weight. The different parts of the snowman which the speaker dismantled have turned frigid due to the extreme temperatures of a hyperborean night. The unforgiving arctic atmosphere is also what preserves the snowman. The speaker's estrangement from society is so complete that only in extreme cold does she find a modicum of comfort. As the speaker identifies with the snowman, the physical weight of the snowman is also the weight of her psychological baggage. Her gelid, frosty attitude is the consequence of her psychological chaos. When she lifts the snowman and holds it close to her chest, she experiences its frosty, forbidding tactile presence. In the inhospitable weather conditions of a severe winter night, she finds that the snowman emits a cruel frightening chill that lacerates through her being. Therefore, her inner frigidity is equally harsh and unforgiving.

Part of the thrill was knowing
that children would cry in the morning. Life's tough.

The speaker is of the opinion that part of the macabre delight of the situation was in knowing that the disappearance of the snowman, probably built by children, would distress and unsettle them next morning. The children would arrive next morning seeking to play with the snowman, only to have their plans and expectations dashed. This would result in unhappiness and anguish causing the children to cry. The speaker is amused at the thought that this will probably transpire. The sadistic pleasure which the speaker derives from the supposedly precipitating situation demonstrates the lack of empathy that her frigid isolation has caused. She attempts to justify her transgression by pretending that she is imparting a life lesson to the children by destroying their happiness. By being deprived of their snowman they would learn that life is unfair and difficult. Therefore, the speaker is of the opinion that her actions are not only justified but also beneficial for the supposedly aggrieved children, even though her actions

have a clearly sadistic intent as she is thrilled by the knowledge that her act will make the children weep.

Sometimes I steal things I don't need.

The speaker's desire to steal is not motivated by any need or monetary profit. She confesses, in the same casual tone that she partakes of thing for which she has no requirement. Therefore, stealing gives the speaker a sense of fulfilment and transitory happiness with expires quickly, thereby making the speaker repeat her acts, to feel that thrill and happiness on a cyclical basis. The act of stealing is almost therapeutic for the speaker. She steals to alleviate the unacknowledged pain of her extreme, unforgiving isolation.

I joy-ride cars

to nowhere, break into houses just to have a look.

I'm a mucky ghost, leave a mess, maybe pinch a camera.

The speaker details purposeless activities of her life into which she invests her time and energy, activities without meaning and value. She rides cars to "nowhere," without any sense of destination. The speaker's actions are neither excessively destructive nor inimical in a way to cause serious injury or harm. Her pointless aggravations prove no point, nor does it provide her with any succour or impart any meaning to her existence. She breaks into houses just to look around. A house is an abode of rest, peace and security, guarantees in life that the speaker would never be blessed with. The speaker calls herself a mucky ghost. Her existence is that of a spectre. She considers herself erased from the world of the living; such is the extremity of her isolation. She leaves a trail of grime in the homes she invades, puts things in disarray, homes that will never be hers to repose in. She wishes to announce her presence by manufacturing a disorderly mess in the homes. Her apparent bravado and glorification of her activities only underscores her loneliness, alienation and detachment from society. Sometimes the speaker steals a camera which is the receptacle for the memories of others which hold no meaning for her. As the speaker does not steal for profit, the speaker takes the camera to seek a semblance of meaning and psychological connection, just as she steals the snowman which the others invested their feelings and memories with.

I watch my gloved hand twisting the doorknob.

A stranger's bedroom. Mirrors. I sigh like this - Aah.

The speaker seems to divest herself of agency at this point. She personifies her glove encased hand and then says it is not herself but her hand that turned the doorknob and opened the

door while she has remained a compliant spectator. She trespasses into the most sacred space of the occupants of the house, the bedroom. She observes the mirrors, which reflect back an imperfect image of herself in the mirror. She breathes over its reflective surface forming a haze over her reflection. The speaker does not wish to confront the reality of her position as she is alienated from herself.

It took some time. Reassembled in the yard,
he didn't look the same.

Throughout the poem, this is only one instance where the speaker attempts to construct something and fails at the venture. She puts in effort to re-construct the dismantled snowman in her yard. However, the snowman has lost its original appearance which made the speaker form a connection with it. As the snowman is a reflection of the speaker's own alienated, frigid existence, it refuses to form again and regain its original unity.

I took a run
and booted him. Again. Again.

Displeased with the re-assembled form of the snowman, the speaker proceeds to destroy it. The enjambment in the lines enacts the accumulation of energy that is unleashed in the destruction of the snowman. Initially the speaker stole the snowman for its apparent beauty and as she felt a kinship with the object which she personified. Therefore, the intentional, violent demolition of the snowman which the speaker identifies with is self-destructive. The violent destructive repetitive 'again' reflects the anger, the frustration built up inside the speaker. The speaker is unable to create or construct something. Her energies have been permanently re-channelled into antagonistic, noxious acts. The emphasis on the work 'again' demonstrates the utter savagery of the act, which ultimately the speaker subjects herself to as the snowman is a reflection of herself.

My breath ripped out
in rags. It seems daft now. Then I was standing
alone among lumps of snow, sick of the world.

The vicious act exhausts the speaker entirely. She is left enervated. She feels the breath of her body being violently torn out of her being. After undergoing the entire act of admiring, identifying with, stealing and finally owning the snowman, the speaker terminates process by destroying the snowman. The speaker is eminently self-aware of the sheer inanity of her actions. Her

search for meaning in an alienated, isolated, spiritually vacuous existence manifests in the committing of unlawful and meaningless acts. After demolishing the snowman, she stands quite alone among its clumps of snowy remains contemplating the futility of her actions and thoughts while being cloistered out from the world, insulated to its joys, estranged from it. The speaker contemplates the irrationality and the meaning of her ways and of her existence as well. She meditates on her complete alienation from humanity and from herself. She is so severely disconnected from the world, that she can only attempt to form a connection with an inanimate object. She can only exist in the plane of absolute isolation; hence she destroys the snowman despite going through the trouble of transporting it back to her yard as she viewed it as a friend.

Boredom. Mostly I'm so bored I could eat myself.

The speaker's inability to form meaningful connections in the world is what makes everything inconsequential and nugatory. It is her lack of inner resources, her negative worldview and the refusal to seek productive and fruitful moments in life are what renders her existence worthless and hollow. Her apathetic and pessimistic outlook to everything that life has to offer becomes ultimately detrimental to her. The nihilistic ennui she experiences is of her own making. Unfortunately, she attempts to alleviate that condition, not by channelling any positive energy, but by engaging in unlawful acts, indulging in pointless unproductive activities and finally wounding herself, perhaps irreparably. The idea that "boredom" can cause her to "eat" herself it the ultimate expression of the desire for self-destruction.

One time, I stole a guitar and thought I might…flogged it, but the snowman was the strangest.

The speaker lists the unusual things she stole, among them a guitar and a bust of Shakespeare, Therefore the speaker attempts to reach for beauty and meaning in her life only to fail definitively every time. The stealing of the guitar, in a way reflects the theft of the snowman, in the sense that both were stolen to seek out meaning in a meaningless existence and both items were relegated to oblivion with their purpose defeated. The speaker attempted to find sanctuary in music, represented by the guitar and in literature, represented by the bard's bust. However, it is the speaker's own failure and inability to pursue something worthwhile and profitable that she is left hollow, cynical, spiritually depleted. Thereby, the guitar is forgotten and the bust of Shakespeare is simply discarded. However, the snowman which the speaker stole remains her most singular acquisition as it is the most transient object and it is one which the speaker identified with, wanted as a friend and then upon acquiring it illegally, viciously destroyed it.

You don't understand a word I'm saying, do you?

This final line demonstrates again, the self-awareness of the speaker. The poem begins and ends with a question where the speaker directly addresses the listener. The speaker assumes that the utter futility of her actions, their utter absurdity would perplex the listener. The speaker is aware of the nihilistic nature of her existence, but has imposed such isolation upon herself that she is unable to live in any other manner. Therefore, anyone living by the normative standards of life would find her actions and thoughts incomprehensible and illogical. Hence the speaker concludes her narration with a pertinent question addressed to the listener.

2.10.4.3. Critical Appreciation

The poem dramatises the psychological chaos and emotional crises experienced by the speaker who is an existential outsider to society. The poet harps on the themes of isolation, alienation and ennui. The poem is a dramatic monologue where the speaker is confessing her misdemeanours, a narration that reflects nonchalance, frustration, self-awareness, inquisitiveness, alienation, anger and resignation. The speaker suffers from an existential crisis and is angry and distressed at being unable to seek and find value in life, ever inevitably failing in whichever constructive work she chooses to invest herself in. The speaker is unable to comprehend the futility of her lived experiences and her life has become an endless cycle of pointless, unlawful activities which culminate in greater unhappiness and frustration.

The poem is written in a conversational tone. The speaker begins by answering a question about the 'most unusual' thing she ever stole, which happens to be a snowman. The speaker identifies with the snowman, personifies it, then proceeds to dismantle it to carry it home as she seeks a friend in the inanimate object. However, on finally assembling it back she destroys the snowman violently, an action which becomes a metaphor for self-destruction. The speaker's thievery becomes an outlet for her disappointments, anger, anguish, frustrations, failures. The speaker experiences intense psychological anguish and chaos which is compounded by her spiritual vacuity. This causes her to become apathetic, antagonistic and indulge in schadenfreude. Her isolated existence gradually drains her of empathy as she revels in the possibility of children being distressed by the absence of the snowman. She glorifies and justifies her actions. She seeks kinship with a rudimentary sculpture of snow as she identifies with its arctic, lifeless nature. She feels finds no solace by invading homes which she can only observe, not own. In her futile attempt to seek beauty and meaning she steals a guitar but never learns to play, steals a bust of Shakespeare but does not read literature. As the speaker's capabilities, sense of purpose has been whittling away, she is left hollow, without purpose or hope of redemption.

The poem is written in vers libre with no fixed stanzaic structure. The poet has cleverly used a combination of enjambment and caesura to depict the mental state of the speaker and how that is manifested in the different absurd actions of the speaker. The poem is unrhymed but the arrangement of the lines and the metric accents impart to it an interesting cadence. The poem, even though, it narrates the story of a single individual, may be interpreted as an exploration of a societal condition where humanity, deprived of meaning and purpose, may be impelled to commit acts that challenge the established codes of society, its laws and regulations just to seek a temporary thrill and a semblance of fulfilment. The finality of an individual's alienation from society is demonstrated in the perverse fulfilment gained by the speaker as she takes to thievery and misdemeanours to affirm her existence, a sense of intense and momentary gratification of the senses which evaporates quickly once the initial excitement fades. Then the speaker is left with a terrible and crushing sense of vacuity, spiritual and emotional, condemned to repeat the vicious cycle again to regain that transient illusion of fulfilment to carry on with life. It is the illustration of a nihilistic way of existence which only results in being taken further into the darkness of isolation without hope or even desire for redemption. The speaker is doomed to permanently relive her pointless acts as there is no possibility of release from this vicious cycle.

2.10.5. Critics Comments

Carol Ann Duffy becomes the voice of voiceless women who have been relegated to a subordinate position in society. Duffy's female personas/characters all subvert feminine archetypes and assert themselves as individuals with aspirations. Critics have commented on how Duffy's poetry often drew inspiration from her own life. The poetry collection reads as a long love poem. It depicts a relationship in all its complexity and reality with boldness and subtlety at the same time. Duffy traces the progression of a relationship in a way that becomes "ruthless, tender, utterly modern, utterly classical." Zainab Abdulkadhim Mhana and his co-authors are of the opinion that Duffy uses techniques that blend the poetically established forms and avant-garde poetics which resists the classification of her poetry into any strict category and she has been alive to various voices in British culture since 1980s. J.Dowson observes Duffy's poetry delves into human experience which straddles time, place and individuality. Duffy has democratised the poetic space and transformed the way contemporary readership views women poets and their poetry.

Ian Gregson in "Carol Ann Duffy: Monologue as Dialogue" in the book *Contemporary Poetry and Postmodernism: Dialogue and Estrangement* (1996) observes that Carol Ann Duffy's poetry provides a voice to the marginalised. Her experience as a dramatist has

allowed her to acquire speech rhythms that are natural, unpoetic, conversational and draw on the common speech of the people. Duffy uses shock tactics and juxtapositions in her poems. The poet draws on the tradition of dramatic monologue in English poetry like Browning for crafting her poems. In Duffy's monologues the voice of the speaker is present along with that of the poet. Duffy condemns the established representations of women in literature. Her feminism can be read as part of the wider political protest against representation that programs readers and orients them in a particular manner.

Jane Dowson's *Carol Ann Duffy: Poet for Our Times* (2016) is study of different issues in Duffy's poetry. Dowson perceives Rapture "finding the words for the sheer intensity of love's seasons from falling in love, through desire, mutual passion, mundane companionship, delight, suspicion, separation, reunions and finally ending" (62). Dowson also speaks of the socio-historical context of Duffy's poems as her poems are set in conservative UK of Thatcher and the Republican U.S.A of Regan. Duffy explores the issues of homosexuality, marginalisation of women, the sexual politics of society and shifting gender roles. Duffy's poems challenge and undercut the myths sustaining gender stereotypes and facilitating gender oppression. In Feminine GospelsDuffy "deconstructs the 'gospel' truth about femininity as it pervades myth in seemingly ineradicable forms" (144).

Carol Ann Duffy (1999) by Deryn Rees-Jones is a study which situates Duffy's poetry outside the mainstream poetic language of established poetics. Rees-Jones situates Duffy as a Scottish, feminist, political, working-class, dramatic and lyric poet. Her position as a representative poet, close to the issues and speech rhythms of the common citizenry makes her writing accessible and relatable. Duffy's poems explore issues like racism, otherness, violence, gender discrimination among other topical matters in her poems. Duffy uses the dramatic monologue in a way that allows the speakers to "repeatedly present themselves as both self and other, subject and object; to speak in ways and about subject matter deemed, because of gender and/or class inappropriate not only for art but for representation within a public forum" (26). Rees-Jones also explores the influence Browning, T.S.Eliot, Ted Hughes, Dylan Thomas, Pablo Neruda had on Duffy's poetry.

In *52 Ways of Looking at a Poem* (2004), Ruth Padel observes that Duffy's poetics attempts to release women readers from the male-normative poetry of literary tradition. Padel sass that Duffy acts as the "Queen of the eighties renaissance, whose poems combine scouring feminist wit, social anger, dramatic originality with a clear, gentle lyricism" (Padel, 166). Padel observes that Duffy challenges the phallocentrism of literary works and forges a new path for poetry, one that re-imagines the female position in literary tradition.

3.13.6. Summing Up

Carol Ann Duffy's poems are a psychological study of an extreme state of alienation and isolation. The poems become a reflection on the mediation of advanced technology in contemporary life and its impact on human relationships, even the most intimate ones. The reduction of human interaction, relationships and love to symbols and codes on a screen only causes unfulfillment and detachment. It does not connect, only distances people. The poet's excessive care for a device, the failure to recreate an actual imaginary conversation, the attempt to seek warmth and affection by interpreting the lines of code on a screen and the resulting despondency and resignation all summarise this aspect of contemporary existence. The voiceless disembodiment of humanity in the era of advanced communication technologies has become endemic in the contemporary era. The poet's laconic, sarcastic, witty tone and language become vehicles to convey a topical aspect of lived experience that, in a globalised world, chimes true across national borders.

2.10.7. Comprehension Questions

Long Answer Type Questions:

1. Carol Ann Duffy traces the breakdown of human interaction in the contemporary world. Discuss.
2. How have advanced technologies altered human relationships? Discuss with respect to the poem 'Text'.

Medium Answer Type Questions:

1. Discuss 'Stealing' as a psychological study.
2. How does the poet evaluate the mediation between advanced technologies and contemporary human life?
3. Duffy's poem is part of a collection of poems (*Rapture*) which is a reflection on a romantic relationship. How would you evaluate the poem from that perspective?

Short Answer Type Questions:

1. Do you think that texting becomes a suitable replacement for human interaction?
2. Why does the speaker steal only particular objects in the poem 'Stealing'?

3. What is your assessment of the speaker's character from the poem 'Stealing'?

2.10.8. Further Reading

Dowson, Jane. *Carol Ann Duffy: Poet for Our Times.* Palgrave Macmillian, 2016.

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Padel, Ruth. "Rapture, by Carol Ann Duffy." Independent, 15 September 2005.

www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/reviews/rapture-by-carol-ann-duffy-312878.html

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Module - 3

British Novel

Unit 11 ❐ British Fictional Prose from 1945-2000

Structure

3.11.1. Objectives

This Unit primarily aims at acquainting the learner with the wide range of fictional prose that proliferated in the twentieth century after the First World War. The Unit also gives the learner an idea about the authors who experimented with different literary forms and ideas to put across their perspectives on the emerging crises faced in the modern era.

3.11.2. Introduction

The fictional prose of the twentieth century, ranging from 1945 to 2000 is the product of testing times owing to the occurrence of massive wars. As a result, the fictional prose works of this era are mostly self-reflexive or fragmented. They experiment with language and form and attempt to dive deep into human consciousness. Quite a few texts are dystopic, reflecting the anxieties of totalitarian politics and technological singularity. The following section divides post 1945 English fictional prose into three segments on the basis of their publication for your better understanding. They are: works published roughly from **1945 to 1960**, **1961 to 1980** and **1981 to 2000**.

3.11.3. English Fictional Prose (1945-2000)

3.11.3.1. 1945-1960

i. George Orwell (1903-50)

Remembered as the author of two of the most iconic political allegories of 20th century fiction, George Orwell is the pen name of Eric Arthur Blair. In spite of his socialist inclination and his scepticism towards capitalist modernity, his works also delineate the risks of a totalitarian regime. *Animal Farm*, published in 1945, is a political allegory which explores the outcomes of a socialist revolution. Following the prototype of most revolutions, the animals of the farm are unified by the ideas of equality and fraternity so as to revolt against Mr. Jones, the oppressive master and owner of the farm who had been treating them unfairly since long. The pigs emerge out as more intelligent among other animals and employ that superiority in preparing a set of 'commandments' as the framework of a 'new' social order. In spite of starting off with the doctrine that 'all animals are equal, the pigs take total control of the farm and end up being 'more equal than othersv. With the pigs acquiring a totalitarian control over the other animals, the same oppressive, capitalist structure returns. The pigs become the new master of the farm and equality remains a myth. The failure of achieving equality in spite of the revolution indicates that exploitation is an essential tool for gaining control and for implementing a structure or an order. The pigs resemble the political parties and politicians as theyuse rhetoric in order to manipulate the thoughts and decisions of other animals. The novel proclaims that people in pursuit of power shall inevitably lead to corruption no matter how noble their political ideology is.

Whereas *Animal Farm* (1949) allegorically talks about the failure of socialism, Orwell's *1984* is even bleaker. It talks of a dystopia, a society under the totalitarian rule of Big Brother who keeps the entire population under constant surveillance ('Big Brother is Watching You'- a phrase commonly used to remind people of the surveillance). The ruling party plans and watches over every activity of the inmates and regularly brainwashes their subjects in order to manipulate them into believing all their words. The protagonist Winston Smith and his girlfriend are lured into denouncing each other and Winston actually starts believing that he loves Big Brother. His thoughts get thoroughly moulded by what is done to him in the prison and torture rooms. The novel is an alarming premonition of the ease with which a totalitarian regime can work if the people are made to lose their individualism by force or by manipulation. Ever since this novel was published, every emerging totalitarian regime is compared to this Orwellian dystopia. So much so, that it is considered more as a prophecy than a work of fiction.

ii. Evelyn Waugh (1903-66)

Posing a sharp contrast to Orwell's incisive and politically charged texts are Evelyn Waugh's light-hearted, gentle comedies which are thematically reminiscent of the comedy of manners of the eighteenth century. He used irony and satire to highlight the dimensions of a class-conscious society, their pseudo liberalism and the 'vanity of human wishes' as observed in his works like-*Decline and Fall* (1928), *Vile Bodies* (1930) and *A Handful of Dust* (1934). *Brideshead Revisited* (1945) is often considered as one of Waugh's most successful tales and surprisingly, in this novel, he moves away from his typical condemnation of upper class snobbery and actually admires them-represented by Sebastian Flyte's family in the story.The novel nostalgically broods over the age of English aristocracy. The novel explores Catholicism through Charles Ryder's quest for love and faith and is, therefore considered to be Waugh's most overtly religious novel. *With The Sword of Honour*- a Trilogy published between 1952 and 1961-Waugh returns to his favourite theme which is the decline of the English aristocracy. The series also includes Waugh's experiences from the Second World War. The novel deals with the complex struggles of an army life and also revisits a regular theme of Waugh, which is a celebration of the virtues of tradition, family loyalty and paternalist hierarchy. Overall, his works lament the loss of this heroic ideal which he considers to be the cause of the hollowness and futilitydiscerned in the modern world.

iii. Aldous Huxley (1894-1963)

Often acknowledged as one of the foremost intellectuals of his time, Huxley is mostly remembered for his futuristic book *Brave New World* which has strong Orwellian overtones in its depiction of a dystopic world overpowered by technological advancements. His last work is *Island* (1962), which is a utopian counterpart to *Brave New World*, in its treatment of themes such as drugs, social ordering, assisted reproduction and contraception. Here he offers an alternative social and religious ordering. He conceptualises a society where children do not grow up in families but in groups. Unlike *Brave New World* which used drugs for pacification, in *Island*, drugs are used for gaining enlightenment. The best traits of Christianity, Buddhism and Eastern mysticism are amalgamated so as to provide a holistic understanding of religion.

iv. CS Lewis (1898-1963)

Whereas Aldous Huxley's utopian and dystopian worlds mostly explore the upshots of technological advancements, CS Lewis-a celebrated medievalist and Milton scholar of great repute-weaves a deep religious vision into his fantasy stories. *The Chronicles of Narnia*

(1950-56) recounts the adventures of a group of children who visit a magical island named Narnia. The series is thematically influenced by Christian, Celtic and Greco-Roman mythologies as well as doctrines.The fundamental theme is the victory of good over evil, which is explored by means of different characters in vivid plots in the seven books.

v. JRR Tolkien (1892-1973)

Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* (1954-55), which is a prefiguration of the characters in *The Hobbit* (1937), is one of the most enduring works in fantasy literature of the 20th century. The title of the novel refers to the story's main antagonist, the Dark Lord Sauron, who creates a ring to control all other rings of power. Through a series of adventures, Frodo-the main protagonist-looks for the ring and while doing so, overcomes vivid obstacles. He, along with a few companions, fights Orcs, giant tree shepherds and is joined by the Hobbits in the final combat with Sauron. The ring is finally destroyed and Sauron is defeated, thereby returning to the fundamental theme of good conquering evil.

vi. Graham Greene (1904-1991)

Graham Greene is considered to be one of the most significant English novelists of the 20th century. His Catholic perspective enabled him to explore various political and morally dubious issues of the modern world. In The *Quiet American* (1955), journalist Thomas Fowler is the first-person narrator of the novel which delineates the breakdown of French colonialism in Vietnam and early American complicity in the Vietnam War. The novel achieved special appreciation for predicting the outcome of the Vietnam War and for appropriate characterisation of main characters that enable him to explore the theme adequately. Greene's quiet realism is a sharp contrast to the high fantasy of Tolkien or Graham Swift. Well known for conceiving characters that have an introspective nature, Greene's *A Burnt-Out Case* (1961) explores themes of duty, selfless service and moral obligations in the background of Congo. Greene's enormously popular novel *The Heart of the Matter* (1948) deals with the moral crisis of its protagonist Henry Scobie. Dealing with the sensitive issues of adultery and suicide, the novel delves deep into the analysis of failure and indicates the impossibility of knowing a person to the fullest, no matter how close an associate he or she is.

vii. Kingsley Amis (1922-1995)

It is important to note that besides being a well-known comic novelist, Sir Kingsley Amistried his hands at other genres as well and was essentially inclined towards poetry. He is primarily remembered as the author of *Lucky Jim*(1954), one of the most significant campus novels of

20th century. The novel addresses the clash of cultures of 1950s-1960s England; a theme which made a substantial impact on the elite as well as on the common readership. The story focuses on the experiences of Jim Dixon, a young lecturer who finds it difficult to cope with the hypocrisies of the highbrow academicians (embodied in Professor Welch) of the university where he works. Jim embodies the problems faced by young academicians in entering the tight-knit coterie of veterans who are reluctant to do anything without appropriate appeasements. Fed up of Professor Welch's betrayals, Jim mocks him in a public lecture in an inebriated state and as a consequence, is terminated. Though the novel ends on a positive note as Jim finds a better partner in Christine and gets rid of Margaret, it does share Jonathan Swift's misanthropic view of mankind. As Jim Dixon emerges as the prototype of the anti-hero, the novel is considered to be a major representative of the Angry Young Men movement of the 1950s.

viii. William Golding (1911-93)

British novelist, playwright and poet, Sir William Golding rose to fame with the publication of his first novel *Lord of the Flies*-a novel that he got published in 1954 after getting rejected twenty one times! In his debut work, Golding questions the very notion of human civility by focusing his narrative on a group of British school boys who get stranded in an uninhabited island and disastrously attempt to govern each other. The novel indicates the tenuous nature of propriety and decorum that raptures at the slightest opportunity to breach protocol. Golding's dark, misanthropic vision gets even more frightening in *The Inheritors* (1955), where the Neanderthal man meets his descendant, the Cromagnon man, wherein the latter overpowers and quickly destroys the gentler Neanderthals.

ix. Lawrence Durrell (1912-90)

Lawrence Durrell is the author of a major epic titled *The Alexandria Quartet* published between 1957 and 1960, a work that experimented with the technique of narration by conveying the same event to the reader by means of various characters. He also explores contemporary issues like love, sexual intrigues and espionage.

x. Alan Sillitoe (1928-)

Alan Sillitoe was a British writer and was one of the so-called "angry young men" of the 1950s although he vehemently opposed to this label. He is primarily known for his debut work *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* published in the year 1958 and a short story titled *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner* published in the year 1959. *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* is divided into two disproportional parts, Saturday night occupying

the larger portion of the novel, whereas Sunday morning is a minuscular one. In the first half, the story revolves around 21 year old light-hearted Arthur Seaton-the archetype English working class man-who gets involved in casual affairs with Brenda, her sister Winnie and later with Doreen to escape from the drudgeries of his mundane work life. In the second part, Arthur seems to be somewhat serious about his relationship with Doreen, who decides to stay with him even after knowing about Brenda and Winnie. Both eventually decide to marry.

The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner focuses on Smith, a poor working class boy, who perceives the gaps in the society across classes and does not have much hope in life. This angry boy takes up long-distance running as a way to vent out his emotional and physical frustration and ultimately finds a way to deal with his condition.

His other works- like *The Death of William Posters* (1965), *A Start in Life* (1970) and *The Widower's Son* (1976)-mostly deal with the anxieties of the working class which come due to the deprivation they face in their daily lives. Sillitoe is known for his angry protagonists who nurture a deep hatred for the affluent sections of the society. His novels suggest a different set of morals for the working class people as they find solace in extra-marital affairs, lust and anger. His works are marked by violence, street slangs and barroom scenes which provided the required backdrop to his works.

xi. Mervyn Peake (1911-1968)

Gormenghast Trilogy (1946-1959) is a gothic fantasy series by British author Mervyn Peake. The series narrates the incidents that take place with the inhabitants of castle Gormenghast. It has also been credited for being the first 'fantasy of manners' novel as it fuses elements of fantasy literature and comedy of manners. According to Harold bloom, this series is a better crafted work in comparison to its contemporary works of fantasy such as *The Lord of the Rings.*

xii. Muriel Spark (1918-2006)

The Comforters (1957) is Scottish novelist Muriel Spark's first work where she employs her own experiences with Catholicism in order narrate the story of a novelist named Caroline Rose who has converted to Catholicism recently. After returning from the retreat, she begins to hear voices and the sounds of a typewriter only to realise that she is actually a character in a novel! Spark's best known work is *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* published in the year 1961. The novel deals with the domineering impact of Miss Jean Brodie, who is assigned as a teacher to six ten-year-old girls and she decides to educate them in the real sense of the

original Latin term 'educere' which means to 'lead out'. She tries to provide them a holistic education by giving them important lesson which she has learned from her own life-her experiences with love, her travels, her ideas about classical studies and her ideas on Fascism. The novel traces the impact of this unconventional idea of education on the students and the way they use or misuse it.

3.11.3.2. 1961-1980

i. Anthony Burgess (1917-93)

Although Burgess was a comic writer, his satiric black comedy named *A Clockwork Orange* published in 1962 became famous for exploring the Orwellian concept of dystopia at a larger scale. The story of the novel is set in a near future society where the youth practices a street culture of extreme violence. Alex is the teenage protagonist who leads a street gang of thugs, goes on rampages and narrates his ghastly experiences in a rhetoric which is symptomatic of Burgess' linguistic experimentation-a street slang Nadsat, which bore heavy Russian influence. Its portrayal of violence and its film version on 1971 made the book create a lot of controversy, thereby making Burgess a memorable name.

ii. Margaret Drabble (1939-)

Margaret Drabble is an English novelist, biographer and critic. Her first novel *A Summer Bird-Cage* published in the year 1963, explores the different layers of the relationship between two sisters-Sarah and Louise. The action of the novel centres on the tension between them and delineates the effects that their personalities have on each other.

The Millstone (1965) celebrates the individuality of a young academic Rosamund Stacey who gets pregnant as a result of a one-night-stand and decides to keep the baby and carry on her academic pursuits simultaneously. The novel presses on the necessity of women to make choices that do not restrict them. At the end of the novel, in spite of getting a chance to meet her child's father, Rosamund skips the fact that he is Octavia's father and prefers to bring her up alone, without any strings attached.

In *The Ice Age*, published in the year 1977 Drabble uses the experiences of former BBC producer Anthony Keating, to delineate the ups and downs of life during the 1960s and 1970s. Here she deviates from her usual study of individuals and instead focuses on the state of England after the emergence of property crisis in Britain during that time.

iii. Jean Rhys (1894-1979)

Born as Ella Gwendoline Williams and brought up in the Caribbean islands of the Dominica, Jean Rhys wrote *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966)-a book that received immense popularity as well as critical acclamation. The book is a prequel to Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre* and is a feminist and anti-colonial response to the 1877 novel. Rhys' Antoinette Cosway is her portrayal of Bronte's "madwoman in the attic." Antoinette is the non-European woman who perceives her Caribbean home as Edenic and England as hell, thereby reversing the stereotype of the colony-as-hell. Rhys explores Antoinette's plight of being stuck in an oppressive, patriarchal society which subjects her to an identity crisis and a troubled marriage where her husband declares her mad. Rhys also raises questions on other postcolonial themes such as racism, assimilation and displacement in her book.

iv. Iris Murdoch (1919-99)

Iris Murdoch was a novelist and an erudite philosopher. Her works mostly concern themselves with themes like good and evil, moralities sexual relationships and the power of the unconscious. Her works also carry gothic elements, especially in their portrayal of gloomy settings and events that almost lead us to the surreal and bizarre. Her first novel *Under the Net* was published in the year 1954.The book is about the struggles of a young writer named Jake Donaghue settled in London. It gained popularity because of its picaresque elements and philosophical undertone. Following the footsteps of some of her contemporaries like Evelyn Waugh, Kingsley Amis and Allen Sillitoe, Murdoch satirises the hypocrisies of upper-class English society in her book *A Severed Head* published in the year 1961. She shows a bunch of middle-aged aristocrats who are trapped in a vicious cycle of adultery, incest which ultimately renders love and sex as worthless entities. Murdoch paints them as debauched people, who wrongfully justify their sexual preferences and moral transgressions.*The Sea, The Sea* published in the year 1978 is often considered as Murdoch's best novel as the gothic and surrealistic elements of the work blurs the distinction between reality and illusion as it talks about the delusions of a playwright-director who decides to record his memories in an autobiography. Charles Arrowby attempts to put in all of himself into his autobiography without realising that his apparent romantic self is backed by ego and selfishness. Murdoch's readings of the motives of her characters are one of the noticeable aspects of the novel.

v. Richard Adams (1920-2016)

Richard Adams is known for his survival and adventure novel titled *Watership Down* published in the year1972. The novel anthropomorphises the lives of a small group of rabbits: they are

shown to have their language, proverbs, poetry and culture and mythology. The novel emulates the quest of an epic as it traces the journey of the rabbits escaping their warren which is at the verge of destruction. They face numerous problems which ultimately lead them towards establishing their new home-the Watership Down.

vi. John Fowles (1926-2005)

John Fowles is an internationally acclaimed English writer who is critically positioned between modernism and postmodernism. Showing considerable influence of Satre and Camus, Fowles is fondly remembered for *The Magus* (1965) and *French Lieutenant's Woman* (1969). *The Magus* is a postmodern novel which focuses on the life of Nicholas Urfe, a young British teacher of English, who gets trapped into the psychological illusions of a master trickster and the matter gets bleaker and nastier with time. One of the iconic works in postmodern historical fiction, Fowles' *French Lieutenant's Woman* explores the life of Sarah Woodruff-an intriguing woman who leads a melancholy life and has a gentleman named Charles Smithson eventually fall in love with her. There are other twists and turns in the plot but what is remarkable in this novel is its metafictional component as the narrator, who had been intervening throughout the novel, finally becomes a character in the novel and enters in a climactic moment to offer three different endings to the story.

vii. Ian McEwan (1948-)

English novelist and screenwriter Ian McEwan commenced his writing career with gothic short stories. His first novel *The Cement Garden* published in the year1978 was critically acclaimed, although some critics called it disturbing. The story revolves around a teenage protagonist Jack, his elder sister Julie and their two younger siblings against a gothic backdrop. The children lose their parents at a young age. In order to avoid foster care, Jack-the narrator-and Julie decide to hide their mother's death and encase her corpse in cement in the cellar. Then onwards, Jack and Julie are into occasional role-playing as they pose to be 'father' and 'mother' to their younger siblings. The rest of the story is mostly anexploration of the sexual tension between Jack and Julie and the impending effect of revealing the secret of the cellar to the outer world which might reveal the sordid and macabre nature of the household.

Enduring Love (1997) is a thrilling story of two strangers who get dangerously involved with each other after both of them become witnesses to the same incident. One of the witnesses suffers from a psychological ailment which significantly affects the subsequent twists in the plot.

viii. Doris Lessing (1919-2013)

Doris Lessing became a sensation after the publication of her novel *The Grass is Singing* in 1950. The novel talks about the racial politics between the whites and the blacks in Zimbabwe during the 1940s. The novel was a massive success in Europe as well as in the United states.

Margaret Drabble calls *The Grass is Singing and The Golden Notebook* Lessing's "inner space fiction" as they deal with mental and social breakdown. *The Golden Notebook,* published in the year 1962, focuses on major issues of the time like war, communism and woman's liberation movements.

3.11.3.3. 1981-2000

i. A S Byatt (1936-)

A S Byatt is the professional name used by Dame Antonia Susan Duffy; the elder sister of Margaret Drabble. She is known for her novel named *Possession* published in the year 1990. Often considered as one of the significant works in the genre of historiographic metafiction, the novel explores some of the quintessentially postmodern concerns such as ownership, freedom within romantic relationships and so on.

ii. Julian Barnes (1946-)

Julian Barnes' *Flaubert's Parrot* published in the year1984 is Geoffrey Braithwaite's quest for a stuffed parrot that seemed to have inspired the great litterateur Gustav Flaubert. The story is an allegory to find the real Flaubert by having three different subjective interpretations of his life's chronology *England, England* is a satirical postmodern novel published in the year 1998. Genre-wise it falls somewhere in between a dystopia and a farce. The work raises the idea of replicating England in a theme park and in so doing it challenges the ideas of national identity, myth creation and the authenticity of history and memory.

iii. Alasdair Gray (1934-2019)

Scottish writer shot to fame for his iconic novel *Lanark: A Life in Four Books* written over a period of thirty years. The novel uses a dystopic and surrealist narrative to retell the story of his home city Glasgow.

iv. Graham Swift (1949)

English writer Graham Swift's *Water Land* published in the year1983 raises crucial issues of new historicism and postmodern literature as it explores the nature and importance of history as the primary framework of meaning creation in a narrative.

v. David Lodge (1935-)

Reminiscent of Amis' *Lucky Jim*, many of David Lodge's works satirise the highbrowed academic culture and criticise its messy politics. His notable works include the "Campus Trilogy" (*Changing Places, Small World* and *Nice Work* published between 1975 and 1988) whose plots are set against the background of a fictional university, modelled after Birmingham. Whereas Amis' *Lucky Jim* dealt with the pretentious nature of the academia, Lodge explores the question of research, funding and the politics of contemporary literary theory. Kingsley Amis as well as David Lodge have significantly observed the messy negotiation of class in the English universities during their time and therefore the campus novel inaugurated by them is also known as the 'university novel.'

3.11.4. Summing Up

The previous section has given you a cursory estimation on the major fictional prose writers and their works that represent crucial features of the modern era in the history of English literature.Now let us sum up the basic features of this discussion:

- Post First World War fictional prose show a high level of complexity in its form, structure and language.
- Works are self-conscious, focussing on the process of their own creation.
- Authors focus upon the angst of the working class people the on the hypocrisies of the privileged ones.
- Many works are dystopic and pessimistic, indicating the persisting gloom in the socio-political ethos.
- Works and often elitist in terms of allusions thereby calling for an erudite readership.

3.11.5. Comprehension Exercises

Long Answer Type Questions:

1. How does anthropomorphism play a role in George Orwell's *Animal Farm* as a "fairy" story?
2. Comment on the ways in which the characters of Sarah and Ernestina are affected differently owing to thedifference/s intheir social and economic status in John Fowles' *The French Lieutenant's Woman*.
3. Comment on the association between *Jane Eyre* and Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea*.

Medium Answer Type Questions:

1. Write a short note on the 'Campus Novel' which emerged as a genre during the modern period.
2. Discuss *Lord of the* Fliesas an allegorical novel.
3. Discuss Richard Adams' novel *Watershhip Down* as an anthropomorphic text.

Short Answer Type Questions:

1. Justify Allen Sillitoe as one of the 'Angry Young Men' of 1950s.
2. Give a brief note on the epic elements of Richard Adams' *Watership Down*.
3. Write a short note on 'University novels' with reference to Kingsley Amis and David Lodge.

3.11.6. Suggested Reading

Gillie, Christopher. *Longman* Companion *to English Literature*. Longman, 1986.

James, David (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to British Fiction since 1945*. Cambridge University Press, 2015.

Greenblatt, Stephen (ed.) *The Norton Anthology of English Literature (vol.2)*. W. Norton and co, 2006.

Stringer, Jenny. *The Oxford Companion to Twentieth-Century Literature in English*. Oxford University Press, 2004.

Unit 12 ❐ William Golding: *Lord Of the Flies*

Structure

3.12.1. Objectives

This Unit aims to help learners analyse William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* as a complex moral narrative, understanding that evil is a pervasive element not confined to specific characters, and to evaluate the novel's exploration of whether science, intellect, or spiritual insight can save humanity.

3.12.2. Introduction

Published in 1954, in *Lord of the Flies*, William Golding skilfully combined his perception of humanity with the years of experience he had with schoolboys. He was heavily influenced by the social, religious, military as well as cultural ethos of the time. Important personal experiences helped shape Golding's worldview and insight, which is reflected in his novels. He spent two years at Oxford University as a student of science before abandoning it for studying English literature, a step towards rejection of the scientific rationalism. Having been a part of the British Royal Navy when the second World War began, he was involved in the invasion of

Normandy. Post the military experience, he taught at a school and during this time he immersed himself in exploring the Greek classics, which had a significant impact on his works.

Lord of the Flies is an allegorical microcosm of the world that Golding lived as well as participated in. For an in-depth analysis of the duality of savagery and civilization that is inherent in humanity, Golding uses the trope of an island as a setting where a group of marooned British boys find themselves. Being away from the adult world, they enjoy freedom which makes them enact their worst impulses. The group of boys are soon divided and the boys who are faithful to the ways of civilisation face intimidation from the boys who have given in to the innate aggression. The novel exemplifies the failure of rationalism and break down of all seemingly civilized forces. Golding views the world with a rather fatalistic view which was in contradiction with the rationalism that Golding was raised in. While his father's optimism made him feel that mankind can be perfected with efforts and purged of undesirable traits, Golding's assessment was more pessimistic as he viewed human nature as consisting of both good and evil, which was intertwined. Golding's view suggests that he did not believe in social reform to cure humanity of the inherent aggressiveness and evil, but he shows that a break down in the social order can be traced to a moral degeneration at the individual level.

Lord of the Flies addresses morally complex themes of good and evil, and by extension it can be studied as a representation of the Judeo-Christian idea of the original sin. When it was first published, many critics criticized it as they were not impressed by Golding's choice of not adhering to the popular contemporary literary movements and experiments concerning existentialism and sociological themes but delving in theology and mysticism.

While teaching in a school, Golding was witness to the reality of the behaviour of the schoolboys and their tendencies, which later proved to be important considerations in his literary endeavours. The reality that he perceived was very different from the children's adventure stories, such as *Coral Island*, by R.M. Ballantyne which exemplified good assumptions about schoolboys and British culture, like being naturally righteous and innocent, which Golding found to be false. This novel can be considered as almost a parody of *Coral Island* as the boys resolve to savagery and anarchy.

3.12.3. William Golding: His World

William Gerald Golding was born in 1911 in Cornwall, England. His father, Alec, was a schoolteacher and a supporter of rationalism, the idea where reason rather than experiences was a means of gaining knowledge and understanding the world. Alec's anti-religious views were dominant in Golding's growing up years which disregarded emotionally based experiences,

such as fear of dark. His mother, Mildred, was a supporter of the British suffrage movement. Following his father's belief, he studied science for two years, later switching to literature. He graduated in 1935, with a degree in English and a diploma in education. From 1935 to 1939, he worked as an actor, write and producer with a small theatre company. With the exception of five years that he spent in the navy, he taught English and philosophy until 1961 after which he gave up his job to devote time to his writing.

Although *Lord of the Flies* was not the first novel to be authored, it was the first to be published after being rejected for a number of times. William Golding's life experiences find a synthesis in *Lord of the Flies* as he investigates three key aspects of the human experiences which forms the basis of the themes expounded by him. The first being the desire for establishing a political and social order through institutions like parliaments, governments and legislatures (represented through conch and platform). Secondly, the natural predisposition of human nature towards violence and evil, visible in every country's need to maintain a strong military force (represented by the choirboys who turn into hunters and later into murderers as well as the war that is raging beyond the island). Thirdly, the believe in divine intervention, superstitions and destiny (represented by the chanting, dances and sacrifices to appease Beast).

This novel was followed by *The Inheritors* (1955), which depicts how the deceitful and violent Homo Sapiens defeated the gentler Neanderthals. *Pincher Martin* (1956) followed next. It deals with survival after shipwreck, just like *Lord of the Flies*. During the Second World War, Christopher Martin, a navy lieutenant, is thrown off a ship during combat. The story unfurls from the vantage point of him clinging on to a rock to save his life, describing the struggle for survival and recounting the details of his life.

Golding further experimented with the flashback technique that he first used in *Pincher Martin* in his next novel, *Free Fall* (1959). Deviating from the narrative voice used in the earlier novels, this story is narrated through a first-person narrator, an artist named Samuel Mountjoy. The novel is modelled on Dante's *La Vita Nuova*, which is a collection of love poems intermingled with Dante's own comments on the poems. Mountjoy becomes the mouthpiece of Golding as he comments on the conflict between faith and rationalism. In *The Spire* (1964), issues of faith are highlighted. The novel expounds the story of the human cost of a spire's construction as Dean of Barchester Cathedral decides to build a 400-foot high spire on top of the cathedral but the foundation of the cathedral was not strong enough to hold it.

Apart from these, he wrote many novels like *The Pyramid* (1967), *Darkness Visible* (1979), *The Paper Men* (1984) and others. He also published three essay collection, namely

The Hot Gates and Other Occasional Pieces (1966), *A Moving Target* (1982) and *An Egyptian Journal* (1985), which are sometimes comic and illuminate the plots of his novels. William Golding received many accolades and awards during his lifetime. He was a member of the Royal Society of Literature. He was knighted in 1988. One of his novels, *Rites of Passage* (1980) received the Booker Prize. He was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 1983. He died in 1993.

3.12.4. Locating *Lord of The Flies*

Golding wrote *Lord of the Flies* in 1954, which is less than a decade after the second World War, when the world found itself in the midst of Cold War. The memories of the atrocities of the Holocaust, the ill-effects of atomic bombs and all the horrific events of the wars were still fresh in the minds of the people at the time when the novel was first published. The environment of fear along with technology's unchecked advances serve as a backdrop to the events that unfold on the island. Over the course of history, it has been observed that in times of socio-economic crises, the general masses feel vulnerable which makes them turn to a leader who exhibits strength and has the ability to offer protection. In the novel, Jack and the group of hunters, offer the comfort of meat and protection through dictatorship, thereby fulfilling the role of a leader. In exchange for this protection and comfort, the others have to sacrifice their moral reservations which they might have regarding his way of rule and he enthusiastically punishes the boys who oppose joining his tribe. These circumstances to some extend reflect the economic suffering that countries faced during the time of the world wars which gave way to the rise of autocratic rule and worldwide recession in the 1930s.

According to Golding, mankind's inclination towards violence and evil, combined with the play of fear leads people to act in inconceivable ways. This view was primarily based on his wartime experiences in the British Navy where he understood that the unimaginable brutality exhibited by the Nazis was not limited to any specific group but was potential present in everyone. While the horrific news of Nazi concentration camps shook the world, Golding felt that none of the countries were far from committing acts of such atrocity. The catastrophic loss of lives, use of technologically advanced warfare and committing atrocities against others were important events that Golding was sensitive to and these finds expression in the events of the novel.

3.12.5. Introduction to The Characters

Ralph

He is the protagonist and the elected leader of the boys. He is not the smartest or the strongest among the group but has the charisma of a leader. He believes in civilization, rules and domestic order but loses his authority and also comes close to losing his life to Jack's lust for power.

Piggy

He is subjected to ridicule due to his physical attributes like weight, asthma and his general weakness. He represents the power of intellect and is a symbolically the brain of the group. It is his spectacles that light the fire which is an important trope of the novel. He remains loyal to Ralph throughout but ultimately dies.

Jack

The leader of the choirboys initially and later the leader of the hunters. He leads the choirboys to mutiny against Ralph's leadership by manipulating their instincts. Jack is obsessed with hunting and prefers the savage reward of meat over the hope of being rescued.

Simon

He is the visionary of the group. Prone to fainting, he likes to spend time alone in the jungle. Due to these reasons, he is considered odd by others. It is only him who understands the reality of the beast but before he can share the realization with others he is killed in a ritualistic frenzy.

Roger

A shrewd and secretive boy who shows cruelty towards weaker boys. After joining Jack's tribe, he becomes the hangman and is responsible for Piggy's death and torturing Samneric.

Samneric

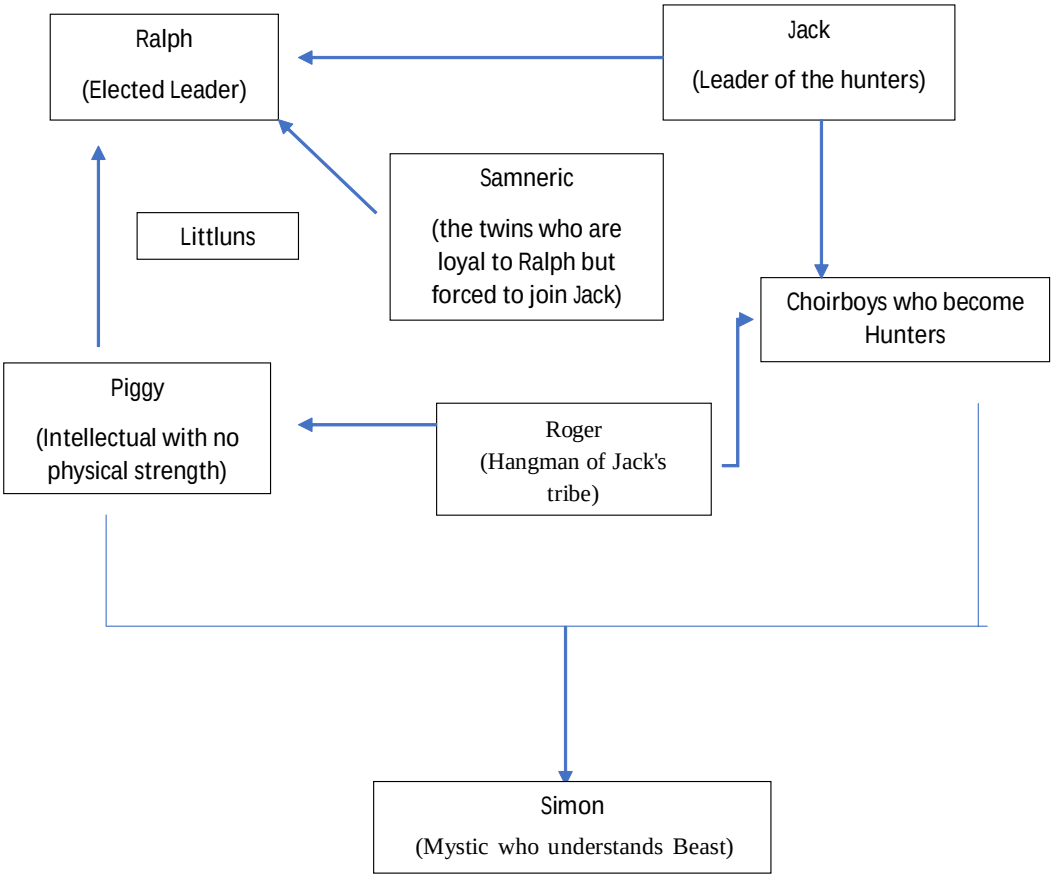
Sam and Eric, collectively referred to as Samneric, are in charge of keeping the signal fire going. They are loyal to Ralph until they are captured by Jack's boys. They are seen as having a singular identity as they finish one another's sentences.

Littluns

The little boys who are around six years of age. They side with Ralph during the mutiny.

Robert

A bigun who enacts the role of a pig during a mock hunting. He gets hurt when the tribal dance turns into a violent beating.



3.12.6. Chapter-Wise Summary

Chapter 1:

As the novel opens, Ralph, a young boy of twelve years,is seen navigating his way through a jungle when he hears another voice as a boy scrambles out of the undergrowth to join him.

This boy is in sharp contrast to him. While Ralph is fair and attractive and having a boxer's physique, the boy was stumpy, bespectacled, stout and asthmatic. As the narrative unfurls, we are made aware that they were evacuees from an atomic war and had escaped from the passenger tube from an aircraft that which was under attack. The aircraft sank but some other children, along with them, must have escaped. Ralph is still hopeful that the pilot will come back for them but the fat boy is aware of the reality.

Their talks reveal their differences further. Ralph appears to belong to the middle-class through his speech, background and mannerisms. His attitude to the fat boy is reserved, whose speech is grammatically incoherent and his background seems to be not as affluent as Ralph. The fat boy reveals that his nickname was Piggy in school. Ralph finds this hilarious and continues to taunt him with his nickname. Ralph finds a conch shell and begins to blow it. On hearing this sound, a group of boys wearing black cloaks and caps of choirboys emerge from the forest. The leader of these boys is Jack Merridew who seems to be indifferent towards Simon, a part of his group, and hostile towards Piggy, who he calls Fatty. There is a tussle between the boys regarding who will be the leader of the group and after a vote, Ralph is chosen by the majority and assumes leadership.

As a gesture of goodwill, Ralph tells Jack he can keep the choir, and Jack makes an announcement that they will be an army of hunters. Ralph takes charge and decides that they should explore their surroundings to see if they were on an island. He chooses Jack and Simon to accompany him instead of choosing Piggy, who is hurt. Following Ralph's orders, Piggy stays back to learn the names of the rest of the survivors. The three boys start their journey excitedly as they meander their way through the jungle as explorers. They reach a top of a great rock and discover that they are on an island. They share a sense of triumph on learning that they have an island to themselves. While returning they fail to kill a pig as they were horrified at the idea of killing a living creature. However, Jack swears that they will do it the next time.

Although aware of how young the boys are, yet as the narrative progresses the readers cease to be aware of this fact. The emotions, actions and thoughts portrayed are the basic nature of human beings. It is interesting to see how these emotions manifest among young children in a manner similar to adults. The trope of isolated people on an island enables the author to probe into the deepest recesses of mind as they are away from the civilized society that guide and shape the accept code of conduct.

Chapter 2 :

Ralph blows the conch and the rest of the group gather to listen to what had happened on their expedition. He explains to them they are alone on an inhabited island. Jack interrupts to insist that having an army is necessary- for hunting pings. Ralph agrees with this but puts across a serious message saying that since there are no grown-ups, they ought to be responsible and look after themselves. Further they make rules such as they will have to raise their hands if they wished to speak and endorse punishment for who breaks them.

Piggy takes the couch and tries to make the others realise their position by asking them, "Who knows we're here?." Ralph takes back the conch and reiterates the message that Piggy wants to send by repeating that they are cut off from any kind of help. The initial unsure replies are replaced by silence. Ralph reassures them that they are on 'a good island,' with food and drink so they can enjoy while waiting for rescue. One of the smallest boys of the group, aged six years, is encouraged to express his fears. When he takes the conch from Ralph, everyone starts laughing which makes him cry but nevertheless Ralph gives him the conch and he says that he fears a 'snake-thing' that wants to eat him. He claims to have seen this 'beastie' in the woods, which turns into a creeper in the day time but emerges during the dark. Ralph tries to reassure others that there is no such thing on the island and Jack takes back the conch and says that although such a thing does not exist yet he and the hunters will hunt it down.

Changing the topic, Ralph reminds everyone that they need to think about how they will be rescued. Everyone agrees and Ralph says that the ship has a map of the island and a ship should be coming soon to their rescue. Everyone applauds and he continues explaining that they could light up a fire to attract attention of any ship that might be passing by. The group begins to gather wood but Piggy, due to asthma, is slow to climb where wood is collected to be lit. Ralph suddenly realizes that they did not possess any means by which they can light the fire and so he appeals to his group for matches. Jack grabs Piggy's spectacles and uses the lenses of the spectacle to focus the sun rays on a piece of wood which successfully catches fire. The fire burns brightly but there is no smoke and Ralph announces that it is useless. There is an argument among them regarding the utility of the fire. Ultimately, Jack asserts that they must do the right thing as they are English and undertakes the task of keeping the fire going along with some of his hunters. However, there is no sign of any rescue. Piggy notices that the trees have caught fire on the other side of the island. The fast spreading fire destroys a huge area of forest and there is a lot of smoke. Piggy solely remains calm and tries to make the others understand what their real challenges are, like, shelter, proper fire and to obey their leader, Ralph. The animal imagery used in this chapter to describe the fire has an undertone

which can be applicable to the wild behaviour of the kids. Golding's view of the external things and the incidents run parallel to the internal fears and moods of the boys. This is obvious through the interplay of the symbols of light and darkness, suggestive of fear and evil.

Chapter 3 :

Jack is determined to prove himself as a hunter but after repeated attempts he is unsuccessful. When he comes back to the beach, he sees Ralph and Simon struggle to erect a temporary shelter. Even after a long time, they have not made sufficient progress. They begin to realize that meetings and discussions fail to solve their problems as they become reluctant after each talk. Ralph feels that Jack and his hunters have not succeeded in hunting nor have they helped in the other tasks. There is no unity among them as they fight over various issues and their actions reveal that they have different priorities. For Jack, killing a pig is more important while for Ralph getting rescued is more important. Slowly they begin to recognize that there exist huge differences among them which separates them. In this chapter, the use of animal imagery is further enhanced as Jack is show naked and almost 'dog-like.' Jack is compared to the primordial man. Consumed by rage, communication seems to be a failure as they experience different frustrations resulting in parallel talks between Jack and Ralph.

Chapter 4 :

The boys slowly adapt to the life on the island and their live falls into a pattern guided by the weather. The mornings are spent playing while the afternoon heat is unbearable and it creates mirages which they eventually learn to overlook. The evenings are pleasant but the night is seen as threatening and to protect themselves from the unseen dangers they huddle together. There are sufferings but the fear of darkness looms large. They take the illusions of mirage and dreams of night as reality. The incompetence to distinguish real from the unreal is an important theme of the novel. The littluns, referring to the group of small boys, are caught up in their play and are not able to grasp the reality. They are generally seen as a group and lack individual identity. However, this is not the case with Henry and Johnny who act as bullies while tormenting a little boy. An insight into Henry's mind is revealed when he says that he is "exercising control over living things" reflecting the human instinct of physical dominance over creatures weaker than them. Jack becomes obsessed with hunting to such an extent that he tries to camouflage, not only disguising himself from the rest of the group but from himself. The transformation 'from shame and self-consciousness' into savagery is striking. In contrast to this, Piggy symbolizes progress as he is seen struggling along with Ralph to make a sundial, an instrument which belongs to the civilized world. Ralph mocks Piggy, which he fails to recognize as he is

rejected by him for talking about rescue. When smoke is visible on the horizon, it kindles hope of rescue but the disappearing ship brings agony revealing how desperately they need rescue and their inability to cope with their situation. Ralph's anger intensifies when he sees the hunters coming triumphantly with their kill as they had let the fire go out completely. There is a persistent struggle for power among Ralph and Jack. Ralph tries to assert his position as a leader again, much to the annoyance and anger of Jack who wants his skills to be admired and his obsession understood by the rest. Ralph concedes to borrow Piggy's spectacles to ignite the fire and while returning them he suddenly realizes that he has dissociated himself from Jack and forged a relationship with Piggy.

Chapter 5 :

Ralph calls for a meeting and reiterates their decision to maintain sanitation, water supply, shelter and keeping the fire alight. Then he asks the other boys to share their fears. Jack points out that had there been a beast on the island, they would have seen it during their hunting expeditions. Piggy logically explains that they should use psychology to explain the experience of fear which will render it as invalid. Simon tries to enlighten them by explaining that it could be the boys themselves or something intrinsic to human nature that could be the beast that they were fearing. This abstract explanation is not understood by all and the talk leads to discussions about ghosts. This sparks an outburst from Piggy and an ensuing reaction from Jack, who openly undermines Ralph's authority and leads the boys to the beach initiating a tribal dance.

It is only Piggy and Simon who show rationality and the power of conceptual thinking. Piggy does not partake in any physical endeavours due to his poor physical condition and Simon prefers to be alone in his spot, meditating, and that allows him to acquire an understanding of the complexities of human nature. This silence that Simon enjoys is a threat to the other boys as they find jungle's quietness disturbing while hunting. Another incident that shows that they find silence threatening is that they break into a chant "What's your name? What's your name?" during the meeting when they ask Percival his name and are received by his silence. Chanting is linked to primitiveness and not with order that Ralph is trying to establish.

Ralph is beginning to lose confidence after the hard labour of erecting shelter and no hope of rescue. He is a representative of the civilized English society but he is neither as intelligent as Piggy nor as savage as Jack. Sometimes he experiences lack of clarity leading to a loss of verbal command but he experiences many revelations in the course of the narrative. His maturity is seen as he ponders over concepts and realises the gap that he had associated with this life and the stark reality. He reflects on question of reality as appearance as he sees the

light of the sunset makes the surroundings loo different. Moreover, he assigns value to the intellectual gift of Piggy. Until now he was leading by the virtue of his charisma which Piggy lacked, but now he starts attributing value to thought, logic and wisdom.

Chapter 6 :

The chapter opens and closes ominously as the aerial battle continues in the world where the boy long to return. After the assembly, the boys go off to sleep. A casualty of the raging battle floats on the island due to his open parachute. Due to the wind, the body is dragged to the top of the hill. Sam and Eric, also referred to as Samneric, catch a glimpse of the body and run to Ralph with the news, exaggerated by fear. They even report having seen eyes, claws and teeth, which they could not have possibly witnessed. This world is in contrast to the world of adults which signifies order and security. Ralph calls for a meeting at dawn and decides to investigate the only spot left on the island resembling a rock castle. Ralph alone leads the way, followed by jack a few minutes later. Having established that there was no beast, the other boys join and wish to play there. Later they go back to the fire site. As a leader, Ralph's pressing concern is to guide the group through the unchartered area of the castle rock. He takes the responsibility of going to the hill alone although he is equally frightened. He admits that he “did not really expect to meet any beast” and, in case they happened to see one. He did not “know what he would do about it.” The support of the group wavers between Ralph and Jack, based on their actions and bravery.

Chapter 7 :

On the way back, Ralph realizes the dishevelled state of the group and daydreams about bathing and having a haircut. Staring at the vast ocean, he seems to abandon all hopes of a rescue. Ralph successfully strikes a boar and Jack leads a pig hunt where he is slightly injured. After this, they put up a re-enactment of the hunting which gets out of hand and Robert, who was playing the role of the pig, is lucky to not get injured. Ralph urges the group to move back but the undulated terrain hinder their progress. Since Piggy and some of the other little boys were on the other side of the island, Simon volunteers to cross the island alone to inform Piggy that it would be dark before the others returned. Darkness surrounds them by the time they reach the base of the mountain. Ralph, Jack and Roger volunteer to look for the beast while the others return to the platform. Tired by Jack’s continuous mocking, Ralph asks him to go by himself. When they investigate, they all are terrified by the image of the beast, which in reality was the dead paratrooper that appeared to be a huge ape and moved when the wind touched the parachute. They all return to the platform in the dark.

When Ralph hits the boar, he is exuberant and this emotion makes him connect with Jack's obsession with hunting. He recognizes the instinct to hunt and kill and after experiencing these emotions, he appreciates the preoccupations and priorities of Jack, which is present in all humans, although latent mostly. He grudgingly accepts that Jack could have been used as a resource all this while as when their progress in the jungle is hindered, they rely on Jack's knowledge of the island which he had gathered during his hunting expeditions for an alternate route. Ralph realizes that Jack becomes competitive and aggressive whenever he is not in charge and they see each other as competitors and not as allies.

Chapter 8 :

Ralph infuriates Jack when he tells Piggy that Jack is not immune to fear as he would also hide if the beast attacked. In response to this comment, Jack tries to instigate the other boys into a revolt to remove Ralph. When the boys do not rebel, he announces his defection and goes into the forest. Simon suggests that they should face whatever is in the mountains but no one shows the courage. Thankful that Jack was gone, Piggy suggests that they should start a fire on the beach now so that they do not have to climb the mountain. While everyone is gathering wood, most of the big boys sneak out to join Jack as they were reluctant to openly vote against Ralph. Simon also disappears to the hiding spot after the unsuccessful attempt to address the group. Meanwhile, Jack is successful in another hunting campaign. He feels liberate, symbolising the shedding off of all the civil and social constructs as he forsakes clothes and wears only paint and knife. He kills a nursing sow in full view of Simon's hiding spot and impales the head on a stick as an offering to the beast. Having being previously injured, he now targets a defenceless and vulnerable sow, an act devoid of mercy. Simon starts hallucinating that the head is talking to him and ultimately, he loses consciousness. The sow speaks to him in a male voice becoming the Lord of the Flies. A literal translation of the Greek Beelzebub, the Lord of the Flies represents evil and therefore, by extension, Jack is evil personified. Jack invites Ralph and his group to the roast as he tries to recruit them to join his gang. Similarly, Ralph also tries to win over the other group but momentarily loses his train of thought as he thinks of being rescued.

Both Jack and Simon have different perceptions of regarding barbarity and evil as Jack revels in it but Simon is undone by it, stuck by the image of the Lord of the Flies. There is twist in the presentation of the ideas of fun and savagery. Since the beginning, Ralph's objective for the group was to have fun like on an adventure trip but when Jack defects, he also lures some of the other boys with the promise of fun. This fun is accompanied with dressing and hunting while the earlier once was constrained within the bounds of a civil society.

Chapter 9 :

There is a storm building over the island. Simon wakes up and goes towards the mountain where the beast was sighted. He discovers the true identity of the paratrooper. From the high hill he sees most of the boys at Jack's camp and so he decides to head down to give this news to the others but he is weakened due to the day's experiences. Soon Ralph and Piggy gather that the boys who were loyal to them have also gone to join Jack's party. Out of hunger and curiosity, they also go. Although Jack allows them to eat but as soon as everyone has finished eating, he asks the boys to choose whose group would they want to remain in. On one hand Ralph reminds the others that they had chosen him as their leader while Jack also poses a strong contention as he has adopted the role of a tribal chief.

The storm begins and, in response to the rain, Jack orders a dance. Ralph and Piggy also participate in the periphery. When the dance is in motion, Simon emerges from the forest and finds himself in the centre of the dancing. He tries to share with them the real identity of the beast but he is not heard by the others over the sound of the storm and the frenzied chanting. Overcome by the wildness, the group turns on Simon as if he is the beast and kills him. As the rain increases, they retreat leaving the body on the beach which is engulfed by the tide. The strong winds lift the paratrooper's parachute and carries him out to the sea. This is witnessed by the boys who are frightened.

The weather symbolizes an assessment of the action taking place in the narrative and is an ominous sign. The chapter focuses on the fulfilment of Simon's role of a visionary mystic as he awakens from the fainting spell and goes out to the mountain to find the truth. He is not afraid of the beast and has a philosophical take regarding the beast inherent in the human beings. Having seen the vision of the Lord of the Flies, he moves into another realm of emotion. He frees the lines of the parachute from the rocks, enabling the imagined beast to fly away during the storm. The paratrooper is a representative of the true beast which brings out the worst in the boys, manifested in the savagery and frenzy that they display and the killing of Simon.

Chapter 10 :

The next day, Ralph discovers that out of all the boys only Piggy, Samneric and few littluns remain with him. Ruminating over the previous night's incident, Ralph points out that they actually murdered Simon. He is the only character who has a realistic view of the events and calls the deed a murder. He also puts together what Simon had been shouting and the dead man they spotted, realizing that humanity has left them. Piggy objects to the term 'murder' as he does not want Samneric to know that they were a part of the deadly dance. Piggy and

Samneric are in denial. Piggy tries to maintain his intellectual and scientific demeanour and looks for a 'formula' justify Simon's death. He explains that the assault was justified as he crawled out of the forest and into the dancing circle. Ralph's association with the civilized self crumbles although he fights to maintain it.

Jack progressively becomes paranoid and more dictator-like to his group members, having a boy tied and beaten for infuriating him. He plans to steal fire from Ralph's camp. He also tries to assure the others that they had only beaten the beast and not killed him. Being a dictator, he tries to control the truth that everybody believes. He is in complete denial that they had killed a boy who belonged to their former group. Meanwhile, the boys in Ralph's camp decide to let the fire die as they did not want to go into the dark to collect wood. As Jack and his hunters cannot steal burning wood, they attack Ralph's group and steal Piggy's spectacles, which makes Jack feel like a real chief. This renders Piggy ineffective and helpless, depriving Ralph of the intellectual help.

Chapter 11 :

Having suffered the loss of a signal fire and to find a solution to Piggy's blindness, Ralph calls for a meeting and decide that they will ask for the spectacles back from Jack's tribe as the signal fire is important. Samneric express fear in confronting the other boys who have become savages. Jack's group is hostile towards Ralph's group. When Jack comes back from hunting, he tells Ralph to return to his side of the island. Ralph calls him a thief and a brief fight ensues. Jack's group fail to realize the importance that Ralph's attaches to the signal fire. Jack orders Samneric to be tied, leading to a fistfight between Ralph and him. Piggy tries to interrupt and scold the boys for becoming savages. Roger releases a big boulder in Piggy's direction which knocks him off the cliff, resulting in his death. Jack celebrates his victory and throws a spear at Ralph who is injured but flees. Samneric are still tied, intimidated by Jack and soon to be tortured by Roger.

Ralph has lost all his authority and the conch is the only tool left through which he can assert his authority but it becomes ineffectual as the savages have lost respect for it. It symbolized the power to speak during meetings and by extension the power of speech itself. Until his death, Piggy's perspective does not shift sue to external circumstances. At the meeting, he still supports Ralph and relies on him to get things right irrespective of the fact that Jack's tribe has no regard for his authority. Ralph and Piggy represent a certain code of conduct, morals and ethics which originates from a civil society's values and in sharp contrast to this is what Jack's culture stands for. Roger undergoes a transformation, as earlier he restrains from

throwing stones at other boys due to his social conditioning to his releasing of the boulder that kills Piggy. He mentally dehumanizes the boys who do not belong to Jack's tribe and this frees him from all restraints. He is now perceived as a 'hangman' who can single handedly kill someone which is in start contrast to Simon's death. Evil has symbolically triumphed. Spirituality and creativity were lost with the demise of Simon, with Piggy's death intellect and reason has been defeated and authority, tradition and rules have been shattered with the conch.

Chapter 12 :

Ralph returns to the platform while the tribe are feasting inside the rock castle. Afraid to be alone at night, he decides to go back to Jack's side of the island to reason with them. While going he encounters the head of the pig that spoke to Simon and he knocks it on the ground and takes the stake to be used as a weapon. He sees Samneric are on watch at the entrance as they have been forced to join the tribe. Someone overhears them talking to Ralph and they are punished. Ralph finds a place to stay for the night but is betrayed by Samneric the next day. Becoming a prey for the tribe unleashes his animalistic survival instincts accompanied by the intellect of a human. Once the tribe draws out Ralph by setting fire to the thicket, he is on the run. The fire spreads across the island and he has to outrun the savages as well as the fire. He is able to make his way to the beach and falls in front of a British naval officer, whose ship was attracted by the smoke from the raging fire. Ralph breaks into tears for all his loses when he realizes that finally he will be rescued. It is ironical how the naval officer's uniform is reminiscent of civilized war paint and, for him, Ralph is not a victim of a tribe but a boy who needs a bath and haircut.

3.12.7. Analysis of Major Characters

Ralph

Ralph is an attractive and decently intelligent boy who represents leadership, socialized and civilized human being. His inclination and ability of leadership is apparent from the beginning. He envisages about setting up an organized society on the island and conceives of fire, shelter and meeting place. He matures over the course of the novel and synthesizes as well as tries to apply Piggy's intellectualism. Ralph is able to recognize that superstitions and false fears prove to be obstacles to survival. His middle-class background lends him the dependability resulting from a stable background, which means a lot to him as he daydreams about it while facing the crises on the island. This normality and stability render him with average intelligence and fair-mindedness. He works vigilantly to keep the group's focus on the issue of being rescued. In

certain incidents he takes the lead, like while investigating the rock castle despite his fear of the beast. He adheres to civility and politeness under all circumstances which is a prerogative of the British culture and civilized society.

Ralph eventually loses his romantic attitude towards the adventures that he had anticipated on the island. The excitement that he had initially felt is replaced by the longing for the familiar surroundings and comfort. He recalls his earlier life which was civilized and fantasizes about bathing and grooming. These images of home and innocence that he symbolizes undergoes a drastic change as the experiences of the island destroys the innocence and exposes him to the crude human nature. With the passage of time on the isolated island, Ralph begins to lose his power of organized thought. He is lost in an incoherent labyrinth of vague thoughts and this is manifested in his apparent loss of verbal skills, which is a threat to the group as his authority on the platform is a symbol of ordered governance and problem solving where verbal articulation is a basic necessity.

Ralph's mental mechanism is vulnerable to the kind of decay and degeneration that his clothing is subjected to, as both are tattered by the primitive forces. When Ralph convulses on finding dirt and decay, he is figuratively uncovering humankind's darker side. At the same time, he has understood that reason, intellect, empathy and sensitivity are the qualities that can keep evil and savagery at bay. Though he is weighed down by difficulties and fears accompanying the primitive life, he becomes progressively infected by the barbarity of the other boys. He is the only one who terms Simon's death as murder as he has a realistic view of life. He contradictorily feels aversion as well as excitement over the killing that he saw. At the end, when he meets the officer on the beach, he is discomfited due to his unclean appearance rather than relieved at being rescued. In giving up his innocence, he has attained a deeper insight into the human nature, an understanding that eluded him prior to his experiences on the island regarding the evil and savagery present in people but repressed by the civil society.

Jack

Jack embodies the evil and violent side of the human nature. Having been a head boy at his school and a former choirmaster, he had the experience of exerting control over others before coming on the island. He believes in setting rules and meting out punishment to whoever breaks the rules yet he breaks rules himself for his self-interest. His only interest, which becomes an obsession, is hunting. Although hunting started as a necessary activity for their survival, yet it magnifies into an overpowering desire to kill other creatures. Hunting brings out the savagery

that was already inherent in him, making him almost like a predator. His raw emotions run and fuel his animal instincts.

Jack's desire to dominate the group is the starting point of the conflict as he is not willing to work with Ralph for the greater benefit. He undermines the authority and power of the conch, declaring that the power of conch in redundant on certain parts of the island yet he uses it to his advantage when he requires it. For example, when he calls upon the others to impeach Ralph, he does it through the conch. The conch becomes a symbol of formal rule and boundaries for him that had prevented him from giving in to his impulses of dominating others. Since their birth, the boys had lived their lives moderated by the social rules set by the society repressing physical aggressiveness, however stranded on the island the social conditioning fades away. He loses interest in the politeness and civility of the social order, symbolically represented through his disdain and refusal to keep the fire burning and taking up other responsibilities for the survival of the group. He denounces the rule of order and the dictator in his character becomes apparent.

Piggy

Piggy is the intellectual boy of the group with poor eyesight and asthma. Physically, he is vulnerable and slow compared to the rest of the boys in spite of his superior intelligence. He is the symbol of rational world. Through him, we get the glimpse of the only female voice in the narrative in the form of his aunt's words. His role as Ralph's advisor is crucial as his intelligence benefits the whole group. Although he is intelligent yet he cannot be the leader as he lacks the charisma and leadership qualities. He is a believer of following the social conventions exemplified through the incidents where he believes that having the conch in his hand gives him the right to be heard. As a representative of the intellectual civilization, he is pragmatist and has a scientific temper as he is always looking for a logical explanation for every incident as evident in his explanation of Simon's death. He states that the attack on Simon was justified as Simon strangely emerged out of the forest and crawled into the ring.

Piggy desperately tries to preserve some trace of civilization on the island as he assumes wrongly that Jack's tribe has attacked their group to steal the conch whereas in reality they had come for the fire. Even till his death, Piggy's viewpoint does not undergo any change in response to the experiences he encounters on the island. His predominantly intellect-based attitude towards life is modelled on the approach and rules of the adult world which is authoritative and he believes everyone should share his attitude and values. When he comments 'What's grownups goin' to think?' at Simon's death, it is an indication of his mourning for the

loss of ethics, discipline and values which caused the death and not so much a mourning for the death of a boy.

Simon

Simon's role in the narrative is of an artistic as well as religious visionary, which is established through his secret place of meditation and also by the description of his eyes as 'bright that they deceived Ralph into thinking him delightfully gay'. In contrast to Piggy's spectacles, which were also a symbol of vision, Simon's bright eyes are an indication of an alternative kind of vision. He is very different from the other boys in terms of his physical feebleness as well as his concern for the other weak and vulnerable boys. The littluns follow him and he takes care of them by picking fruits for them from spots that they are unable to reach, lending him an almost saint-like image. He has a morally strong character as he stands up for Piggy and helps him get back his spectacles when Jack knocks them off, thereby alluding to his visionary bent.

Simon's tendency of spending time alone and having a hidden place in the jungle makes him a loner and marks him as odd for the other boys. However, Simon's credibility as a mystic is recognized when he makes a prophesy to Ralph, stating that he will get back to where he came from. He develops an abstract understanding of man's evil streak latent in each of us. When Simon discovers the beast, it is a human being, thus metaphorically emphasizing that the beast is in the human beings. It is symbolical that a mystic discovers the beast that everyone is scared of as Simon is the outsider, like a visionary in any society. He undertakes the quest to uncover the true identity of the beast on the mountain as he understands the importance of facing the fears and, in this way, he discovers the false beast and metaphorically representing the need to face the inner beasts in them. He usually stays on the fringes and has the power to understand things which are beyond the comprehension of the majority. He embodies philosophical and abstract thoughts. Simon's deeper understanding of the darker side of human nature is juxtaposed against Piggy and Ralph's equating adulthood with higher understanding. By daringly pursuing to face the beast on the mountain, Simon fulfils his destiny even though he cannot share the insight with other boys as they are still not enlightened enough to accept it. Instead, he dies a tragic death as a result of being enlightened but a target for the boys' inner fear. Simon's dead body is covered by phosphorescent jellyfish-like creatures, rendering him a representative of knowledge.

Samneric

Sam and Eric are the representatives of civilized and socialized persons. They are identical twins and have always been considered as having a singular identity. They have submitted to

their collective identity. Initially they were drawn to the orderly rule and hope of rescue but they soon give into the allure of Jack's tribe. They symbolically represent the masses who play by the rules of whoever is in power. Intimidated by Jack, they discard their duty of tending to the signal fire on his command. They are not apologetic of their reluctance to responsibly discharge their duty of tending the fire as they mock Ralph when he is angry at the loss of the opportunity of possible rescue due to their negligence. This laughter could be a medium to negotiate with their guilt or they have already forgotten the loss. It could also represent their instinct to avoid punishment. After witnessing the horror of Simon's death in which they also participate, they are fearful of their own lives as they have shown their loyalty to Ralph. When Ralph decides to approach Jack's group, they want to paint themselves like the boys of Jack's tribe as they want to integrate into that group. On being captured by Jack's tribe, they are quick to abandon their loyalty to civilization as they had initially sworn to avoid punishment. They betray Ralph's concerns for their personal interest, signifying that their return to civilization will be easy as they can switch their allegiance to whoever is in charge.

Roger

Roger has sadist tendencies as evident in the enjoyment that he derives from hurting others. His motives, although evil, are different from those of Jack. Jack practices leadership and enjoys the thrill of the hunt but Roger enjoys hurting people. Initially Roger is described as a boy who keeps to himself which is probably due to his secret evil side as he has been conditioned to mask his impulses and desires. The kind of leadership that Jack demonstrates gives him the chance to unleash his inner cruelty. Roger's acts soon lend him the reputation of the hangman of the tribe, a torturer who is central to all dictator rules and he takes delight in the role of a killer. He can mentally dehumanize the boys who do not belong to the tribe which releases him from all the social restraints of decency and humanity. This helps him in releasing the rock which kills Piggy.

3.12.8. Major Themes:

- **Depiction of Human Nature**

One of the central themes dealt in the novel is the base and fallen nature of human emotions, and also portrays other themes like fear and power. In contrast to all the celebrated values of humankind, the boys in the novel are shown to be selfish, scared, greedy and, importantly, rebellious of social norms established by the adult authority. They have given in to the primitive nature, displaying cruel, vindictive and uncooperative nature which finally results into self-destructive behaviour. The social context of the novel is an important consideration when we

study the traits of the boys in the novel. Disillusioned by the evils of the two World Wars, the decline of religion and optimistic Victorian ideals result in the worldview projected in the novel. *Lord of the Flies* exposes the innate evil in the characters and sometimes reiterates it through repetition of behaviour. Jack becomes a cruel dictator of a tribe who orders Ralph's death at the hands of the choirboys, who have also turned into savages lacking mercy. Roger becomes the hangman or the torturer, driven by sadistic lust. What started as an innocent play of a make-believe world disintegrates into barbarity and violence. The incidents of cruelty represent the journey of realization of their instincts that the characters experience and the fulfilment of their uninhibited selves. However, some characters display good intentions and actions but they are not always rewarded. An essential illness plagues all the characters and this is deeply rooted in everyone's minds. In varying degrees, they also share the basic dark instinct as Ralph is also seen participating in the play-acting where he fights with Roger to hurt Robert who was acting as the pig.

The boys all fear the Beast as they cannot see him fully yet the unknown looms large in their lives. The unknown scares them, except Simon but ironically, he is killed when he comes to tell the others the truth about the beast which he discovers. The rest of the boys become a singular entity, united by fear, and they kill Simon giving vent to their inner bestiality. It is only Simon who prefers being alone and is never shown to be indulging in any evil act and paradoxically it is through death of the visionary and saint-like character that the diseased nature of man is represented. Simon is an unselfish boy as he consistently cares for the littluns, encourages Ralph's leadership, tries to save Piggy from Jack's rage, crosses the island alone to inform Piggy and the littluns, builds huts and, finally, makes the climb on the mountain alone to discover the truth about the beast only to be killed when he returns. He is sole character to be exempted from the essentially inherent evil human nature as he has the moral courage necessary to face the degeneration and bestiality of the boys.

- **Civilisation**

Civilisation has been presented both as a negative as well as a positive force. With the exception of Piggy, the boys are exuberant at the prospect of being away from the controlling and socially conditioned world of the adults and its rigid rules but some of them quickly come to realize that being removed from the protection of the adult world has its own problems. Incidents like irresponsible starting a fire and eating wild fruits which causes diarrhoea, prompts Ralph to assume the role of an adult which makes him insist on following rules which are formed to reinforce the order of the civilised world. This is almost a futile attempt to maintain the facade of civilisation that the action of the narrative is breaking down.

The rules that Ralph sets are gradually violated and disregarded, eventually dismissed by jack. The symbol of rationality and authority, the conch, is slowly ignored as well as the signal fire and shelters are abandoned. With the passage of time, the memory of civilization fades and this provokes the latent savagery in the boys to resurface, which unbinds them from the socially constructed codes. This leads to their joining of the tribe, dominated by a Chief who forces his will with brutality, and this results in a collective identity as they give up their individuality to conform to the Chief's whims.

It is only Ralph, Piggy and Simon who struggle to sustain the standards of the civilized world but they fail gradually as they are unsuccessful in maintaining the symbols of civilization, like shelter, cleanliness and fire. In contrast to this, Jack propagates an alternative kind of life that offers excitement through hunting and cruelty, free of any sort of responsibilities. In order to deal with the fear of the Beast among the boys, Jack says that it can be killed or placated. Ralph anguishes at the collapse of all forms of order and prays for a sign from civilization, denoting security and comfort. In an ironic answer to the prayer of civilization, a dead paratrooper reaches the island. This, again, signifies the dark and negative aspects of the civilized society and therefore metaphorically believed to be the Beast. There is implicit reference to violence throughout the text, civilized violence as well as the primitive violence. The boys have lost their innocence due to the world they inhabit, a world of wars and bestiality. They reach the island due to a war and are ultimately saved at the end when a warship comes to their rescue. The faith that Piggy bestows in the civilization proves to be misplaced as the scientific temper that he stands for has left the world in ruins, just like Jack and his tribe also destroy the island, thus becoming a victim of their own bestiality.

- **Fear and Beast**

Fear is a recurrent theme in the novel which manifests in different forms like a snake-like thing for a littlun or an ape-like beast for others which prowls after dark. The novel examines humankind's fallen nature as the basic reality and presents destructive behavior as an outcome of this which results in the pervasive fear. The darkness and shadows add to the mysterious nature of the island and, by extension, it refers to not just the physical shadows. The fear and constant need for reassurance hint that there exists something that is beyond reason, therefore the boys shudder as darkness encroaches. Ralph understand that the fear is the main cause of the disorder yet he commits the mistake of calling for an assembly at dusk, which is ominous.

To some extend Ralph shares some of the littlun's fears but it is only Jack who is aware of their instinctive nature. This knowledge enables him to manipulate their fears as he is sensitive to his own inner instincts which prompts him to offer solutions to cope with the Beast, an

embodiment of the boys' inner terrors. Jack and his tribesmen plan to track down the Beast and kill it ritualistically. The ritual itself represents a means by which they can attempt to tame their inner fears as well as the Beast. Jack mocks at their fears at times because he has ruthlessly mastered the fear present in himself. Simon proves to be the only exception as he is not controlled by the inner fears and is able to face the truth. He is not hindered by his intellectual and spiritual acumen or blinded by his instincts. He has the moral nerve to not only understand but confront the unknown. Even when he is about to experience an epileptic fit, he dares to face the pig's head and is able to resist the lure of the hallucinatory voice. The Lord of the Flies tries to trick him into believing that he is ignorant and should join the others but he stands his ground. He is already aware of the things that the voice tells him and, more importantly, he knows that the voice originates in his mind, along with the fear that it creates and the evil it encourages him to accept. Simon's realization of the truth strips the pig's head of the terror it perpetuates. He loses his life by attempting to disclose the truth to others who suffer from the torments of the Beast, which exists in them individually and all of them collectively, but they are not enlightened enough to understand it. In his futile attempt to free them from the fear that plagued the boys, Simon comes to be associated with it and ultimately killed. His death is a symbolical death of the truth. Ralph does not dare to see the truth embodied in the pig's head, he lashes out at it only to be mocked at. Towards the end of the novel, he becomes indistinguishable from the savages who pursue him. He becomes the personification of terror, embodying the fear that is all pervasive.

- **Power**

Lord of the Flies is an account of the unequal power struggle for power that takes place between Ralph, the elected chief of the group and Jack, who wants to usurp his leadership. On one hand, Ralph is tolerant, willing to listen to others and take their opinions, especially Piggy, and very particular in following the democratic principles symbolised by the conch shell. Ironically, the virtues that he possesses slowly undermine his authority and leads to his downfall. Jack, on the other hand, is guided by ambition and has a total disregard for anyone who appears to be weak. Since the beginning, he dominates others almost with a regimental authority and is devoid of compassion and concern. He successfully liberates himself, along with his hunters, into savagery and becomes obsessed with killing, which can be interpreted as the ultimate display of power. After killing the first pig, Jack and the hunters are elated that they had the potential to outwit a living creature, impose their will on it and take away its life at their whim. This excitement that Jack feels in killing a pig accentuates to the murder of Simon, followed by Piggy and the near-murder of Ralph, whom he needs to kill as he is the rival. For

the sake of power, Jack is ready to be ruthless with himself and others. He negates his individuality to assume the role of the tribal chief, who has life and death at his command.

Power becomes a game, not just restricted to the power of leadership but takes on perverse manifestations like physical power which allows them to inflict torture. Roger's gradual change from teasing to torture offers a clear example of the perversion of power which is demonstrated in the way he sadistically kills the sow. From this moment of realization, Roger pursues fulfilment of his perversion by inflecting pain and death which strips him of any residue of civilization. In Roger's character, we see the excesses of power that corrupts him to such an extent that it sets him apart from the others. There are other hints of sadism in the narrative like in Jack's arbitrary beating of a boy named Wilfred which opens up the world of wielding power physically. Therefore, power is an important theme addressed in the novel.

- **Classifying the Novel**

➢ **As an Allegorical Novel**

Allegory is a literary device where a character, thing or situation is used to symbolically refer to wider concerns and issues. *Lord of the Fliesis* an allegorical novel as it is replete with objects and characters that represent the themes and ideas addressed in the novel. The island is a microcosm of the adult world that the children find themselves stranded in. The central conflict in the novel is the clash between the civilised and the savage impulses which is present in every individual. Each of the main characters exemplify certain traits or ideas of the vast spectrum of human nature. For example, Ralph symbolizes the civilizing impulse which is seen in all his actions as strives to build a stable society right from the beginning and create order among the boys. Piggy exemplifies the intellectual and scientific temper of the civilization. In contrast, Jack represents the repressed yet inherent instinct of mankind to gravitate towards savagery and the desire to dominate and possess unchecked power. Roger embodies the thirst for violence and bloodlust in its most raw expression. Along with the characters, some of the objects represent thematic concepts as well. One of the most recurrent objects, the conch shell, is used to summon meetings, address the gathering and it functions as an emblem to express opinions. It stands for democracy, civilisation and political lawfulness. Further, Piggy's glasses which help in starting the fire symbolically represent the power of science and intellectual efforts. The pig's head represents the human instinct towards violence and barbarism that exists within the deepest recesses of each person's mind. Throughout the novel, Golding uses characters and objects to emphasise the various thematic concerns that the novel aims to explore.

➢ As a Political Novel

The novel presents an interesting contrast between democracy and anarchy. While Ralph represents democratic rule, Jack stands for anarchy. Ralph is elected by the boys to be their leader. Guided by rationality and civility, he has the potential to be a democratic leader and he also proves himself on several occasions as he listens to the concerns of everyone, including the littluns. He thinks about the welfare of the entire group by planning about shelter and maintaining the signal fire. He uses the conch, a symbol of authority, wisely which subtly reminds every one of the orderly rules that he represents. In stark contrast to Ralph is Jack as he detests rules and democracy. He even tries to convince the others to impeach Ralph so that he can assume the role of a leader. When these machinations do not work, Jack reacts in anarchy and this sets the events of the novel which gradually take a sinister turn. He deserts the democratic principles, confiscates a part of the island for himself and gathers followers through manipulations and fear. He and his tribe raid Ralph's side of the island and steal the last remnants of civilisation, that is, glasses and fire, as well as break the conch thereby symbolically establishing anarchy over democracy. Jack rules for himself and his pleasure, almost like a dictator. He makes his own rules notwithstanding the consequences and metes out punishment according to his whims. Moreover, he encourages the barbarity of his followers and demand loyalty almost to the point of servitude. However, at the end we see that neither democracy nor anarchy can survive on the island.

➢ As a Fable

Fable refers to short fictional stories which are intended to teach moral lessons. Lord of the Flies can be considered to be based on a fable structure but usually fables have a simple story and flat characters which leaves little scope for interpretation but this novel presents an ironic take as the characters are complex and the novel allows speculation. Golding puts across lessons through the use of human characters who represent the dominant themes instead of animals, which is generally found in fables. The interactions of the characters among themselves and with the environment reveal multiple layers of meanings. Using these complex characters, Golding presents multiple layers instead if simplistic opposition and ultimate resolution. Unlike animal fables, humans act in unpredictable ways due to the circumstances that they find themselves in and this may result in conflict with the values that they might have once followed. For example, Ralph too finds himself momentarily participating in the display of savage behaviour which he had once condemned. This shows a realistic image of a person who resorts to unfamiliar behaviour owing to unusual circumstances.

3.12.9. Summing Up

Golding does provide with a lesson in morality but it does not have the straightforward approach that the fables adapt or the decisive proverb that the fables end with. By the end of the novel the reader has understood that not all evil is confined to Jack and his tribe. The novel also raises the question whether science and intellect can save humanity as Piggy is ridiculed since the beginning and ultimately killed. Considering the fate of Simon, the spiritual or visionary insight might also not be able to save the predicament of humanity. Among all the uncertainties, the reader learns that evil lies in all and there is no proverb that aptly sums it. Therefore, Golding's narrative adds depth to the fable structure and offers a complex moral lesson as well.

3.12.10. Comprehension Exercises

Long Answer Type Questions

1. Consider *Lord of the Flies* as a commentary on human nature.
2. Although education and social order impose certain restrictions on people and condition our behaviour yet they are necessary. Discuss with reference to the moral degeneration of the characters in the novel.
3. Elucidate the concept, identity and the manifestation of the Beast in *Lord of the Flies.*
4. Examine Simon's role as a visionary and explain why this makes him an outcast in the group.
5. Critically discuss the significance of the title of the novel.
6. Compare and contrast the characters of Ralph and Jack.
7. Highlight the extensive use of symbolism in the novel.

Medium Answer Type Questions

1. What does the conch symbolise?
2. How does Ralph's treatment of Piggy change over the course of the novel?
3. What is the significance of Piggy's glasses?

Short Answer Type Questions

1. How does Jack use the Beast to control the littluns?
2. What is the role of fire in the novel?
3. What is the symbolism some of the boys decide to paint themselves?
4. Discuss the importance of the role of Samneric.
5. Why does the choice of island as the setting of the story important?

3.12.11. Suggested Reading:

Babb, Howard S. *The Novels of William Golding*. The Ohio State University Press, 1970.

Friedman, Lawrence S. *William Golding*. Continuum International Publishing Group, 1993.

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Gregor, Ian, and Mark Kinkead-Weekes. *William Golding: A Critical Study of the Novels*. Faber, 2002.

Kulkarni, Indu. *The Novels of William Golding*. Atlantic Publishers & Distributors, 2003.

Medcalf, Stephen, and I. Scott-Kilvert. *William Golding*. Longman Group UK Ltd., 1975.

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Unit 13 ❐ George Orwell : *1984*

Structure

3.13.1. Objectives

The aim of this Unit is to introduce learners to George Orwell's *1984* and to comprehend Orwell's motivations for writing the novel set against the historical and political contexts of Nazism and Stalinism. Learners are encouraged to analyse Orwell's warning about the dangers of totalitarian regimes and how it applies to contemporary society. Learners will be able to evaluate the actions and motivations of the characters in *1984* to understand how they reflect the dangers of an unaccountable government.

3.13.2. Introduction

The novel, *1984*, was published in 1984 and is set thirty-six years into the future. It is an expression of George Orwell's rather dark vision of the future. Written towards the end of his career, it drew inspiration from the work of Russian author Yevgeny Zamyatin and is a shocking depiction of the ways in which the State can use its power to dominate and suppress the people through cultural conditioning. One of the most powerful science fictions of the twentieth

century, the satire portrays a apocalyptic world where people's individuality is wiped out through the figure of Winston Smith and how he is reconfigured in the Party's vision of an obedient man until he follows their dictates blindly and starts loving the Big Brother. Orwell initially conceptualised the novel as early as 1940, during the second World War, but he did not complete it until 1948, which also marked the beginning of the Cold War. The various anti-Fascist writings and discussions during the 1930s and 40s significantly impacted Orwell, which is reflected in his writings.

The influence of the novel was widespread as the terms coined by Orwell for the purpose of the novel, like, "Newspeak," "unperson," "thoughtcrime" and "doublethink" have become a part of the regular language usage. Moreover, the term "Orwellian" has come to denote any dehumanized or regimented society and "Big Brother is Watching You" has become synonymous to the autocratic rule of a totalitarian state. The impact of the novel was such that it considerably influenced other works like *Fahrenheit 451* (1954) by Ray Bradbury, which shares the thematic concerns of repression and destruction of culture and *A Clockwork Orange* (1962) by Anthony Burgess, which has a British setting and an invented language, like Newspeak of Oceania.

3.13.3. George Orwell: His world

Born in India as Eric Blair in 1903, George Orwell studied in prestigious schools of England on scholarship but he did not quite fit in as he felt oppressed due to the strict dictatorial control that the schools exercised over the lives of the students. After graduating from Eton, Orwell decided to join the British Imperial Police in Burma. He did not like his duties in Burma as he had to enforce the strict laws of a political system that he did not believe in. Health issues troubled him throughout, forcing him to return to England and after he returned, he quit the Imperial Police and concentrated on his writing career.

Drawing inspiration from Jack London's *The People of the Abyss* (1903), which chronicled his experiences in the slums of London, Orwell bought second-hand clothes and lived amongst the downtrodden in London. His experiences were recorded and published in a book entitled *Down and Out in Paris and London.* Later, he lived amongst the impoverished coal miners in northern England which made him realise the ill-effects of capitalism and made him favour democratic socialism. Orwell travelled to Spain in 1936 to report on the Spanish Civil War, where he encountered the atrocities perpetrated by fascist regimes. The dictators who rose to power during these years, like Hitler in Germany and Stalin in Soviet Union

stirred Orwell's hatred towards totalitarian regimes and authority. This inspired him to write politically charged novels like *Animal Farm* (1945) and *1984* (1949).

Animal Farm is a fable that chronicles the events during and following the Russian Revolution. It was a disguised criticism of Russia, An ally of England at that time. *1984* is one of Orwell's powerful writings that serves as a potential warning issued against the dangers of a totalitarian society. In countries like Spain, Soviet Union and Germany, Orwell had closely seen the threats that absolute authoritarian political rule posed in an age which was advancing technologically, which is illustrated in *1984*. Continuing the tradition set byAldous Huxley in *Brave New World* (1932), *1984* is a powerful commentary depicting the dystopian world. Dystopia, or a negative utopian society, portrays the worst of the human society to convince the readers to avoid the paths which may lead to the degeneration of society. In an age of nuclear power and with inventions like the television, Orwell's vision of a dictatorship regime where everyone would be under surveillance round the clock through the telescreen seemed a horrific possibility. The title of the novel predicted this possibility only thirty-five years into the future made this a frightful reality.

The prediction that Orwell postulated in the novel did not materialize as democracy won in the Cold War, symbolised by the fall of Berlin Wall, and the disintegration of the Soviet Union. However, *1984* remains a landmark as it warns the readers about the nature of totalitarian governments as well as the penetrating analysis of the concept of power and the possible effects of manipulating language and history, which are effective mechanisms of control.

3.13.4. Locating *1984*

1984 carries with it literary traditions that can be traced back in time. Among the various traditions that Orwell makes use of, the concept of Utopia is an important one as he distorts it effectively for the needs of the novel. Utopia, a term coined by Sir Thomas More in 1516, is an ideal imagined society or a place with no sufferings and the state of things are perfect. However, Orwell twists this idea and creates a dystopia, an anti-utopia, a world that is undesirable or frightening. They are characterised by tyrannical or dictatorial political regimes, dehumanisation and other characteristics which reflects a decline in the society. Usually, these representations are particularly set in the future and are often used as a means to draw attention to the degeneration occurring in various facets of society, like, environment, economy, politics, religion, technology, ethics and so on.

Orwell creates a technologically advanced world, where fear is a widely prevalent tool used for manipulating and controlling people who dare to go against the established norms of

the political party. To elucidate the potential consequences of particular political philosophy and shortcomings of human nature, Orwell transposes the utopian tradition to create a dystopian setting, a fictional world where the lives of common people are characterized by deprivation, terror and oppression. The world inhabited in the novel is a world where people have virtually no control over their lives and choices and they are forced to live in misery, repression and constant fear. This tradition can be seen as a criticism of the contemporary times of the authors and also a forewarning to the people of what might be as they have underlying political statements.

3.13.5. Introduction to the Characters

Winston Smith

Winston is a minor member of the Party, settled in London. He is a thin, frail, fatalistic intellectual who hates the totalitarian government and the enforced repression and control that the Party exercises which makes him harbour dreams of being a rebel.

Julia

Julia is a dark-haired beautiful girl who worked in the Fiction Department of the Ministry of Truth. She is Winston's lover and is open about enjoying physical relationships. She claims to have had a number of affairs with many Party members. She is very pragmatic. Her rebellion against the Party is at an individual level unlike Winston. She tries to defy the Party by enjoying herself as compared to Winston's ideological motivations.

O'Brien

A powerful and enigmatic member of the Inner Party whom Winston mistakenly believes to be a part of the anti-Party rebels, named the Brotherhood.

Big Brother

Big Brother is a mysterious figure who is perceived to rule Oceania but he never physically appears in the novel, thereby, making the readers question his existence. Winston sees posters of Big Brother's face everywhere which carries the message "BIG BROTHER IS WATCHIG YOU". The image of Big Brother is casted on coins and shown on the telescreens which haunts Winston and makes him simultaneously hate him yet feel fascinated by him.

Mr. Charrington

Mr. Charrington is an old man who runs a second-hand shop in the prole district. Initially, he seems to share Winston's interests and also was supportive towards Winston's desire to rebel and his relationship with Julia. He even lets Winston rent a room above his shop without a telescreen so that he can carry on with the affair. But he turned out to be a member of the Thought Police.

Syme

Syme works at the Ministry of Truth with Winston. He is an intelligent man whom Winston believes to be too intelligent to stay in the Party's favour. He specializes in language and is seen working on a new edition of the Newspeak dictionary.

Parsons

Parsons is Winston's neighbour and also a dull Party member who works at the Ministry of Truth. He lives with his wife and children who are suspicious and members of the Junior Spies.

Emmanuel Goldstein

Emmanuel Goldstein is a mysterious figure who never appears in the novel just like Big Brother. According to the Party, he is the leader of the anti-Party group, named the Brotherhood. He is believed to have been a Party member once who fell out of favour. He is labelled as the most dangerous and treacherous man in Oceania.

3.13.6. Chapter-wise Summary

Book One: Chapter I

As the novel opens, Winston Smith, a thirty-nine-year-old man returns home on a cold day in the April of 1984 to a dilapidated apartment named Victory Mansions. Thin and frail, it is difficult for him to climb up the stairs due to his varicose ulcer above his right ankle. The elevator is always out of service so he does not even bother to use it. On his way up the stairs, he is greeted on each landing by a poster which depicts a huge face underscored by the words "BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING YOU."

Winston is an insignificant official in the Party, the totalitarian political regime which rules the Airstrip One- the land which was once known as England. Technically Winston belongs to

the ruling class yet his life is still controlled by the Party's oppressive rule. An instrument, telescreen, is always on in his apartment and it spreads propaganda through which the Thought Police are known to keep the actions of the citizens under surveillance. From the window of his apartment, he sees the Ministry of Truth, where he works as a propaganda officer, whose main job is to alter historical records so as to match the Party's version of past events. Winston ponders upon the other Ministries that exist as a part of the governmental apparatus: the Ministry of Peace, which wages wars; the Ministry of Plenty, which is responsible for planning economic shortages; and the Ministry of Love, the epicentre of Inner Party's despicable activities.

From a drawer, Winston pulls out a diary he purchased recently which he found in a second-hand store in the proletarian district, where the poor live somewhat unchecked by the Party's monitoring. The proles are impoverished and so insignificant that the Party does not consider them as a threat to their rule. Winston writes in this diary, an act of rebellion against the Party. He contemplates about his feelings, thinking about his lust and hatred for the girl with dark hair who works in the Fiction Department of the Ministry of Truth, and about O'Brien, an important Inner Party member but whom Winston considers to be an enemy of the Party. He then thinks of the day's Two Minutes Hate, an assembly where the party's orators infuse the people into a frenzy of hatred against the enemies of Oceania. This signifies the governmental use of manipulation at a psychological level to maintain its power. Moments before the Hate began, Winston knew he hated Big Brother and looking at the diary he realizes that he had scribbled "DOWN WITH BIG BROTHER" many times. This represents an act of rebellion as it reflects his desire of freedom. Unknowingly he has committed thoughtcrime, an unpardonable crime, for which he knows that the Thought Police will seize him. And suggestively at that moment, there is a knock at the door.

In this chapter, the readers are introduced to the themes of the novel and the world the protagonist inhabits. The physical and psychological cruelties that the people are subjected to is narrated from Winston's perspectives. The major theme addressed in this chapter is to depict the frightening techniques that a totalitarian government has at its disposal to control the subjects and also the extend to which the government is able to exert it. To illustrate the themes, Orwell presents a protagonist who has been a subject to the control of the government all his life. Unlike anyone inhabiting Airstrip One, Winston has a vague idea that he would be happy, had he been free. It is emphasized that such a thought is shocking and alien and its expression in a diary is unpardonable. The government's control is highlighted by describing how the Party keeps the people under surveillance even in their homes through the telescreens.

There is a pervasive omniscience of the party and also efficiency in the techniques of monitoring.

Book One: Chapter II

On hearing the knock, Winston fearfully opens the door as he presumes that the Though Police have come to arrest him for the unpardonable crime. But it turns out to be a neighbour, Mrs. Parsons, asking for help with plumbing. In Mrs. Parson's apartment, he is tormented by her children, who being Junior spies accuse him of thoughtcrime. Junior Spies was an organization of the children who monitored adults for disloyalty to the party and even succeeded in catching them. This demonstrates the extend of influence that the Party had on family life as the children are effectively converted to spies who look upon their own parents with suspicion. The children were agitated as their mother did not allow them to witness a public hanging of some of the political enemies of the Party. Winston remembers a man's voice from his dreams, which he attributes to O'Brien, saying to him, "We shall meet in the place where there is no darkness." Winston notes that the thoughtcrime has already marked him as a dead man and hides the diary. He has been fearing the Party's power for years which is also reflected in the guilt and fear of punishment that he feels on violating the Party's rule. The general pessimism that he felt pervades the entire novel, making the atmosphere seem darker.

Book One: Chapter III

In a dream, Winston envisions being with his mother on a sinking ship. The dream signifies a responsibility that he feels for the disappearance of his mother during a political purge around twenty years ago. He also dreams of a place named The Golden Country, where the girl with dark hair whom he fancies, takes off her clothes and runs towards him signifying an act of freedom against the whole Party. The party's oppression also percolates to the private lives of individuals where they are forced to repress their desires. Winston has to limit his desires to the world of fantasy where he can dream about physical intimacy with the dark-haired girl although the girl is portrayed as an unfathomable mystery in the chapter and also as someone whom Winston desires yet distrusts.

Winston wakes up with 'Shakespeare' on his lips, not understanding why he uttered it. A whistle from the telescreen signals that the officer workers must wake up as it was time for Physical Jerks, a round of exercise. While exercising Winston reflects on his childhood, a time he can barely recall. He feels that the lack of physical documents like photographs results in losing one's memory of life. The party's control of the past is a very important element of the psychological control that it exercises over the subjects. Since no one can keep any physical records which may document the past, people cannot challenge the government's actions or

authority. Winston's vaguely recalls a time before the Party's rule and these memories come only in dreams, the only secure repository for thoughts and memories which is suppressed in the waking life. Winston also thinks of Oceania's relationship with other countries- Eurasia and Eastasia. According to the official history, Oceania has always been in alliance with Eastasia and at war with Eurasia but he knows that the records have been tampered with. He recalls that prior to 1960 no one was aware of Big Brother or the Party but now stories about them appear in records going back to the 1930s.

Book One: Chapter IV

Winston goes to work in the Ministry of Truth's Record section, where he uses a 'speak write' (an instrument that types as he dictates) and destroys obsolete documents. He updates Big Brother's orders and Party records so that they do not question the new developments. When the citizens of Airstrip One are compelled to live with meagre food, they are told that they are being given more food than before, which they come to believe. The job that Winston has at hand is to alter the record of a speech made in the December of 1983, which had a reference to Comrade Withers, a former official of Big Brother, who has been vaporized. Since he was executed on the pretext of being an enemy of the Party, a document could not exist that praised him as a loyal Party member.

Winston creates an imaginative person named Comrade Ogilvy and substitutes him for Comrade Withers. Comrade Ogilvy is portrayed as an ideal Party man while Comrade Withers has become "unperson," that is, he ceases to exist. Across the way, he watches a man named Comrade Tillotson, Winston ruminates about the activities of the Ministry of Truth, where the workers alter the flow of history to complement the party's ideology, and also churn out drivel-including pornography, to appease the destitute proles.

Book One: Chapter V

Winston has lunch with Syme, an intelligent member of the Party who works on a modifying the dictionary of Newspeak, the official language. Syme discloses that the aim of the Newspeak is to narrow down the range of though so as to make thoughtcrime impossible. The idea behind doing this is that if there were no words in a language which can express rebellious or independent thoughts then no one will be able to conceive of a rebellion. Winston realizes that Syme's intelligence could get him vaporized one day. Parsons, a Party official and husband of the woman he helps earlier comes and asks for contribution for the Hate Week. Although he apologises for his children's harassment yet he is proud of their spirit.

There is a sudden announcement from the Ministry of Plenty which informs everyone of increases in production. Winston sees through the announcement and realizes that the alleged rise in chocolate ration is actually a reduction from the previous day but the people around him accept the announcement joyfully. Winston feels that he is being watched and when he looks up he sees the girl with dark hair staring at him. This makes him suspicious that she is a Party agent.

Book One: Chapter VI

In the evening, Winston records the last memory of his sexual encounter which he could recall with a prole prostitute. He reflects on the Party's hatred of sex and realizes that their aim was to dissociate pleasure from the sexual act, thereby relegating it as a duty to the Party, a way to create more Party members. Katherine, Winston's former wife, hated the sexual act and when they realized that they could not bear children, they separated. Winston can remember the pleasure associated with the act and so wants to have a sexual affair, which would be the ultimate act of revolt. Although he notes that the prostitute he went to was ugly and old, he still went ahead with the act. Writing in the diary did not help him in alleviating the anger, depression and rebellious instincts that he felt. The repressed sexuality becomes one of the important reasons for him to want to rebel. The ugly memory of the prole prostitute makes him want to have an enjoyable sexual experience. By turning the emotional and physical pleasure associated with the act into a duty, the Party strike a psychological blow against individualism as the people are only expected to create new members and not reproduce their genes.

Book One: Chapter VII

Winston realizes that the only hope for any rebellion must come from the proles as they form eighty-five percent of the population of Oceania, and can muster the courage and strength to overcome the Police. He understands that destroying the Party from within is not possible, even the legendary revolutionary group the Brotherhood lacks the ability to defeat the Thought Police. Even though the proles are the only hope, they lead ignorant and animalistic lives and lack the will and energy to revolt. More importantly, they do not see through the Party's oppressing rule. To understand what is happening in the world, Winston flips through a children's history book. In contrast to the Party's claims to having built ideal cities like London, where Winston lives, it is a wreck. The building are dilapidated, electricity seldom works and people live in a constant state of fear and poverty. Due to the unavailability of any reliable source, Winston does not know what to think regarding the past. The claims made by the Party with respect to improved infant mortality rates, better food and shelter and increased literacy could

be all untrue. Although Winston suspects these are false claims, but he has no proof as history has been re-written completely by the Party.

Winston recalls an incident where he caught a lie propagated by the Party. In the mid-1960s, the original leaders of the Revolution were arrested during a cultural backlash. Winston saw few of these deposed leaders sitting at a café, where the out-of-favour members of the Party gathered. Symbolically a song was playing- "Under the spreading chestnut tree/ I sold you and you sold me"— and Rutherford, a party member began to cry. Winston never forgot this incident and one day he chanced upon a photograph which proved that the Party members were in New York at the alleged time that they supposedly committed treason in Eurasia. Scared, Winston destroys the evidence but the photograph became etched as a concrete example of the dishonesty of the Party.

The things that Winston records in his diary is a kind of letter to O'Brien although he does not know anything about O'Brien but he detects a strain of rebellion and independence in him. He feels that O'Brien shares the same consciousness of oppression that he himself feels. He also realises that the Party requires the members to deny what the experience through their eyes and ears but he believes that the true freedom is in the ability to interpret reality as one comprehends it.

Book One: Chapter VIII

Winston envies the lives of the proles when he went for a walk through the prole district. He spots an old man when he entered a pub and he thinks of the old man as a possible link to the past. He strikes a conversation with him to ascertain the claims of the Party that in the earlier days people were exploited by greedy capitalists. The old man's memory fails him which makes Winston lament the loss of the past whose memory has been left to the proles, who will eventually forget it.

Winston goes to the second-hand store from where he had bought the diary and buys a clear glass paperweight with a pink coral at the centre. The owner of the shop, Mr. Charrington, takes him upstairs into a room which has no telescreen, where he sees a print of St. Clement's Church on the wall, which evoked the rhyme: "Oranges and lemons, say the bells of St. Clement's/ You owe me three farthings, say the bells of St. Martin's." While going back to his home, Winston sees a figure wearing blue overalls and imagines that the girl with dark hair following him. Scared, he imagines hitting her with the paperweight he had bought and rushes home. He contemplates that the best thing to do in this situation would be to commit suicide before the Party catches him otherwise the Thought Police would torture him before killing

him. Winston tries to calm himself by recalling what O'Brien had mentioned in his dreams about the place where there is no darkness. Still troubled, he looks at the face of the Big Brother and recalls the Party slogans: "WAR IS PEACE," "IGNORANCE IS STRENGTH" and "FREEDOM IS SLAVERY."

In this chapter, Orwell shifts the focus to the world of the common people, which is steeped in poverty. Winston's visit to the antique shop is symbolically important as it signifies a museum, a connection to the past in a world where history was being altered. It is emphasized that the knowledge of past is very important to understand the present. Through the rule of the Party, Orwell underscores that by controlling history, the Party forces the members to lead lives of ignorance and uncertainty as well as making them depend on the Party for all information. This visit to the prole district also highlights that although the proles have more freedom that the minor Party members yet they lack the awareness to use the freedom as they lead impoverished lives. His quest to understand history is in direct contrast with the old man in the bar who is only concerned about his bladder and feet and has no understanding of the impact of the Party on his life.

Book Two: Chapter I

One morning in the office, Winston goes towards the men's room and sees the girl with dark hair with her arm in a sling. She falls down and passes a note to Winston that read "I love you" as he helps her up. He had always viewed the dark-haired girl with suspicion of being a political spy who monitored his behaviour but is puzzled after knowing that she loves him. Before Winston can grasp the situation, Parsons interrupts him with the talk of the upcoming Hate Week. The note from the girl gives a sudden hope to him. After few days of nervousness, Winston manages to sit at the same table for lunch as the girl. They converse without looking at each other to avoid being noticed and plan to meet at Victory Square so that they can be away from the telescreens amidst the crowd. They meet and there they witness Eurasian prisoners being tormented by a crowd. The girl gives Winston directions to a place where they can meet secretly and asks him to take a train from Paddington Station to the countryside.

Book Two: Chapter II

Executing their plan, they meet in the designated place. Winston starts to believe that the girl is not a spy as he had thought earlier. He is paranoid that there might be microphones hidden in the bushes but the girl reassures him because of her prior experience. She reveals her name to be Julia and they indulge in physical intimacy which is identical to the passionate encounter that he had envisioned. Winston enquires whether Julia had done something like this before

and to which she replies that she had done it scores of times. On hearing this he is thrilled and says that the more men she has been intimate with, the more is his love for her as that means that there are more Party members who are committing crimes.He feels no jealousy as Winston is hopeful of a possibility of a widespread rebellion against the mandates of the Party. For Winston, the importance of an illegal sexual encounter with another member of the Party lies in the fact that someone else is also complicit in the act of rebellion.

Book Two: Chapter III

Julia makes practical preparations for returning to London the next day as she and Winston head back to their everyday routine lives. Over the next few weeks, they plan a number of meetings in the city. At one such meeting in a ruined church, Julia tells Winston about how she lived with thirty other girls in a hostel and also about her first unlawful sexual encounter. For Julia, the thrill lies in outwitting the Party and enjoying herself, therefore, it is unlike Winston's rebellious instincts. She clarifies to Winston that the Party tries to restrict physical intimacy so as to channelize the frustration of the citizens into a passionate opposition to the Party's enemies as well as blind worship of Big Brother. She delivers a keen analysis of the Party's ways and her views on sexual repression as a mechanism to incite feelings of war underscores the sexual act as a political one. Winston reveals about his instinct of pushing his ex-wife, Katherine, off the cliff when we had once gone for a walk. He also adds that it would not have mattered if he had pushed her or not as it is quite impossible to win against the oppression that guides their lives.

Book Two: Chapter IV

Winston visits the little room above the antique shop of Mr. Charrington, which he has rented for his affair with Julia. Winston and Julia have been busy with preparations for the Hate Week and Winston is frustrated by their inability to meet. The problem is worsened by the fact that Julia is menstruating. Winston wishes for a more romantic life filled with leisure like an old couple. Julia comes to the little room with bread, sugar and coffee, a luxury that only Inner Party members could obtain. She applies make-up and the tropes of femininity overwhelms Winston. Their affair becomes an established part of their lives for which he is willing to take the risk of renting the room. Looking across the room, Julia spots the paperweight. Winston explains that the paperweight is a link to the past. They sing the St. Clement's Church song and Julia says that she will clean the old picture one day. The St. Clement's song has references to the past which interests Winston. Moreover, Julia's offer of cleaning the picture is very significant because had she done so then they would have discovered the telescreen behind it. After Julia leaves, Winston sits staring into the paperweight and imagining living inside it with

Julia. The recurrence of the symbol of the paperweight stresses Winston's obsession to the past which is linked to his desire to rent the room as he hopes to have a free relationship with Julia, like the older times.

Book Two: Chapter V

As prophesied by Winston, Syme vanishes. The city comes alive during the preparations for Hate Week accompanied by the summer heat and the proles become rowdy. Parsons hangs streamers as decorations for the Hate Week and his children sing the "Hate Song," written as a celebration of the event. Winston increasingly becomes obsessed with the little room above the antique shop, constantly thinking about it when he cannot go there. He even fantasizes that Katherine will die and that would make it easier for him to marry Julia. He goes to the extent of thinking about his altering his identity so as to become a prole. Julia and Winston talk about the Brotherhood. While he tells her about the strange connection he feels with O'Brien, she confides in him that she feels that the war and Party enemies like Emmanuel Goldstein are Party creations. Winston is angered at her lack of concern and scolds her for being a selective rebel.

Book Two: Chapter VI

O'Brien contacts Winston, who has been looking forward to this moment for all his life. He is anxious as well as excited to meet O'Brien briefly in the hallway at the Ministry of Truth. O'Brien makes allusion to Syme and tells Winston that if he wishes to see a Newspeak dictionary then he may come to O'Brien's house one day. Winston feels that the incidental meeting with O'Brien is in continuation of the path which began when he had the first rebellious thought. He understands that the path that he had been following will inevitably lead him to the Ministry of Love, where he imagines he will be killed. Though he accepts his fate, he is excited about getting O'Brien's address. The meeting between the two is brief but it asserts the enigmatic and powerful figure of O'Brien but his intentions are unclear.

Book Two: Chapter VII

Winston wakes up crying one morning in the rented room. When Julia asks him why he had been crying he reveals that thing about his past. He says that he had dreamt of his mother and until then he had subconsciouslybelieved that he was responsible for her death. He sees flashes of memories that he had repressed. He recalls his childhood after his father had left. His mother, sister and him took shelter in the underground shelters to hide from air raids, often going on days without food. Once driven by hunger, Winston stole chocolate from them and ran away, only to never see them again. He blames the party for eradicating human feelings.

He feels that the proles are still human but the Party members like him and Julia have been forced to suppress their feelings to the level that they have become almost inhuman. The depth of the Party's psychological manipulation becomes evident and it is only in the subconscious mind that Winston can cling to the truth. Julia proves to be only outlet for the emotionally charged memories of the past and thus she is one of the very few people that he can interact with meaningfully.

Julia and Winston are worried as they know that there is a possibility of being captured, tortured and killed. The act of renting the room increases the likelihood of their capture. Anxiously, they reassure each other that even if they are tortured and they confess their crimes, it will not put an end to their love for each other. Although they decide that the best course of action would be to leave the rented room forever, but they cannot. Their commitment that torture will make them confess and turn in each other but not stop loving one another shows their gross underestimation of the power of the Party and the control it exercised over the human mind. These words take an ironical turn as the only meeting after the torture proves to be devoid of emotions.

Book Two: Chapter VIII

Winston and Julia undertake the risky endeavour of visiting O'Brien together. Inside O'Brien's house, O'Brien turns off the telescreen which shocks them. Under the impression that they are free of Party's surveillance, Winston openly declares that Julia and he are enemies of the Party and so they wish to join the Brotherhood. Winston's fascination with mysterious O'Brien makes him trust him blindly and feel protected in his presence. O'Brien informs them that the Brotherhood is real and that Emmanuel Goldstein is alive. He guides them through a ritual song to formally initiate them into the order of rebellion. O'Brien offers them wine and Winston says that they drink to the past. O'Brien promises a copy of Goldstein's book, the manifesto of the revolution, to Winston. Before parting O'Brien tells Winston that they may meet again one day and to which Winston replies if that meeting would be in the place where there is no darkness. O'Brien reaffirms this by repeating the phrase. As Winston leaves, O'Brien turns the telescreen back on and returns to work.

Book Two: Chapter IX

After a hectic ninety-hour workweek, Winston is tired. Midway through the Hate Week, Oceania has changed enemies and allies in the ongoing war, thereby burdening Winston with additional work to compensate for the change. The changes were so sudden that at a rally, the speaker was forced to modify his speech halfway to point that Oceania has never been at war

with Eurasia. Instead, he reiterates that Oceania's enemy is Eastasia. With this sudden change, the people are embarrassed about carrying anti-Eurasia signs and they are quick to blame the agents of Goldstein's for sabotaging them yet they exhibit extreme hatred for Eastasia.

In the rented room, Winston carefully reads the book by Goldstein that O'Brien gave him, entitled *The Theory and Practice of Oligarchical Collectivism.* The book has chapters titles inspired by the slogans of the Party such as "IGNORANCE IS STRENGTH" and "WAR IS PEACE" and it theoretically traces the social classes through recent history: Low Class, Middle Class and High Class, referring to the Proles, the Outer Party and the Inner Party. According to the book, Eurasia was created when Russia subsumed the whole of Europe, Oceania was born when the United States took over the British Empire and, finally, Eastasia comprised of all the remaining nations. The three nations kept the majority of the population engrossed in a perpetual border war so as to concentrate the power within the High class. Goldstein further writes that the war never seems to advance as no alliance between two nations can defeat the third nation. The war is a trope that helps the ruling party to maintain the ignorance of the masses regarding life in other nations- elucidating the meaning of the slogan "WAR IS PEACE." Julia enters the room as Winston is reading and flings herself into Winston's arms. When they lying on the bed, they hear a red-armed woman sing. Winston reads to Julia from the book. Goldstein elaborates that controlling history is the most effective tool that the Party possesses. Ultimately Julia falls asleep while Winston was reading. The final thought before he also sleeps is that "sanity is not statistical." The chapter provides a long political discourse which acts as a lull before the dramatic turn of events in the following chapter.

Book Two: Chapter X

The red-armed woman's singing wakes them up the next morning. Through the window Winston looks at the woman and admires her reproductive ability and imagines that the proles may give rise to a generation who are conscious and independent who will be able to challenge and fight the oppressive Party control. Staring at the woman, they both realize that they are doomed but she might hold the key to a better future. Both Julia and Winston exclaim "We are the dead" and they hear a third voice out of the shadows which repeats the same words. They suddenly realize that there was a telescreen hidden behind the picture of the St. Clement's Church. They hear the sound of stomping boots outside and the house is surrounded. A familiar voice says the last lines of the St. Clement's song and then the windows shatter and troops pour in. The paperweight is smashed and Winston realizes its smallness. The troops beat Julia and kick Winston. As they restrain Winston, Mr. Charrington enters the room and asks someone to pick up the shards from the broken paperweight. Winston realizes that the

familiar voice from the telescreen was Mr. Charrington's voice and he was a member of the Thought Police.

Book Three: Chapter I

Winston is imprisoned in a bright but bare cell, where the lights are always on, symbolically he has arrived at the place where there is no darkness. There are four telescreens which continually monitor him. Initially he was kept in a holding cell with a huge prole woman who shares his last name Smith, who wondered if she was Winston's mother. In the solitary cell, Winston imagines being beaten up by the captors and agonizes that the pain that will be inflicted on him will force him to betray Julia.

Later, a poet named Ampleforth is tossed into Winston's cell whose crime was that he did not remove the word "God" in a Rudyard Kipling translation. Ampleforth is then dragged into Room 101, a dreaded room of unspeakable horrors. Winston shares his cell with a number of prisoners, including his neighbour, Parsons who had been turned in by his children on account of committing thoughtcrime. Seeing the destitution, mangling and beating around him, Winston hopes that the Brotherhood will send me razorblade so that he can commit suicide. His dreams and hopes from the Brotherhood are shattered when O'Brien enters his cell. He exclaims, "They've got you too!" and O'Brien replies "They got me long ago." He reveals himself to be an operative who worked for the Ministry of Love. O'Brien proclaims that Winston was aware all along that O'Brien was an operative and Winston grudgingly admits that it was true. A guard strikes a blow at Winston's elbow, making him think that no one can become a hero while facing physical pain as it is too difficult to endure.

Book Three: Chapter II

O'Brien supervises all the prolonged torture sessions of Winston. O'Brien informs Winston that his crime was to refuse to accept the Party's control of history and memory. As O'Brien raises the level of inflicted pain, Winston accepts everything that O'Brien wants him to believe as he accepts that O'Brien is holding up five fingers even though he is fully aware that O'Brien is holding up only four. He starts to love O'Brien as it is him who can stop the pain and even succeeds in admitting that O'Brien is not the source of pain. O'Brien reprimands Winston for his current outlook and emphasizes that torture is the only way to cure him.

O'Brien informs Winston that the Party had perfected the system which was practiced by the Inquisition, the Soviets and the Nazis- they had learnt how to remove the enemies of the Party without giving them the stature of the martyrs. They make sure that these people do not exist. Gradually, Winston starts to accept O'Brien's version of everything. He realises how to

practise doublethink, denying to believe memories which he knows to be real. O'Brien offers to answer Winston's questions and Winston grabs this opportunity to ask about Julia. O'Brien divulges that Julia had betrayed him immediately. Winston enquires about the existence of the Big Brother and Brotherhood. O'Brien gives allusive answers and responds that he will never know. Lastly, Winston asks what is in Room 101 and O'Brien states that everybody is aware of what waits in that room.

Book Three: Chapter III

After a prolonged period of torture and interrogation, O'Brien reveals the motives of the Party. Winston makes the conjecture that the Party rules the proles for their own profits. O'Brien extracts this from him through torture, declaring that the Party's only goal is endless, limitless and absolute power. In order to defy him, Winston says that even though the party may enjoy limitless power, they cannot alter the natural order of things like the stars or the universe and O'Brien replies that they will never need to do something like that as the only reality that ever matters is the human mind which the Party has already under control.

Winston is forced to look into a mirror and he sees that he has deteriorated physically to look grey and skeletal. Winston's condition makes him cry and he blames O'Brien for it. O'Brien replies that Winston should have been aware of his predicament when he started writing the diary. O'Brien commends Winston's grit that he had not betrayed Julia and even after the pain he feels overwhelmed with love and gratitude towards O'Brien due to this recognition. Although O'Brien tells Winston not to worry as he will be cured yet he notes that in reality it does not matter because everyone is shot anyhow. Leading to this chapter, O'Brien had been an enigma to the reader but the series of events firmly places him on the side of the Party. Winston's obsession with O'Brien began as a result of the dream regarding the place with no darkness but that becomes his undoing. The theme of the relationship between physical pain and human mind is explored and Orwell shows that the person who is capable of inflicting pain has extraordinary emotional power. As O'Brien tortures him, Winston perversely comes to love him. Winston also eagerly starts believing anything that O'Brien tells him due to the torture sessions.

Book Three: Chapter IV

Following the gruelling torture session, Winston is taken to a more comfortable room. He continues dreaming about his mother and Julia, and strangely, he begins to dream about O'Brien. Slowly he gains weight and is allowed to scribble on a slate. He realizes that he was foolish as he dared to go against the Party alone and repeats the Party slogans so as to believe in them.

On the slate, he writes "TWO AND TWO MAKE FIVE," "FREEDOM IS SLAVERY" and "GOD IS POWER."

One day, in a fit of misery, Winston screams Julia's name several times. He is aware that crying out loudly will instigate O'Brien to torture him but he recognizes his inherent desire to continue hating the Party. He tries to pent up the hatred within himself so that even he may not recognize it. He does this to defy the Party as when he is killed, he will die hating the Big Brother which he sees as a personal victory. Unfortunately, he fails at hiding his feelings. When O'Brien arrives with guards, Winston proclaims that he hates Big Brother. Infuriated O'Brien tells him that obeying Big Brother is not enough, he should learn to love him. He

Book Three: Chapter V

In the room, Winston is strapped to a chair and O'Brien clamps his head to restrict his movement. He informs Winston that "the worst thing in the world" is present in Room 101. He even reminds Winston of his worst nightmare- the dream of being stuck in a place of darkness with something terrible lurking on the other side. He uses the thing that Winston is scared of the most, that is, rats to torment him. He places a cage filled with enormous rats to increase his distress. To incite him to betray Julia, O'Brien says that if he presses the lever, the door will open and it will release the rats on Winston's face. Seeing the starving rats so close to him, Winston ultimately cracks. Winston shouts that Julia should be subjected to the torture instead of him. Satisfied by O'Brien's betrayal, he removes the cage. Winston's apparent death wish leads to speculation about the characteristic trait of his character is fatalism, that his rebellion against the Party does not stem from his desire for freedom but from the fact that he wants death as freedom at the hands of the Party.

Book Three: Chapter VI

Finally, after all the trials and tribulations, Winston is now free. He visits the café named Chestnut Tree Café, which is frequented by the dismissed Party members to enjoy a drink. He ultimately accepts everything that the Party propagates. Unconsciously he can still smell the rats. Symbolically, he traces "2+2=5" on the table referring to the doctrines that the Party has ingrained in everybody's minds. He recalls seeing Julia on a cold day that March where she had stiffened at the encounter and he found the thought of physical intimacy repulsive. They mutually agree that they had betrayed one another but they decide to meet again but neither of them are truly interested in meeting each other again. The physical pain and danger override their emotions as the threat of the rats makes him act irrationally. The promises of love are rendered useless in the face of physical pain as it does not make them defend emotional

conviction. Winston thinks that he heard the song, "Under the spreading chestnut tree/ I sold you and you sold me," a song that he had once heard when he had met the political prisoners of the Party much earlier. He breaks down. He remembers a time when he had experienced happiness with his sister and mother but he dismisses the thought believing it to be false. He sees a picture of the Big Brother on the telescreen, which makes him feel safe and happy. His conditioning is complete when he listens to the news about the War and reassures himself about his victory over himself and his newfound love for the Big Brother.

Appendix: The Principles of Newspeak

The significance of the appendix lies in the fact that it stands as the authors' explanation of the official language of Oceania- Newspeak. It shows that the importance of the tools of language and thought in relation to the acceptance of the governmental control by the public. It presents ideas too technical to integrate into the narrative. It is the language favoured by the Party members, scheduled to be officially adopted in 2050. The language is designed to remove the slightest possibility of rebellious thoughts. It is aimed at eliminating the means of articulating such thoughts from the language. Newspeak does not contain any negative terms, like, the word which expresses "bad" is "ungood." Something that is extremely bad is referred to as "double plus ungood."

The grammar of Newspeak is arranged in a way that any word can serve as a part of speech and there are three categories of vocabulary. The A vocabulary consists of everyday words and phrases for things such as eating, working and so on. When compared with modern English, these words are less in number and more rigid in terms of meaning. The language leaves no scope for nuance or variations in meanings. Words concerning political or ideological significance, engineered in a way so that the Party's doctrines are blindly accepted, are contained in B vocabulary. The word "goodthink" in Newspeak roughly means "orthodoxy". This list mostly comprises of compound words and sometimes the bigger words are compressed into smaller forms for conceptual simplicity, like the phrase "Though Police" becomes "thinkpol" and "the Ministry of Love" becomes "miniluv." Words encompassing science and technical knowledge and disciplines are contained in C vocabulary. It is intended to segment the technical knowledge among various fields so that no individual has complete access to all the knowledge.

The traits of Newspeak make it difficult to translate texts originally written in older English into the new language. For example, the introduction to the Declaration of Independence can be translated only as a single word- "crimethink." Moreover, a huge number of texts and manuals must be translated into Newspeak which makes it a time-consuming process which delays the official adoption of Newspeak to 2050.

3.13.7. Character Analysis

Winston Smith

One of the primary objectives of Orwell was to demonstrate the terrifying effects of totalitarianism. The readers get a glimpse into this dystopian world through the lens of the protagonist, Winston. The harsh oppressive rule that the Party, Thought Police and the Big Brother subject the people to is reflected and can be understood through Winston's tendency to try to resist the suppressing of his individuality and his intellectual ability to pose resistance. In contrast to Julia, who is somewhat selfish and concerned for rebellion only for the sake of pleasure, Winston is curious and pensive, seeking to understand how and why the Party functions and yields absolute power in Oceania. Through Winston's long reflections, Orwell explored the novel's important themes such as usage of language to control the masses, intimation and manipulation of people both psychologically and physically, and the significance of an understanding of the past.

Apart from Winston's contemplative nature, his main traits are his fatalism and rebelliousness. Winston is sensitive to the Party's practices and so he hates the Party and wants to test the limits of the Party's powers. To this end, he commits a number of crimes throughout the narrative, starting with writing a diary, to having a secret affair with Julia and also joining the Brotherhood, the anti-Party group. The relentless efforts that Winston undertakes to achieve freedom and independence tries to underscore the Party's overwhelming power. But by the end of the novel, Winston's rebellion is reduced to nothing as he plays into O'Brien's trap through his campaign of psychological and physical torture, making him a loyal follower of the Big Brother.

One of the primary reasons for Winston's attempted rebellion and the eventual downfall is his fatalism, the intense paranoia that he feels about the Party and his belief that the Party will discover his crimes and eventually punish him. As soon as he writes down "DOWN WITH BIG BROTHER" initially in the diary, he is sure that the Though Police will eventually come to capture him for the thoughtcrime and he will be tortured. Accepting his fate and realizing that he is helpless in evading his predicament, Winston takes unnecessary risks like blindly trusting O'Brien and renting the room to continue his affair above Mr. Charrington's shop. Subconsciously he is aware that these reckless actions increase the possibility of being caught, which he confesses to O'Brien while in prison. As he has come to believe that eventually he will be caught irrespective of the circumstances, he convinces himself that he should continue

to rebel. He inhabits a world that is devoid of any optimism or hope, therefore, he only succeeds in giving himself false hopes although he is completely aware of it.

Julia

Julia is Winston's lover and she is the only person whom Winston can trust to hate the Party as much as he does and she also wishes to rebel against the Party. In comparison to Winston's restlessness, fatalistic attitude and concern for the large-scale social matters, Julia is pragmatic, sensual and contended to live in the moment and think about herself. While Winston idealistically wants to join the Brotherhood to take a strong stand and reads Emmanuel Goldstein's manifesto, Julia is concerned about enjoying physical intimacy and making pragmatic plans to keep their affair secret so as to not be caught by the Party. Winston sees their affair as a temporary arrangement as his fatalistic attitude makes him think that a long-term relationship with Julia is not possible but Julia has mastered her chosen medium of rebellion and is quite adept at handling such affairs. She claims to have had a number of affairs with different Party members and has no desire to terminate her quest for pleasure or being caught but unfortunately the involvement with Winston leads to her capture. Julia's character is in striking contrast with Winston as excluding their mutual desire for intimacy and hatred for the Party, their characteristic traits are not similar, if not completely opposing.

O'Brien

Orwell presents the totalitarian world in a fascinating manner as he lend an enigmatic aura to the explicit portrayal of the regimented world. While the personal life of Winston is explicitly revelated through the narrative, the reader's only glimpse into the Party's inner life is seen through the bits that Winston experiences. Due to this, many ways of the Party remain unexplained along with the origin, identities and motivations of the people in the Inner circle. The mystery and enigma of the Party is represented through the character of O'Brien. A powerful member of the Inner Party who manages to trick Winston into believing that he belongs to the revolutionary group called Brotherhood. O'Brien goes to the extent to pretend to initiate Winston into the Brotherhood but later he comes to torture and brainwash Winston into his cell. O'Brien admits that he pretended to be a member of the Brotherhood during the process of the psychological torture so as to trap him into openly admitting his disloyalty to the Party.

This disclosure raises many unanswered questions regarding O'Brien as by the end of the novel, the readers know very little about him. When Winston asks O'Brien whether he has

also been captured and turned by the Party, O'Brien very cryptically replies, “They got me long ago.” This reply is vague and could possibly signify that he was once a rebel who was tortured into accepting the supremacy of the Party. The sections where he treats O'Brien with sympathy may either be genuine or fake just to gain his trust. With the betrayal of O'Brien, the existence of the Brotherhood is called to question as it can be a tool employed by the Party to identify the disloyal people and also to create a public enemy figure for the people to collectively hate. O’Brien is a symbolic, shadowy figure who is present on the fringes of the obscure Party.

3.13.8. Major Themes

Dangers of Totalitarianism

1984 is a political novel with forewarns the readers about the dangers of a totalitarian government. Having encountered first-hand experience of the extent to which a totalitarian government can go to increase and sustain their power in Spain and Russia, Orwell's novel was designed to alert people about these ill-effects. This also coincided with the rise of communism and the various debates surrounding this form of governing system. While many people were supporting communism but the relations between democratic and the communist nations were very ambiguous. However, Orwell was disturbed by the oppression and cruelties that he observed in the communist nations. Moreover, he was particularly alarmed by the role that technology played in enabling the oppressive governments in surveillance and controlling the people.

The novel projects a perfect totalitarian society, the extreme imaginable representation of a modern governmental regime which has absolute power. The title of the novel is indicative of the fact that there is a possibility in the future that certain characteristics portrayed in the novel may come true if totalitarianism is not opposed. Orwell shows a state where the government effectively monitors and can control the various aspects of human life to such an extent that even having a disloyal thought about the party is against the law. In the course of the novel, Winston Smith sets out to try to challenge the Party’s power, only to realize that the power of the Party to enslave the people is much beyond his understanding. It is through Winston's experiences that the readers come to understand the various techniques that the Party uses to control the people, each of which form important themes of the novel. They are:

Psychological Manipulation

The Party streams continuous psychological stimuli onto the citizens to overwhelm their mind’s capacity of independent thinking. The perpetually present giant telescreens in everyone’s homes

bombards a constant stream of propaganda which elevates the Party's shortcomings and failures to the stature of unparalleled successes, thereby making them believe in the Party. These telescreens are also used to monitor the behaviour of the citizens. Wherever they go, they are constantly reminded of being monitored by the authorities due to the presence of the signs which read "BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING YOU." The authorities have infiltrated the family units also as they have inducted children into an organization named Junior Spies, where they are brainwashed and encouraged to spy on the adults, even their parents, and report any instances of disloyalty to the Party.

A totalitarian government seeks to sustain their control by controlling the minds of individuals. One of the ways that the Party adopts to induce this subservience is by controlling and suppressing pleasure. By removing pleasure from society, the morale of the people is diminished, thus allowing the Party to enforce its will. The frustration and anger that is thus created is effectively channelized to generate hatred towards the political enemies of the Party, which are sometimes invented by the Party. Julia uses physical pleasure as a means to rebel and she has indulged in this rebellious act many times. On hearing this, Winston joins her in the acts of rebellion as it makes him hopeful. Winston's optimism and hope is the exact emotion that the Party wishes to eliminate. When Winston is tortured by O'Brien in Room 101, he lets out the motive of the Part, which is, to eradicate the sex instinct and reduce it to a procreation duty to be done to create new Party members.

Physical Control

To complement the manipulation of the minds of the people, the Party also tries to control the bodies of the subjects. The Party minutely observes the people for the sign of any disloyalty to the point that even a facial twitch could lead to an arrest, thereby, making the nervous system of a person their greatest enemy. The Party also regulates their bodies by forcing the members to undergo mass morning exercise routines, referred to as the Physical Jerks, and then to work for long gruelling hours at government agencies which keeps the people in a constant state of exhaustion. If anyone tries to defy the Party, then they are punished and 'reeducated' through brutal and systematic physical torture. After being subjectedto weeks of intense torture, Winston concludes that nothing is more powerful than physical pain. The sheer physical pain can overcome all emotional loyalty and moral conviction. It is such a potent tool that by conditioning the subjects to physical coercion, the Party can distort the reality and convince them that 2 + 2 = 5.

Language as Mind Control

Orwell puts across the importance of language in the novelas it is the means by which the humans can structure their thoughts and controlling the medium of expression will limit the ideas that people can formulate and express. If any political agency controlled language then the agency would be in a position to change the very structure of language so that it is impossible to even think of any rebellious or disobedient thought as there would not exist any word to think and articulate that feeling. This idea is exemplified through the tool of Newspeak, which the Party would adopt as the official language. The Party has undertaken efforts to refine and perfect Newspeak, with the ultimate aim that nobody can conceptualise anything which may in any way undermine the Party's authority. This concept of language has been adopted and modified by authors and critics to deal with the aftermaths of colonialism as the colonizers instituted their language as the official language. This established the superiority of a language over the native languages thus obliterating the cultural and historical significance.

Control of Information and History

The Party filters and controls every possible source of information, managing and rewriting the content of the newspapers and history to suit its own needs. The individuals are not allowed to keep any sort of records of their past, like any documents or photographs. The Party does this knowingly as this makes the memories becomes unclear and unreliable, this makes them vulnerable and they start believing whatever the Party wants them to. By exerting complete control over the present, the Party is successful in mutating the past and by doing so the Party successfully justifies all its present actions.

Technology

Telescreens and hidden microphones all over the city are the means adopted by the Party to monitor the members round the clock. The Party makes use of elaborate mechanisms to exercise control on economic activities as well as sources of information, and horrific machinery to specifically torture and inflict pain on the people whom they consider enemies. Although it is generally perceived that technology is directed towards the greater good yet *1984* shows how technology can also facilitate evil.

3.13.9. Summing Up

Orwell wrote *1984* as a warning after years of brooding on the twin menaces of Nazism and Stalinism. Its depiction of a state where daring to think differently is rewarded with torture,

where people are monitored every second of the day, and where party propaganda trumps free speech and thought is a sobering reminder of the evils of unaccountable governments.

3.13.10. Questions

Long Answer Type Questions

1. What are the important recurring images and symbols in the novel ?
2. Discuss the idea of doublethink and how is it important to the Party's control of Oceania ?
3. Critically examine the character of Winston. How is he different from the other Party members ?
4. Compare and contrast Julia's character with Winston. How is her attitude different from Winston's ?

Medium Answer Type Questions

1. Examine the intricate relationship between technology, society and language.
2. Elucidate the role of physical pain and psychological manipulation in 1984.
3. What is the significance of Big Brother and O'Brien in the plot of the novel?
4. How is Newspeak important to the plot of *1984*?

Short Questions:

1. Describe the dangers of a totalitarian government.
2. What is the role of Emmanuel Goldstein?
3. Who is Mr. Charrington?
4. What are some of the forceful activities that the Party subject the members to?
5. Who are the Junior Spies?
6. What is the Thought Police?
7. Describe the structure of the society.
8. What is Room 101?

3.13.11. Suggested Reading

Crick, Bernard. *George Orwell: A Life*. Little Brown, 1980.

Kubal, David L. *Outside the Whale: George Orwell's Art & Politics*. University of Notre Dame Press, 1972.

Lynskey, Dorian. *The Ministry of Truth: A Biography of George Orwell's 1984*. Pan Macmillan, 2019.

Meyers, Jeffrey. *Orwell: Wintry Conscience of a Generation*. W.W. Norton & Co., 2000.

Module - 4

British Drama

Unit 14 ❐ British Drama: 1945-2000

4.14.1. Objectives

In studying this Unit, the learners are to become familiar with the basic outline of British history in the period 1945-2000. The Unit aims analyse the place of literature in Britain within the

[1]Name given to the western part of central London, which contains some of the best-known shopping areas and most of the main theatres.

cultural market (1945-2000) and give an overview of the post-war theatre in Western society. The learners will be introduced to different avant-garde experiments on theatre and its influence on British drama and learn about the main trends and authors of drama in Britain (1945-2000).

4.14.2. Introduction

In order to contextualise the literary works of the era, it becomes indispensable to understand the history of Britain at this time before studying post-war literature, especially drama. Without a doubt, Britain's post-war history has been one of decline. Based on its courageous defence of democracy during the World War II and its connections with the Commonwealth nations, the former colonies of the now-defunct British Empire, Britain has attempted to maintain a leading position in the globe throughout the past fifty years. However, a series of economic crises, American dominance and its "Cold War" politics, and the Franco-German project of a United Europe have forced Britain to partially renounce its claims to global leadership. With the USA casting a large shadow over it and Britain lacking a strong pro-European posture, it could be argued that Britain currently holds an uncomfortable secondary position among the world's nations.

4.14.3. Historical Overview (1945-2000)

Between 1945 and 2000, twelve Prime Ministers-five Labour and seven Conservative-led the British Government. Twenty years were spent during Labour's control, and thirty- five were spent under the Conservatives, including the eleven years (1979-1990) that Margaret Thatcher served as the country's longest-serving Prime Minister. Despite many changes in government, history has taken its own course and created a new economic, social, and cultural order independent of either Labour or the Conservatives' ideas and ideologies.

Britain's history from 1945 to 2000 may be loosely divided into two phases.

1) The establishment of the Welfare State by Labour governments, the beginnings of the dismantling of the Empire (supported by a hopeful belief in the ability of the Commonwealth to maintain ties between Britain and its ex-colonies), and the emergence of Harold Wilson's "affluent society" occurred during the period 1945-1963.

2) The British were gradually let down by their own institutions starting in 1963 (the year of the Profumo scandal), and they began to seriously question Britain's ability to maintain its position as the world's preeminent power.

While Britain's continued support for imperialism during the disastrous Suez Crisis (1957) caused a breach in the Commonwealth, the country's submission to American Cold War politics through NATO demonstrated that it could no longer maintain a separate position in world politics.

After 1963, successive governments were overthrown due to persistent economic unrest. In addition to the loss of its Empire and France's resistance to granting it participation in the European Economic Community, Britain had to deal with significant domestic tensions, particularly those brought on by tense labour relations and the situation in Northern Ireland.

Britain's spirits were temporarily raised by Thatcher's successful lightning war in the Falkland Islands in 1982. Her retention of power for two additional terms, during which her liberal politics created the appearance that a lost economic splendour was being recovered, was aided by this win. In truth, Thatcher's relationship with Reagan's America endangered Britain's standing in Europe while the gap between the rich and the poor widened. The Conservatives led by **John Major** continued Thatcher's economic policies while bolstering the government's pro-European posture after forcing her departure in 1990 over the subject of Europe.

4.14.4. Literature during 1945-2000: cultural context

After going over the history, it is essential to quickly go over the cultural setting in which the literature was created. The development of post-war English literature is characterised by four major tendencies within the British cultural milieu of the time:

1) The intense commercialisation of the book market,

2) The growth of literary theory and criticism at both old and new universities' English departments,

3) The acceptance of audio-visual narrative media, which is frequently cited as a major factor in the alleged decline of literature, and

4) The expansion of English literature by women and post-colonial authors.

Despite the numerous ominous forecasts about the demise of literature, there are actually a surprising number of prominent contemporary English writers. In any case, even while it is undeniable that more books are being sold than ever, it is significant to remember that the literary book industry is only a small portion of the overall book business.

4.14.5. Voices from the Margin: Women and Post-colonial Writers

Two more significant marginal voices in post-war English literature are feminism and post-colonialism.

1) Women authors are not a recent phenomenon in English literature, nor can it be argued that literary criticism has consistently marginalised them. Thus, Jane Austen and George Eliot (Mary Anne Evans) are unquestionably a member of the Great Tradition in the English novel, according to eminent critic F. R. Leavis. Although this has played a significant role in academic literary criticism, the development of feminism in the 1960s and subsequent waves (or feminisms) have pushed post-war female writers in English to take a side for or against feminism. The literary careers of some of the most significant female writers, such Angela Carter and Fay Weldon, have been built specifically on their ambivalence towards feminism.

2) English has been used to portray the experience of colonisation by authors who were born in former British Empire colonies as well as authors who are Welsh, Scottish, or Northern Irish citizens who live in the United Kingdom. In the years following World War II, new national literatures in English emerged, primarily in Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean. Literary scholars have also been pushed to re-evaluate the definition of the adjective "English" in the phrase "English Literature" due to the work of migrant writers from the former colonies who now reside in Britain (first or second generation that is immigrants or born to migrant parents in Britain).

In a nutshell, despite the bleak scepticism of some, the book industry for literature in Britain is undeniably wealthy and prospering. The range of literary and non-literary texts-those likely to appear on university curricula or not-is undoubtedly impressive. Traditional or experimental new works of post-war literature coexist in the same cultural realm as historical classics. Additionally, post-colonial writers and new female voices-feminist or not-have joined a society that is constantly evolving.

4.14.6. Post-War Literature: 1945-2000

Modernism and Victorian approaches to literature coexisted in the 20th century. The Modernist authors introduced technical breakthroughs that might be utilised to perceive reality from the

point of view of the irrational, the subconscious, the anti-sentimental, or the very individualistic in response to realism in fiction and the remnants of Romantic sentimentalism in poetry. The revolution in theatre took a different path, with G. B. Shaw bringing Ibsen's realism theatre to the English stage. It might be stated that modernism first appeared on the English stage around the time of Shaw's death in 1950, when Samuel Beckett's plays opposed realism and the artificial, well-produced drama.

After 1945, when novelists were tasked with illuminating the new historical reality and the place of the individual in the new post-war order, the majority of them realised that this required selecting between traditional literary models that seemed more suitable for presenting an accurate portrait of the individual in a changing society and experimental, Modernist models that seemed more suitable for illuminating the discrepancy between the individual consciousness and the proletarian state and the new post-war order.

Out of this conundrum, postmodernism developed. Thus, rather than being a continuation of Modernism or a reaction against it, post-modernism might be defined as a new cultural environment in which the writer is invariably conscious of this open choice between tradition and experimentalism. Authors of post-war novels are forced to incorporate both Modernism and Victorianism into their works since they are unable to avoid their influence. Others have publicly recognised their loyalty to either literary heritage or innovation, while some have created a new synthesis-which is essentially what defines post-modernism.

In terms of the post-war literature, the post-modernist synthesis took a while to develop, if at all, as it felt necessary to first identify the new outlines of post-war social reality before continuing the Modernist project.

4.14.7. Traditionalism: between the Past and the Present

Between 1945 and 1955, a look back at the lost pre-war era coexisted with a look at the new realities that the generation growing up in the 1940s, particularly in rural settings, had to deal with. Novels like L. P. Hartley's *The Go-Between* (1953) and Evelyn Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited* (1945) assess the present by looking backwards, seeking for the flaws that lead to the desolation of the person speaking in the present.

Returning to one's past reveals, above all, why innocence has been the major victim of war and argues that, while appearing peaceful, the pre-war era's best social offerings were essentially corrupt.

Lord of the Flies by William Golding, published in 1954, is arguably the finest example of the premise that civilization includes the seeds of depravity. In this book, Golding does not focus on a specific period of recent history, but rather on infancy as the setting for the imposition of adult civilised norms, only to discover utter barbarism there.

A renewed interest in the 'present' emerged in the early 1950s, perhaps as a response to the nostalgic look back at a largely manufactured society from which many people, particularly those in the lower middle and working classes, were excluded. In the 1950s novel, the margins of culture moved to the centre, expressing a widespread discontent that was reflected in the plays of the Angry Young Men and parts of The Movement's poetry, leaving aside the beginnings of the post-colonial novel.

At the time, this discontent was classified as political discontent, but it appears today to be lower middle-class resentment about being excluded from the vanished world of the upper classes as depicted in pre-war literature. Thanks to the expanded educational opportunities provided by post-World War II Labour governments, lower middle class and working class writers-many of whom originated outside of London-found themselves immersed in a culture where they were both outsiders and emerging new stars.

What matters is that through these novels, a world that pre-war fiction had largely ignored, entered the English literature. This happened frequently in close collaboration with the Free-Cinema movement of the 1960s, which frequently took inspiration from these books and the plays of the Angry Young Men. In both films and books, England is depicted as a nation that is attempting to reconcile its inconsistencies and no longer the valiant nation of World War II.

Fantasy also made a significant entry into the English literature during the years 1945-1960. The 1960s saw a new wave of fantasy writers, notably J. G. Ballard and Michael Moorcock, who challenged the distinctions between fantasy and mainstream or realistic fiction. In the 1960s and 1970s, experimentalism significantly grew without, however, dethroning realist authors like Graham Greene's work from its position of preeminence. It's debatable exactly when the technical experimentation of Modernism gave way to **Postmodernism**. Some authors, like Wyndham Lewis, Lawrence Durrell, and Henry Green, seem to blur the lines between the two eras, while others switch between realism and experimentalism.

However, it may be said that the defining characteristic of English post-modern literature is its unwillingness to completely renounce realism and its interest in forging a synthesis with other narrative genres, such as fantasy, autobiography, and historiography. In any case, it is crucial to appreciate that the post-war English novel-and maybe post-modernism as a whole-are characterised by the presence of wildly disparate novelistic genres.

This might be the result of a practical approach to literature, one that avoids conflicts like those that occurred between modernists and traditionalists during the Edwardian era. Novelists might like to ensure a place in the cultural marketplace for the book as a whole rather than for any specific form of novel since they are perhaps most conscious of the rising popularity of the audio-visual narrative media, which compete with the novel.

Despite the repeated warnings about declining standards, a glance at the English literature as a whole from 1975 to 1990 finds a healthy state of affairs. Although it may be true that there are fewer enduring characters than in the Victorian novel, there are nevertheless novels that stand out for their intricate architecture and, frequently, their wry humour. The only thing that can be stated to describe modern English writers' work as a whole is that they don't want to be associated with any one particular school, movement, or trend.

The post-war English literature is polyphonic because it includes a variety of voices. If there is one thing that characterises English literature of the past fifty years, it is its chameleonic nature. Because of this adaptability, literature can now take into account the experiences of various social classes, genders, nationalities, and literary projects, ranging from realism to experimentalism. In fact, the business factors that determine literary trends and establish or break literary reputations undoubtedly influence the literature.

4.14.8. Post-War Drama: Avant-garde experiments

After World War II destroyed much of civilization, efforts were made to restore it. This led to a reconsideration of the place of theatre in the new society. The live theatre had to rediscover what it could offer the community that the mass media could not in order to compete with the technological advancements of motion pictures, radio, and television (all of which were offering drama). This prompted a search for a "popular" theatre that would include everyone in the neighbourhood, much like the Greek theatre and the Elizabethan theatre had. In addition, it culminated a new generation of experiments that had begun prior to the war-experiments that intended to push the audience in more extreme ways than ever before, erasing the barriers between spectators and performers.

It is crucial to look at the various forms of experimental theatre that developed in Europe after World War II. These experiments had an effect on English playwriting and theatre practice as well. While the avant-garde theatrical experiments in post-war Europe impacted English drama, they also prepared the way for its own theatre/drama to be creatively reinvented.

i) The Epic Theatre of Brecht

Bertolt Brecht began writing plays in Germany in the 1920s, although he did not become well-known until much later. In the end, his stage presentation theories had a greater impact on the direction of mid-century theatre in the West than those of any other man. This was largely due to the fact that he put up the most important counter argument to the Stanislavsky-inspired realism that controlled acting and the "well-made play" architecture that dominated playwriting.

German Expressionism was a major influence on Brecht's early work, but it was his obsession with Marxism and the notion that man and society could be studied intellectually that inspired him to create his philosophy of "epic theatre." Brecht thought that theatre should appeal to the audience's reason rather than their emotions. It should be highly didactic and capable of inciting social change while still giving amusement. He asserted that in the realistic theatre of deception, the audience is more likely to identify with the individuals on stage and feel an emotional connection to them than be inspired to reflect on his own life.

Brecht devised his *Verfremdungs-effekt* ("alienation effect"), or the use of anti-illusive techniques to remind the audience that they are in a theatre watching an enactment of reality rather than reality itself, in order to encourage the audience to adopt a more critical attitude towards what was happening on stage. The use of few props and "indicative" scenery, purposeful interruption of the action with songs to drive home a key point or message, projecting explanatory captions onto a screen or using placards were some of these techniques. They also included flooding the stage with harsh white light, regardless of where the action was taking place, and leaving the stage lamps in full view of the audience. Instead of realism and empathy with the character, Brecht expected his players to adopt a detached, objective manner of acting that allowed them to comment on the play's action.

The most significant of Brecht's plays, such as *The Life of Galileo, Mother Courage and Her Children, and The Good Woman of Setzwan*, were created between 1937 and 1945 while he was in exile from the Nazi regime, initially in Scandinavia and then in the United States. He returned in 1949 to found the Berliner Ensemble with his wife, Helene Weigel, as the star actress, at the invitation of the newly established East German government. Brecht didn't become known as one of the most significant artists in 20th-century theatre until this moment, when he began producing his own works.

Every Western nation's theatre has been affected, either directly or indirectly, by Brecht's critique of the illusive theatre. Authors including John Arden, Edward Bond, and Caryl Churchill's plays as well as several of the Royal Shakespeare Company's presentations on bare stages in

Britain made use of the effect. Although Brecht acknowledged a debt to traditional Chinese theatre, Western theatre in the 20th century proved to be a cross-fertilization of numerous types, and by the 1950s, alternative methods were gaining ground.

ii) Theatre of Fact

Documentary theatre, sometimes known as the Theatre of Fact, was a more direct way to bring social topics to the stage. The presentation of factual information was often given priority in this scenario over aesthetic concerns. A unit of the WPA Federal Theatre Project in the United States adopted what it called a "living newspaper" technique as a result of the social protest movement that emerged during the 1930s depression, drawing on film (particularly in the use of brief scenes to highlight current issues). Later, the method was used on stage to different degrees of success. Through fictitious alterations or the use of real documentary materials (such as court transcripts, government records, and statistical tables), real events were reconstructed and interpreted. Through plays like *In the Matter of J. Robert Oppenheimer* (1964) by Heinar Kipphardt, *The Representative* by Rolf Hochhuth (1963), *The Investigation* (1965) by Peter Weiss, and *US* (1967) by the Royal Shakespeare Company, the form gained popularity in the 1960s. The group 7:84, led by John McGrath, used it in Scotland in the 1980s.

iii) Theatre of the Absurd

Many overseas playwrights who lived in Paris during the post-World War II period represented the post-war temper of disappointment and scepticism. They shared the conviction that human life was essentially without meaning or purpose and that real communication was no longer possible even though they did not see themselves as members of a formal movement. They believed that the human condition has descended to the absurd (Albert Camus, a French Existentialist novelist and philosopher, coined the term most famously). *The Bald Soprano*, or *The Bald Prima Donna*, by Eugène Ionesco, Arthur Adamov's *Invasion*, both produced in 1950, and Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, first performed in French as En attendant Godot in 1953, were some of the first plays of the Theatre of the Absurd, as the school came to be known, that dealt with the devaluation of language. In favour of a world of uncertainty, where things like chairs multiplying mysteriously and people mysteriously transforming into rhinoceroses, rationalism and logical building were abandoned. American author Edward Albee and British writer Harold Pinter were examples of later absurdist writers, however by the 1960s the movement had almost completely died out.

iv) Theatre of Cruelty

The French actor and playwright Antonin Artaud proposed a concept for a Surrealist theatre called the Theatre of Cruelty in the early 1930s. This type of theatre, which was based on ritual and fantasy, launched an assault on the audience's subconscious in an effort to liberate deeply ingrained worries and fears that are typically buried by making individuals view themselves and their natures without the shield of civilization. Extremes of human nature (sometimes craziness and perversion) were graphically depicted on stage in order to shock the audience and elicit the desired response. The use of words was typically minimised in plays that were deemed examples of the Theatre of Cruelty, which was fundamentally an antiliterary uprising. Instead, screams, inarticulate cries, and symbolic gestures were frequently emphasised. Although Artaud attempted to realise these principles in his production of *Les Cenci* (1935), his theoretical writings, particularly *The Theatre and Its Double* (1938), had a much greater impact.

The Theatre of Cruelty didn't take on a more concrete shape until after World War II, first in the 1947 production of Franz Kafka's *The Trial* by French director Jean-Louis Barrault and later in the plays by Jean Genet and Fernando Arrabal. The success of Peter Brook's 1964 production of Peter Weiss's *Marat/Sade* for the Royal Shakespeare Company contributed to the movement's popularity during the 1960s.

v) Poor theatre

The important figures of the 20th century in terms of developing actor technique were the Polish director Jerzy Grotowski, Stanislavsky, and Brecht. When Grotowski's Laboratory Theatre, founded in Opole, Poland, in 1959, triumphantly toured the continents of Europe and America in the middle of the 1960s, he first gained widespread recognition. The publication of his theoretical declarations in *Towards a Poor Theatre* (1968) increased his impact even further. Although the relationship was initially accidental, Grotowski and Artaud had a lot in common, particularly in their views on the actor as a "holy actor" and the theatre as a "secular religion." He thought that theatre ought to be more than just entertainment or exposition; it ought to be a face-to-face interaction with the audience, which is usually no more than 60 people. The performers were looking for spontaneity within a strict structure that was developed through the most intense physical training. Grotowski rejected the frills of the "rich theatre," removing all unnecessary scenery, clothes, and props to establish the "poor theatre," where the actor was the only point of attention. His works of art included adaptations of the plays like *The Constant Prince*, written by Pedro Calderón in 17th-century Spain, and *Acropolis*, written by Stanislaw Wyspianski in the early 20th-century Poland.

During the late 1960s and early 1970s, the poor theatre gained popularity across the globe, despite complaints from critics who claimed that the majority of organisations that attempted it produced merely self-indulgent imitations that tended to exclude the audience. Grotowski's own work, which began to completely exclude the audience in 1976 and prefer to work in private, was a significant example of this sensation of exclusion.

Peter Brook did an excellent job of theatrically expressing the essence of poor theatre. Brook produced a number of lively productions after emigrating from England in 1968 to found the International Centre of Theatre Research in Paris, including *Ubu roi* (1977), a condensed version of *Carmen* (1982), and *Le Mahabharata* (1985), a nine-hour adaptation of the Hindu epic Mahabharata.

4.14.9. English Drama (1945-2000)

Having discussed post-war literary developments and theatre in western society, we will now specifically focus on post-war English drama. Despite the fact that both drama and novel can be categorised as narrative genres, there is a clear distinction between the two: a play can only fully realise its literary potential when it is performed on a stage. Thus, there are two options to consider while analysing the development of drama within a certain era:

1) plays as published texts,
2) plays in performance.

There have been significant shifts in performances of plays in post-war drama. Influenced by the changing theatrical experimentation in Europe as discussed in the previous section, these changes are related to the changes in the way plays are written because the innovations presented by the plays call for **new acting techniques** and **new theatres**, and because the development of acting styles and new trends in theatre management also promote the creation of innovative plays.

4.14.10. West End[2] Theatre and the New English Drama

The rise of a powerful opposition to the mainstream play that predominated the **West End theatres** of London can be used to outline the post-war history of English drama. Paradoxically, after decades in which constant innovation inspired by revolutions in both the form and the content of contemporary drama in English have led to the establishment of strong alternatives

[2]Name given to the western part of central London, which contains some of the best-known shopping areas and most of the main theatres.

to the West End, the success of the playwrights who sustained the **new English drama** can be measured by their presence in West End theatres. Similar to how literary and popular fiction coexists on bestseller lists for novels; mainstream theatre has widened its scope to accommodate all forms of commercial success, whether they are experimental or traditional.

The theatre sector was in a very precarious state at the end of World War II. A lot of theatres had been demolished, there was a lack of actors and managers, and what was even more concerning was that films were growing more and more popular, leading to the conversion of many theatres into cinemas. Later, television would pose a greater threat to the stage.

The Group, a group of business interests that controlled the West End theatres in London for a decade after the war, ensured the success of musicals (often imported from the USA), the predominance of metropolitan over rural tastes, and the reliance of drama on the star system. The desire for theatre outside of London was satiated by travelling companies from the city and repertory companies operating in regional venues.

The West End's audiences had traditional tastes, and amateur clubs, which were unconstrained by commercial demands, were the primary sources of drama's innovations. Actor-managers who had their own companies, like Laurence Olivier, helped revitalise post-World War II theatre by providing alternatives to the standard West End material, most of which were based on the classics.

Noel Coward, Terence Rattigan, and J. B. Priestley were the three major playwrights of the century, though T. S. Eliot and Christopher Fry's more avant-garde verse plays also found great popularity.

The majority of West End theatres featured what were known as "well-made plays," which had their roots in late nineteenth-century French theatre. These plays included an upper-class hero going through a crisis that would symbolise his transition from ignorance to knowledge, and they were connected by a storyline that was predetermined by the unities of time, place, and action. Ibsen's addition of naturalism to the well-written play paved the way for G.B. Shaw's social and political drama in England. By the 1940s, naturalism, particularly in acting, was gaining favour and the well-made play was beginning to seem too artificial and the twist endings too contrived.

4.14.11. Absurdist Drama and Social and Political Drama

The moment was right by the 1950s for a backlash against West End drama. The West End stage faced two fundamentals challenged almost simultaneously:

1) the minimalist, absurdist drama of Samuel Beckett's Waiting for Godot (1955)

2) socially critical John Osborne's Look Back in Anger (1956)

The artificiality of speech, story, and characters on stage was brought to the audience's attention by Beckett in his proposal for a reflection on the dramatic form. Osborne broke with traditions regarding the decorum until to this point seen on the English stage and asked the audience to ponder the new sense of social alienation of the emerging lower middle class.

George Devine's **English Stage Company** at the Royal Court in Chelsea had its financial future assured by Look Back in Anger as well. This company had a significant impact since it specialised in performing plays by emerging playwrights including **N. F. Simpson, Arnold Wesker, Anne Jellicoe**, and **John Arden.**

Harold Pinter debuted The Birthday Party (1958), his masterwork, in the 1950s as well. With this absurdist play, Pinter, who is still considered as the leading actor on the English stage, offered an apolitical substitute to Osborne's play.

Pinter is arguably Beckett's most important student, despite not sharing his existentialist and philosophical interests. Pinter's plays, however, are distinctly his own. Above all, his antinaturalistic, minimalist, frequently violent dramas-in which silence commands the dramatist's attention as much as speech-speak of the difficulty of communication. The epithet "Pinteresque" aptly describes the odd universe in which his characters live.

4.14.12. New Theatre Companies and the Arts Council

The English theatre underwent an unprecedented shift between 1956 and 1966. These years saw the development of numerous new writers as well as the founding in 1960 of the London branch of **Royal Shakespeare Company** under the direction of Peter Hall and the new

National Theatre Company under the direction of Laurence Olivier. When the National Theatre relocated to the new South Bank building in the 1970s, Hall would succeed Olivier.

The significance of the **director** steadily increased, and organisations built around them did as well. The most notable illustration of the cohesiveness desired at the time between director, actors, and authors was provided by Joan Littlewood's Theatre Workshop, a group that relocated to the Theatre Royal in a London suburb in 1953.

Littlewood's Workshop had many common characteristics with Brecht's **Berliner Ensemble**, the non-English company that had the greatest impact on the growth of English drama. Actors, directors, and writers who understood the benefits of teamwork over individualism were drawn to the concept of establishing permanent companies like that of Brecht.

Additionally, Brecht's political and experimental theatre provided a helpful synthesis that won over a lot of fans. Brechtian drama promoted a much more open playing style with a new emphasis on the possibilities of body language, as well as the adoption of new architectural forms for new playhouses that were less formal and had less obvious distinctions between the audience and stage.

The issue was that Brecht's publicly funded firm encouraged British directors to seek government funding via the Arts Council. And this made the English stage unstable. The Arts Council's patronage was little between 1946 and 1956; it was believed that local governments would support theatre as they were permitted by a 1948 act to allocate a portion of taxes to the arts.

However, due to local councils' lack of interest, grants increased steadily between 1957 and 1964, and starting in 1964, it can be said that the Arts Council became a victim of its own success as subsidies became increasingly necessary to support both fringe theatres and national companies.

The modern fringe theatre

In the middle of the 1960s, the fringe theatre debuted. The founding of the **Traverse Theatre** in Edinburgh and the **Theatre of Cruelty** seasons at LAMDA, according to John Elsom (1979), were the two events from 1963-1964 that officially launched the modern fringe. The success of fringe theatre often hinges on the availability of little theatres where

highly experimental theatre directed at niche audiences who would skip larger theatres can be presented. The experimental nature of fringe theatre places a strong emphasis on acting techniques.

Numerous efforts to secure patronage from other groups-including business, local governments, investors, and even labour unions-were unsuccessful in preventing the centralization of patronage. Since literary fiction was largely unaffected by state patronage, the work of the Arts Council was thus both beneficial in that it encouraged new initiatives and detrimental in that it artificially created a situation in which it was impossible to know what audiences really wanted.

4.14.13. Theatre from the Mid-1960s Onwards

By the middle of the 1960s, the lines separating experimental theatre from conventional theatre were beginning to blur. While conventional plays like Robert Bolt's A Man for All Seasons received positive reviews by critics, Osborne's experimental plays were continuously produced by the West End. The minimalist drama by Samuel Beckett and Harold Pinter was still being written, with an increasing emphasis on the significance of silence.

The so-called "kitchen-sink" playwrights, those concerned in the everyday dramas of the lower-middle and working classes, like Arnold Wesker, Brendan Behan, and Shelagh Delaney, were increasingly out of fashion. Despite their efforts, it is hard to say how much they were successful in establishing a true working-class theatre in England.

Stage censorship came to an end in the late 1960s when the Lord Chamberlain's regime was overthrown in 1968. This provided young writers more flexibility with language and enabled them to express their caustic social criticism much more aggressively than the Angry Young Men or the working-class dramatists.

With the emergence of the second wave of new dramatists, several new trends therefore came together in the middle of the 1960s. With *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead,* which was first performed at the Edinburgh Festival Theatre in 1965, Tom Stoppard successfully carried on the legacy of experimentalism established by Beckett and Pinter. However, he countered their minimalism with a rich, opulent use of speech.

The ridiculous and the bizarre, influenced by Eugene Ionesco's absurdist play and Antonin Artaud's theatre of cruelty, served as the inspiration for the disruptive, carnivalesque work of

N. F. Simpson, Joe Orton, and David Rudkin. The constraints of upward mobility appeared to be the focus of interest for the new playwrights' frequently critical portrayal of English society. This was anti-middle class theatre for the middle classes.

With the help of G. B. Shaw's problem plays and social satire, the new social realists of the 1970s-Peter Nichols, David Storey, and Simon Gray-offered a depressing portrayal of suburbia that was also present in more traditional pieces like Alan Ayckbourn's comedies.

The work of Edward Bond, Howard Brenton, David Hare, David Edgar, Trevor Griffiths, Peter Barnes, and John Arden, among others, was more politically left-leaning and thrived at smaller theatres under the influence of Brecht's example before being embraced by the West End.

The English stage has supported a significant number of more traditional dramatists, including Alan Ayckbourn, Michael Frayn, Christopher Hampton, James Saunders, Anthony Shaffer, Peter Shaffer, John Mortimer, John Whiting, and Robert Bolt, in addition to experimentalists and politically engaged playwrights. They haven't been the only ones to split their time between writing original plays, writing for the screen (both cinema and television), and alternately, adapting novels for the stage. Others like Harold Pinter and Tom Stoppard have done the same. This dual devotion to the stage and the screen is likely to inspire fresh ideas for their work, as it will need to be reevaluated.

Drawing strict distinctions between plays and screenplays when both are created by the same author just appears unfair. The English theatre, despite needing new talent and facing competition from television and the movies, cannot be said to be in decline. Perhaps at the expense of softening its political and artistic edges, each appears to have established itself on the global entertainment map.

4.14.14. Comprehension Exercises

Long Answer Type Questions:

1. What were the major tendencies that characterised British stage in the post-war cultural milieu?

2. Discuss the ways post-war drama engaged with Avant-Garde experimentations.

Medium Answer Type Questions:

1. Discuss Brecht's usage of "alienation effect" in his theatre.

2. Explain the term "absurdist drama".

3. Why do you think post-war English literature is polyphonic?

Short Answer Type Questions:

1. When did Modernism first appear on the English stage?

2. Name a few authors who blurred the differentiation between Modernism and Post-modernism.

3. Name two absurdist writers.

4.14.15. Suggested Readings

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Unit 15 ❒ Edward Bond: *Lear*

Structure

4.15.1. Objectives

This Unit introduces the learners to Edward Bond as a dramatist and his play *Lear*. We shall look back at various postmodern stage practices that influence Bond's conception of *Lear*.

4.15.2. Introduction

Edward Bond (born 18 July 1934) is a prolific British dramatist, theatre director, poet, theorist and screen writer. His major works include *The Pope's Wedding* (1962), *Saved* (1964), *Narrow Road to the Deep North* (1968), *Early Morning* (1968), *Lear* (1971), *The Sea* (1973), *Bingo* (1973), *The Fool* (1975), *The Bundle* (1978), *Restoration* (1981). Most of Bond's writing career span around 1970s, a period known for the political unrest and activism leading up to the election of Margret Thatcher's Conservative Government in 1979. It was a decade of mass oppositional left wing political activity when the Cold War, the Vietnam War, the Berlin Wall wrecked the whole world. This unrest was reflected in theatre as well. Bond played a significant role in reviving, radicalizing and revitalizing the British stage. He not only brought the political commitment in the drama but also challenged restrictions imposed on the

dramatists. Bond's most popular play to date, *Saved*, featuring a scene in which a baby is stoned to death by a group of thugs that includes none other than the father of the baby, instigated a national debate over stage censorship, paving the way to the abolition of censorship in the United Kingdom in 1968. He is known to be an inspiration for subsequent generations of dramatists, most prominently Sarah Kane whose first play, *Blasted*, attracted a wave of media fury, against which Bond defended her under the telling title of "A Blast at our Smug Theatre".

4.15.3. Rational Theatre

What it is according to Bond:

His drama is essentially built upon the idea that in a world operating on irrational terms, " art expresses the need for the rational" (Bond xvi). Edward Bond advocates 'Rational theatre' which highlights the need of immediate and radical change in society.Bond calls his theatre, a Rational Theatre mainly because he believes that there is a meaning to history and thathistory is the best way of learning about present. To explain it further, we must note that our present social problems have a history, we would be able to identify and solve these problems only when we understand this history. Bond proclaims that he re-reads the past in the light of the present to identify the underlying socio-political factors that inform events.

And therefore, art of Bond's aim is to reveal how the social conditions of man and his life are determined by the political system. Bond firmly believes that, "Art without politics would be trivial" (Bond and Hern). Bond's theatre thus sketches out the causes of human misery and demonstrates the sources of human strength because he believes that if we can discern a pattern in history, it would be possible ameliorate the human condition.To this end, he professes,"I would like to be able to create individuals on the stage…to be able to present people in such a way that you can understand their social relationship and be able to read the rest of their society in them, to understand them as living processes" (Chambers 27). He also elaborates on the connotative dimension of the marker 'rational' by stating that "I call my plays rational but they are often very passionate and very emotional plays, because passion and emotion are part of a rational life" (Klein).Thus, we see Bond's plays displaying social processes in action and his characterization is firmly rooted, in particular, in classes and society, with the writer focusing on the actions of human beings in response to complex situations. Bond's specific dramaturgical method derives from **Antonin Artaud (Theatre of Cruelty), Bertolt Brecht (Epic Theatre)** and **Samuel Beckett (Theatre of the Absurd)**.

4.15.4. Important Dramatic Influences

a) Theatre Of Cruelty

Theatre of Cruelty, theorised by Antonin Artaud, foregrounds violence and cruelty to deliberately unsettle the minds of the people. Bond's plays present highly unsettling scenes of violence too, but they too work in favour of his humanist drive.

b) Epic Theatre

Like Bertolt Brecht, Edward Bond believed that plays must be cerebral, rather than cathartic. Like the epic theatre of Brecht, Bond's plays have constantly revisited history to examine the social, ethical and political roots of present situation in order to alter them. Thus, like him, Bond uses the technique of historification, by means of which, he aims to break down the audience's sense of identification with characters and places to divert the focus on the socio-political factors, underlying the events in the play. To put it simply, Bond opines, "An epic play tells a story and says why it happened," thereby giving more primacy to action over characters. Therefore, before assuming the political responsibility to change the society, the audience should first locate the social defects and their origins. Like Brecht, Bond uses alienation effect to create such awareness and his alienation effect includes primarily shocking images of violence. He terms the images of violence in his plays as "theatre events." Thus, we see, everything in Bond's oeuvre is designed to replace the idea of an illusionistic theatre with a theatre of objectivity and science, and this aspect too seems inspired by the epic plays of Bertolt Brecht.

c) Theatre of the Absurd

There is a general consensus among the dramatic critics that Bond's contribution lies in pitching his Rational Theatre against the theatre of Absurd. However, he shows his strong antipathy for the Theatre of the Absurd because for him it is by its very nature pessimistic. Bond's rational theatreshares certain postmodern techniques like-ambiguity, incoherence, fragmentation (of both language and setting), non-linear progression of both events and characters and a certain dreamlike quality-with the theatre of the absurd. However, he strongly dismisses the absurdist proposition that assumes absurdity as the basic and universal condition of man. Bond strongly argues that humans can bring into existence a rational society based on justice and equality, action and awareness. His Rational Theatre, as Jenny Spencer says, "places Bond in a tradition of realistic literature with its own history of struggle since the nineteenth century" (4). It takes an initiative and goes on an offensive against what he calls society's excessive controlling and too readily accepted myths: that man is innately violent, that science and technology will get to

the bottom of all of man's problems, and the free market system (capitalism) is best because it appeals to the man's natural aggressiveness. In contrast, according to him, what the theatre of the absurd does is to annihilate in people a belief in their innate abilities. For Bond writers of the absurd only discouraged people and heaped pessimism. It did not help the proletariat to change their miserable condition, on the contrary encouraged their victimisation in an inhuman way. For Bond, when capitalists were exploiting the poor, absurdist writers instead of showing how to change this materialistic society, were preoccupied with human weakness to do so. Therefore, holding on to his markedly confrontational aesthetic to attack bourgeois sensibility and persistent faith in humans as agents of change and revolution, the most important contribution of Bond to modern drama is his rational theatre, through which he targeted to jolt his audience into active awareness.

4.15.5. Performance History and Background of Bond's Lear

Edward Bond's *Lear*, which is a re-writing of William Shakespeare's *King Lear* (1606), was first performed in 1971, produced by the English Stage company at the Royal Court Theatre on 29 September 1971, directed by William Gaskill and revived in 1982 by the Royal Shakespeare Company at The *Other Place*. Bond's Lear is a play shaped by the playwright's experience of growing up in war inflected London andcontemporary political turbulence around him caused by the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, bloody assassination of Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy, unrest in Israel owing to the Six Day War, unrest in Northern Ireland and mass student involvement in politics, to name a few.Like his contemporaries Bond witnessed and experienced the war first hand; son of a labourer, he moved with his family to London, but their roots remained essentially rural. During the war he experienced a number of evacuations which gave him a completely different outlook to the milieu he was living in. After various jobs in factories and offices, he did his national service in the British Army occupation forces in Vienna between 1953 and 1955. During this time in the army he discovered the naked violence hidden behind normal social behaviour. And this reflects in his dramatic works, particularly in his play Lear, where he tries to evoke his faith that there could be an end to the oppression, violence and suffering caused by totalitarian regimes and egoistical ruler classes.

Now, we arrive at the much compelling question-why does Edward Bond choose to rewrite Shakespeare's play? Bond explains it himself. According to him, Shakespeare in King Lear came close to locating the problem of society but he shirked from providing definite answers to these questions. Cordelia dies towards the end and the question of how to change the society remains unanswered. Daniel. R. Jones quotes Bond saying :

> Shakespeare took this character and I wanted to correct it so that it would become a viable model for me and . . . for society. Shakespeare does arrive at an answer to the problems of his particular society, and that was the idea of total resignation, accepting what comes, … Anybody can accept. You can go quietly into your gas chamber at Auschwitz, you can sit quietly at home and have an H bomb dropped on you. Shakespeare had time. He must have thought that in time certain changes would be made. But time has speeded up enormously, and for us, time is running out (505).

And time is running out also on account of the modern technological culture and entire political systems devoted to such culture, technocracy, that have led to large-scale destruction being an ever-present threat.

4.15.5. Plot Summary

The main plot of Shakespeare's *King Lear* deals with the story of King Lear and his three daughters: Goneril, Regan, and Cordelia. Lear has decided to transfer all his power and authority to his three daughters and to divide his kingdom among them according to their protestation of love. Goneril and Regan make extravagant professions of their love for their father, whereas Cordelia remains silent. As a result, Lear deprives Cordelia of everything.

Afterwards, Regan and Goneril treat their father badly and turn him out of doors, while Cordelia marries the King of France and returns with an army to save her father's life. But her army is defeated and she is taken as a prisoner. Lear realizes his rash action but it is too late for Cordelia, who dies at the end of the play. The sub-plot deals with the story of Gloucester and his two sons: Edgar and Edmund. Edmund is a villain who is similar to Goneril and Regan. Gloucester commits Lear's mistake and drives Edgar out of his home. But at the end he is blinded and, in his blindness, he gains more insight, realizes his foolishness and repents.

In *Lear*, Bond presents a king who has two daughters, Bodice and Fontanelle. This king uses the labour to build a great wall in order to secure his country from any foreign attack and to protect his people from enemies, namely Cornwall and North. His daughters, Bodice and Fontanelle, at first, seem as sensible as their prototypes, Goneril and Regan; for they express their great love and loyalty to their father, however, at the same time they have an inner intention to marry their father's hereditary enemies, the Duke of Cornwall and the Duke of North. Before long, they have overthrown their father and established a new regime for themselves which is more vicious and violent than his. At last, they are overthrown by a revolutionary army led by Cordelia, the wife of a farmer, the Gravedigger's Boy, who has been murdered for harbouring the fugitive Lear. Bodice and Fontanelle are killed without trial

and people are forced to build the self-same wall. Many of the old atrocities are committed and Lear himself is blinded in an attempt to makehim politically ineffective, with what the doctor, performing the operation, calls, "not an instrument of torture, but a scientific device" (Lear: Act 2, Scene 6, p. 63). Lear learns that he must act, so he begins to deliver social parables to pilgrims visiting the Tolstoyan homestead where he lives with his disciples. But the government finds his role as a public intellectual dangerous and prepares to execute him. Lear travels to the wall and is shot as he begins to destroy it with a shovel.

Thus, in the course of the play, we see the nation ruled by three different governments-the first, that of King Lear, a tyrannical monarch, obsessed with the construction of a wall to save his realm from imagined foes; second, that of Bodice and Fontanelle, who turn out to be morebrutal than their father and the third being that of Cordelia, whose peasant uprising overthrows the government of the daughters. Cordelia's government symbolises democracy or people's rule. Despite Bond's professed socialist leaning, Lear appears to take an open critical stance against a socialist government that fails its own proclaimed democratic ideal. This also lays barethe general disillusionment with socialism as the age saw not only the failure of socialist nations to keep up with theirideologies but also their utter collapsing into aggressive, dictatorial, totalitarian regimes. Thus, the play, set in its timeless, futuristic frame can be seen as a strong critique against systemic violence at large.

4.15.6. Shakespeare's *King Lear* and Bond's *Lear*: A Comparison

Intertextuality involves a reader to read certain texts and into which he inserts himself by re-writing them. This is completely evident in Bond's *Lear*, where he uses Shakespeare's *King Lear* as an intertext to express his own version. Bond retains the basic narrative structure of *King Lear*: an authoritarian ruler, who loses power, then comes into bloody conflict with his daughters, unleashing a tide of civil and personal violence. Both show a king and a father acting arbitrarily and being opposed by two daughters whose sole concern is to acquire power. Both Lears move from autocratic behaviour into a kind of insanity and come towards some understanding and pity. Incidents to do with the partition of the kingdom, blindness, the imprisonment of father and daughter, and the general deployment of animal imagery are common to each of the versions.

The major shift of emphasis is hinted at in the title: the dropping of 'King' immediately implies that Bond is not interested in the royal nature of the king but in his function as an individual in an oppressive state. By removing the "king" from the title, he removes Lear's

social standing, his absolute power, and also makes him one of the others, as if to signify that what Lear goes through, his cruelty, his fall from power, his suffering can happen to any of us. Lear as a person is more important than Lear as king.

In *King Lear*, Shakespeare presents two plots: the main plot and the sub-plot. Bond's *Lear*, on the other hand, has one main plot and there is no sub-plot. Shakespeare's *King Lear* consists of five acts whereas Bond's *Lear* consists of three acts. Bond's plot develops through eighteen scenes as opposed to Shakespeare's twenty-six. Unlike Shakespeare's Lear whose rashness leads to his suffering, Bond's Lear spirals to his downfall by his way of bringing up his daughters. They are brought up to fear, not to love. To add to this, Shakespeare's Lear has to face the fury of the elements without any shelter, while Bond's Lear is given shelter out of pity by the Gravedigger's Boy. Shakespeare's Lear gains insight through suffering. He discovers that law and justice are for the privileged classes and not for the poor common people. Bond's Lear, on the other hand, comes to realize his mistakes through suffering. This realization makes him see better and behave in a different way.

However, the final act of Shakespeare's Lear puts emphasis on his helplessness. He dies unable to do something, whereas the final act of Bond's Lear has its effect on people especially those who symbolize future generations like Thomas and Susan who may be able to bring change. He dies attempting to destroy the wall, his gesture is heroic but it is also tragic for it costs his life. The death of Bond's Lear looks backwards to the mistakes he must expiate, but also forward to the possibility of a more rational society that may be established by succeeding generations understanding the event. So, the end of *Lear*'s suggests that direct action is imperative and shows that it is very difficult to make any change in an unjust society, but it is not impossible.

4.15.7. Themes and Imagery

a) Animal Imagery:

Lear, through the course of the play, goes through a series of transformations, from an evil, megalomaniac tyrant into a good and caring citizen, from blindness to insight, from infantile obstinacy to mature acceptance, and from victimizer to victim and these changes are reflected in the animal imagery used. Lear in the very first scene complains that his men at work at the wall are being treated "like cattle." He calls his enemies "wolves" from whom the wall is to shield his subjects, whom he calls his "sheep." When his daughters drive him out, he identifies himself with increasingly melodramatic, self-pitying animal imagery: "I am a famished dog that

sits on the earth and howls….my daughters turned a dog out of his kernel because it turned fond of his sack." *(Lea*r) In his attempt to understand what has happened to him he uses terrifying parables in which animals appear as victims in landscapes of fear, "The mouse comes out of his hole and stares. The giant wants to cut thedragon, but the dragon has grabbed the carving knife." (*Lear*)

However, during his trial, when Bodice gives her father a mirror to worsen his lapse into insanity, in hisagony he shifts the focus of his self-pity to animage that mingles with some unidentified tormented animal: "a little cage with bars with ananimal in it. No, no, that's not the king. ... .Who broke itswings? Who cut off his hands so that it can't shake the bars?" (*Lear*, Act II).

In the next scene Lear has gone mad completely but hecan now hold the animal image at a distance and is able to negotiate the horror of his new experience: "There's an animal in a cage. I must let it out or it will be destroyed." (Lear, Act II)

Later, being forced to attend his daughter's autopsy, Fontanelle, Lear is overwhelmed yet it makes himunderstand his own responsibility for the deathof his daughter. His animal images change: "She sleeps inside like a lion and a lamb and a child." (Lear, Act III)

After his blinding, he gains further insight and comes to terms with his share of agony. This shows in his choice of the parable he tells others to teach them what he has learned. It is the story ofa bird trapped in a cage and later crippled byhaving its wings broken thanks to human crueltyand vanity.

b) Violence:

There are many instances when human beingsare killed just like that, whimsically, for the pleasure of a leader orbecause they simply stand in their way. In "Lear" such examples abound. A memorable scene is thebeating up of Warrington, the horrible torture ofLear's old minister which occurs in the frameworkof a comedy. The soldier to whom the techniquesof torture are professional skills discusses with Bodice over this matter "Yer wan' 'im done in a fancy way?" (Act One, scene 4).

Lear's blinding is another instance of violence,again being described as a work which requiresprofessionalism: "Understand, this isn't aninstrument of torture, but a scientific device. See how it clips the lid back to leave it unmarked" (Act two, Scene 6). This use of precision and language is almost anatomical and paraded off proudly as the latest acquisition of science.

This violent blinding find sits counterpart in *"We Come to the River"* wherethe General's blinding is also a political act ofviolence emphasising the long experience and skill and practice of those who accomplish Lear is blinded in a clinical manner, his eyes being removed by "a soothing solution of formal dehydrate crystals" (77). This incident reflects the abuse of technology by totalitarian regimes. Lear cries out in the extremity of his pain: "Aahhh! The sun! It hurts my eyes!" (77). Lear's statement manifests the clinical obscenity of power structures which force man to create such a machine.

c) Technology:

Lear's world has turned out to be a techno sphere and not, as formerly, a biosphere. "Without technology," Bond argues, "there could be no abundance, no welfare, no hope, no destruction of false myths" (Bond). Technology, he also accepts, causes a feeling of aggression, because it makes human beings feel like misfits and inadequate, accordingly, provoking their biological defences as manifested through aggression.

d) Blindness

The blindness of Lear has an archetypal significance in the blinding of Tiresias and Oedipus, the blind seers of classical myth. In shifting blindness from Gloucester to Lear, this allows Bond "to push the Shakespearean action to the Sophoclean end".

e) The Wall

Lear's wall represents Shakespeare's idea of order. Shakespeare believed that monarchs had an obligation to keep order in the state. Lear himself has also been corrupted by his wall. He interrupts his speech about how his people "are my sheep and if one of them is lost I'd take fire to hell to bring him out" (2) to fire on one of his "sheep" because he has slowed down work on the wall. The final scene shows Lear at the wall, as in the opening scene, but acting differently. Instead of sacrificing a life to build the wall, he now sacrifices a life to unbuild it. He sees the great wall, which he dedicated his career to building, as the symbol of a social order based on the denial of basic human needs. Wall symbolizes closure, separation and limitedness. The play opens with the accidental death of a worker who works on the wall, and ends with the death of Lear who is digging the wall with a shovel. Though Lear says "[M]y wall will make you free," the wall turns his people into slaves; farmers are forced to work on the wall for the need of workforce, and it causes a threat that "the countryside would be left derelict. the main symbol of violence in the play is the wall. The wall not only makes people suffer, it also kills them. The wall - which represents both physical and psychological barrier between people and which is the material symbol of violence against both human beings and nature - is

the only thing that stays on stage when the play ends. The wall can be interpreted as a symbol of technology. Lear stupidly tries to build his wall across a swamp, and turns life-giving water into a source of pain and death; inversely, when the Gravedigger's Boy wisely realizes that the grave he is digging is actually a well, he accepts the fact: "I thought, there's water here and some land, why do I want to dig graves all my life? So I live here and built this farm" (32).

f) Maps

The map discussed in the first scene of Shakespeare's play shows King Lear's kingdom as he would like it to be; ironically, what the map depicts never comes to be. In Act Two of Bond's play, a soldier says, "We never come straight an' the maps is US" (57). Both walls and maps represent the futility of trying to impose human conceptions on the natural world (Nodelman 270).

g) Victimiser-Victimized:

In the text, we see that it is the victimized people who later hold the title of victimizer. Bodice and Fontanelle are victimized by their father though he does notintend to do so, yet when they hold the power, they turn into victimizers themselves. Lear himself goes through this transition of status. Another example of a victimized character that turns into a victimizer is Cordelia. Though physical violence dominates the text on the surface, the symbolic violence is what goes under all these violence and suffering. The socially constructed rules are what give some characters the right to use violence; although they create suffering and aggression in the others.

4.15.8. Summing Up

Edward Bond takes up the Shakespearean masterpiece and creates a relatable, modern, socialist parable to awaken the political consciousness of his contemporary audience to the present evils of society so that they can actively, rationally intervene in the social processes that they are part of and bring about a much-needed radical change in society. While Shakespeare play deals with the politics of absolute sovereign power, its potential to blind those in power, the question of responsibility and the wisdom of acceptance of reality, Bond's originality lies in his dramatic ability to relate the incidents of the old story to contemporary issues. He makes it an allegorical tale portraying contemporary political issues, offset in a timeless frame, that goes on to reveal the burning question of unreliability of democracy that in itself is vulnerable to slipping into authoritarian government. Thus, the play reads as an urgent clarion call for practical activism and the need for public intellectuals to safeguard the true spirit of democracy.

4.15.9. Comprehension Exercises

1. How is Edward Bond's *Lear* a modern drama?
2. Compare Shakespeare's *King Lear* with Edward Bond's Lear.
3. How can you compare *Lear* (Edward Bond) and Shakespeare's *King Lear* with regard to their treatments of sanity and insanity?
4. Research Bertolt Brecht's concepts of epic theatre and the alienation effect. How does Bond employ Brecht's concepts in *Lear*?

4.15.10. Suggested Reading

Bond, Edward. "Preface" to *Bingo*. Eyre Methuen, 1972.

Brook, Peter. *The Empty Space*. Pelican, 1973.

Bond, Edward. "Preface" to *Lear*. Hill and Wang, 1972.

Unit 16 ❐ Hanif Kureishi : *My Beautiful Laundrette*

Structure

4.16.1. Objectives

The objectives of this unit are to analyze the British comedy-drama film *My Beautiful Laundrette*, nominated for an Oscar for Best Original Screenplay in 1984, written by Hanif Kureishi and directed by Stephen Frears. The film explores themes of race, sexuality, generational difference, and social class in the context of the Thatcherite Britain of the 1980s.

4.16.2. Introduction: Hanif Kureishi and Stephen Frears

Kureishi is a British playwright, novelist, screenwriter and filmmaker. Born on December 5, 1954, in England, to an immigrant Pakistani father and an English mother, Kureishi goes on to explore the themes of identity, race sexuality, cultural conflict and hybridity, drawing from his

own experience of growing up in multiracial London. Kureishi first gained international reputation for his screenplay of *My Beautiful Laundrette*, in 1985, which was eventually directed by Stephen Frears. As a novelist, Kureishi published many acclaimed books that included *The Buddha of Suburbia* and *Intimacy* (1998). His plays include *Borderline* (1981), *The Black Album* (1995), and *The Mother* (2000). His screenplays include *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid* (1987) and *My Son the Fanatic* (1997). Kureishi has received numerous accolades for his contributions in laying bare the political conditions of England of his times.

The broadcaster Channel 4 commissioned Kureishi to write the screenplay of *My Beautiful Laundrette* for television and Kureishi initially planned it as a multigenerational family epic. But his punkish modern sensibility turned it into the immigrant's struggle to be assimilated in their new homelands that involves "the psychological loosening of the idea of Empire" (qtd. in Yousaf 14). Kureishi's screenplay won accolades from the New York Film Critics Circle, the National Society of Film Critics and even an Oscar nomination, guaranteeing the film a big-screen release. Kureishi in this screenplay explores the lives and experiences of black people and provides fresh insights to see the new Britain and the endless ways of 'belonging' in it. Kureishi's own biracial identity went on to inform his characters with certain 'in-betweenness,' negotiating the possibility and impossibility of transcending cultural, racial, sexual and class barriers, while simultaneously navigating two worlds.

Born on June 20, 1941, in England, Stephen Frears is a British film and television director who started his career as a director for the BBC. His television series include the drama *A Very English Scandal* (2018) and he even directed several episodes of the iconic TV series *Coronation Street* before moving on to direct films and documentaries for television. Frears first directed feature film was *Gumshoe* (1971) and his breakthrough film is *My Beautiful Laundrette* (1985). Frears has directed several more successful films, including *Prick Up Your Ears* (1987), *Dangerous Liaisons* (1988), *The Grifters* (1990), *High Fidelity* (2000), *The Queen* (2006), and *Philomena* (2013). Frears has been nominated for numerous awards throughout his career, including two Academy Awards for Best Director. He was awarded the BAFTA Fellowship in 2008 for his contribution to British cinema. Frears skill in handling sensitive subject matters like social decay, casual racism and genre appropriation, has earned him the recognition as one of Britain's most esteemed directors.

Kureishi and Frears join forces to create the delightfully transgressive *My Beautiful Laundrette* to narrate the uncommon love story between Omar, a young South London Pakistani man (Gordon Warnecke), who decides to reopen and refurbish a rundown laundromat

and his childhood friend, a punkish skinhead, Johnny (Daniel Day-Lewis) who helps him realize his dream. This culture-clash comedy film goes on to explore the issues of race, class, gender, sexuality, identity and homophobia in 1980s Thatcher's England.

The 97 minutes of 16 mm celluloid produced in a shoestring budget of $900,00 within six weeks or so, *My Beautiful Laundrette,* is not only one of Channel 4's prime commercial successes but also ground-breaking in its increased understanding of the experiences of marginalized communities, representation, and cultural diversity through a systematic subversion of stereotypes. Dealing with the dilemma at the heart of the immigrant experience which is often different between the first- and second-generation diasporas, the film is often ambiguous and contradictory, but nonetheless hauntingly resonant till date.

Originally commissioned for the "Film on Four" television slot, the film's rapturous reception at the Edinburgh Film Festival led to its commercial release in theatres, where a subsequent domestic and transatlantic acclaim recognized Kureishi for successfully capturing the pulse of the new Britain. Collaborating with Frears, the duo decisively plunges into a quagmire of contending ideologies, exploring varied forms of exile and belonging, translating these into the audio-visual mode of the silver screen, resounding the theatres during the aggressive monetarism of Margaret Thatcher's era.

4.16.3. Thatcherism and *My Beautiful Laundrette*

Thatcherism refers to the political ideology and policies associated with the former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, who served from 1979 to 1990 and led the Conservative Party. Thatcherism is characterised by a commitment to free-market economic policies, deregulation, privatization, reduced government intervention in the economy, emphasizing individualism, personal responsibility, and a belief in the power of competition to stimulate economic growth.

Thatcherism represented a break from the post-war consensus that had dominated British politics since World War II, which emphasized state intervention and social welfare programs. Thatcher's policies were controversial and polarizing, with some seeing her as a transformative figure who modernised the British economy and restored its global competitiveness, while others saw her policies as harsh and divisive, leading to widespread social inequality, decline of industries, increased unemployment and social unrest among the marginalised communities.

Thatcherism's impact on the immigrants was particularly complex as the privatization of state-owned industries and the reduction of government intervention in the economy led to the

decline of many traditional industries which had employed large numbers of immigrants. This amplified unemployment and poverty in many immigrant communities, who were also subjected to institutional racism. Riots broke out in minority areas across British cities in 1981, and in 1985, and civil unrest returned to London, Birmingham, and Liverpool, manifesting the anger felt by marginalised communities that faced discrimination. Thatcherism's social policies that included emphasis on individualism and personal responsibility, too had a mixed impact on the immigrants with some seeing it as a way to encourage integration, while others considering it as a way to blame the immigrants for their own marginalization.

My Beautiful Laundrette explores the Thatcherite backdrop with its prejudices against the black, homosexual and immigrant communities and the narrow definition of who could be considered truly British. Following decolonisation, the huge influx of immigrants from the ex-colonies to Britain had mixed repercussions and Britain's relation and liabilities to its ex-colonies were often tense and contentious, both at home and abroad. Immigration was important as it imported labour to boost domestic economy but those who did contribute to Thatcher's capitalist utopia were considered redundant. In Granada Television's World in Action program, 1978, Thatcher infamously observed on the rising percentage of immigrants:

> That is an awful lot . . . people are really afraid that this country might be swamped by people of a different culture. The British character has done so much for democracy, for law, and... if there is any fear that it might be swamped, then people are going to be rather hostile to those coming in.... We are a British nation with British characteristics. Every nation can take some minorities . . . But the moment a minority threatens to become a big one, people get frightened. (qtd. in Solomos xiv)

Thatcher's comment invariably evoked panic in the Britons and she tacitly encouraged the waves of racism and atrocities towards the non-whites perpetrated by the rightwing organizations. The colonial condition of subjugation and violence thus still persisted on the diasporic population that have migrated to new geographies after decolonization, a matter of history repeating itself with yet more updated hegemonies.

Thatcher needed to mobilise the white working class to realize her economic ambitions, if not through religion and cultural nationalism, then through homophobia, anti-feminism, and blatant racism. Thatcher was willing to sacrifice those who were beyond the profitable purview of the emerging conservative state, particularly queers, feminists, and people of colour. However, whoever contributed to Thatcher's capitalist dreams and heteronormative family unit were exempted from homophobia and racism and even appreciated as the new 'meritocrats,' a term describing the entrepreneurs of Indian and Pakistani origin. Thatcher sought to heal the

ills of her country by resurrecting Victorian morality that promoted traditional family structure. Thus, the unproductive non-heteronormative people and the postcolonial people of colour were meted with disenfranchisement and gentrification.

Kureishi and Frears thus create *My Beautiful Laundrette*, a cinematic protest against Thatcher's policies. The film narrates the story of the meteoric rise of Omar, a young Pakistani businessman, helped by his extended family and his childhood friend Johnny, a skinhead National Front member, with the reopening of a run-down laundromat in the Thatcherite London. Omar becomes a model 'meritocrat,' but with a twist. As closet homosexuals, Omar and Johnny reinvent a new space of alternative belonging, resistance, and hybridity within the revamped washeteria. The film navigates the complex relationship between Omar and Johnny, offering poignant commentary on the themes of race, sexuality, identity, and homophobia prevalent in 1980s Britain.

4.16.4. Critical Summary

Omar Ali, a British-born adolescent of South Asian descent, is given a rundown laundrette by his Uncle Nasser (Saeed Jaffrey), a living embodiment of Thatcherite ethics. Omar's life in London is constantly haunted by the ideologies of his leftwing socialist father, Hussein or Papa (Roshan Seth) on one hand and by the materialistic ethics of his Thatcherite uncle on the other. Papa having academic aspirations for his son wants to see him in college while his uncle asserts that "In this damn country. . .you can get anything you want. . . You just have to know how to squeeze the tits of the system" (16).

We further learn that Omar's mother has committed suicide by self-electrocution on the railway tracks and this has turned Papa into an alcoholic. Omar is seen caring for his ailing father in the dilapidated flat overlooking the haunting railway tracks and Papa arranges a temporary arrangement for him to work in Nasser's garage till he gets into college. Omar's workmanship is tested and he is also introduced to Nasser's white mistress, Rachel (Shirley Anne Field). Omar goes to Nasser's place where he is introduced to Tania, Nasser's daughter, Bilquis, his wife, and Cherry, Salim's wife. During this encounter, Cherry taunts Omar for his lack of knowledge about Pakistan.

Omar receives the news about his new responsibility to refurbish and run Nasser's derelict launderette. This scene emphasizes the nexus between business and family by depicting Omar as a potential heir to Nasser's legacy being wedded to Tania (Rita Wolf). Tania expresses her frustration with her family and questions Omar about her father's mistress. Going inside Nasser's bedroom where the patriarch indulges in alcohol and holds court with his cronies,

Omar learns about his father's sexual escapades with a woman whom he was foolish enough to marry. Tania chooses this moment to bare her breasts to Omar from across the window, an act of agency controlling the commodification of her own body, using it to buy an escape route either through Omar or later, as she tries, even through Johnny.

The assembly breaks and Omar is seen driving Cherry and Salim back home but, on their way, they are subjected to racial violence by a gang of right-wing extremist street punks, led by Johnny Burfoot, Omar's childhood friend, who stands aloof from the group. The scene invariably reminds of the prologue where a scene of eviction was performed by Salim and his Jamaican goons on Johnny and Genghis from a ramshackled house. The everyday incident between property owners and squatters gains a greater significance when the cinematic representation of black men evicting the white squatters invariably brings to one's mind the classic inversion of the historical reality of colonialism. Johnny's gang, aligned to the nationalist racism of Thatcherism but not to its class ethos, looking for ways to vent their ire on the Pakis, attacks Salim's car, but having seen Omar on the driver's seat, Johnny does not participate in the violence and watches them from afar. Omar, seeing Johnny, fearlessly walks out to him to reconnect. The violence stops but the reunion must wait as Omar has to negotiate between his business ambitions and personal desires.

Neither the pathetic state of the laundrette nor Papa's cynicism regarding Omar's promotion at the washeteria, could dampen his spirits. Salim's offer of help binds Omar to do the errand of collecting pornographic videos for him from the airport. Omar's innocent attempt to watch one of the videos is important as it establishes Salim as a drug trafficker, an information that Omar can use to his advantage later. Omar reconnects with Johnny and takes him to his laundrette but his arrival immediately places him in an antithetical position with that of Salim. Accepting Omar's job offer, Johnny begins transforming the laundrette. The relationship between Omar and Johnny in the laundrette is an unequal one where Johnny is treated as a worker by Omar at the beginning. Needing money for the alteration of the laundrette, Omar plans with Johnny to double cross Salim for his second errand and raise the necessary capital.

Meanwhile, Nasser consents to include Johnny into the family-business-nexus and provide him with housing in exchange for his assistance in "unscrewing" certain undesirable tenants from his property. While performing the eviction Johnny asks him: "Aren't you giving ammunition to your enemies doing this kind of … unscrewing? To people who say Pakis just come here to hustle other people's lives and jobs and houses" (33).Nasser promptly replies "But we're professional businessmen. Not professional Pakistanis. There's no race question in the new enterprise culture" (33). Nasser's instant foregoing of national identity and identifying with the

greater business community is not that simplistic and is actually an intense desire on his part to integrate with the British identity.

The joint endeavour to refurbish the laundrette brings Omar and Johnny closer and when they arrive at Nasser's place, Omar's gesture of brushing an eyelash from Johnny's face raises question in Tania and the audience about the precise nature of their relationship. On their way back, after sharing their eagerness to make the laundrette "as big as the Ritz" (30), when they embrace and kiss, there is little doubt as to how deeply in love the two of them are. The moment is broken by noises generated from Genghis' gang vandalizing laundrette dustbins. Johnny runs to stop them and Genghis retorts: "Why are you working for them? . . . I don't like to see one of our men grovelling to Pakis. They came here to work for us. That's why we brought them over." Johnny replies: "It's work, I want work. I'm fed up of hanging about" (30). No more consoled with dole and street violence that the unemployed Cockney's had at their disposal, Johnny decides to forego his racism and stand by Omar. The romance plot continues and Omar and Johnny are seen kissing in the open-top car. But again, the romance is broken when Omar remembers how Johnny and his compatriots mocked his father. Omar returns to his father and Johnny, repentant for joining the racist National Front, vows to make amends and erase the deep scar that his behaviour has imprinted on Omar's mind.

Witnessing the grand transformation of the laundromat, Salim has little doubts that the substantial renovation finances could only have been procured by selling his missing drugs. So, he sets the deadline for Omar to return the money by Nasser's annual day party. Lights and neon signs reading "Powders," the laundrette's name, complete the décor of the building and the viewers are transported to the following day of the inauguration of the launderette. After Omar confronting Johnny for his fascist past, the two make out in the backroom while Nasser, waltzes away with Rachel in the front room and throngs of people press on the entryway to gain access into the newly launched "Powders." The different strands of the narrative come together in the launderette as we witness Rachel, an outsider, cutting the ribbon to commemorate the launch of the new business, while Salim waits for an opportunity to corner Omar for his money. Zaki discusses handing over two more launderettes to Omar and Papa's absence haunts Omar more than ever. A tiff breaks out between Rachel and Tania with the latter stating, "I don't like women who live off men," and Rachel countering – "Tell me, who do you live off?" Nasser, to abate the argument, yells at Omar to get married to Tania as soon as possible. Omar to placate his uncle talks of marriage to Tania while Salim plants the seed of jealousy in Johnny and makes him leave. Salim reminds Omar of the deadline for repayment while Rachel accuses Nasser of inviting Tania on purpose to humiliate her and she walks off. Later, finding Johnny missing, Omar goes looking for him in his room and

reminding him of their employer/employee relationship orders him to get back to work. This scene is again an ironic reversal of the historical relationship between the black man and white man in the colonial context.

Johnny returns to the laundrette alone and encounters Papa, who confronts Johnny about his neo-Nazi past. But sensing Jonny's influence over his son, pleads him to persuade Omar to go to college and impress on him the importance of education. However, Johnny not heeding Papa's urgings, goes to Nasser's party in response to Omar's call. In Nasser's party, Johnny and Omar remain distant as the question of marriage with Tania still hangs between them. While Omar talks business, Johnny fools around with Tania in the garden that creates a fiasco. Omar tries to appease Nasser by promising to wed Tania, but she vehemently rejects him and looks for an escape route in Johnny now. An instalment of Salim's money is offered back by Omar, raising cash through burglary, but Salim informs him that it was merely a test. Omar invites Salim to invest in his business as this would give him a 'clean outlet' for his money. Amidst obvious animosity between Salim and Johnny, the three of them leave the party in Salim's car to view one of his properties. Salim expresses his hatred for the unemployed punks of Johnny's gang and on their way back even attempts to run them over, hitting Moose, one of the gang members. The clash between Salim and the gang now accentuates to the extent where they plan revenge for Moose's injured leg.

Before Salim's final confrontation with Genghis' gang, the other narrative lines are resolved. Bilquis makes magic potions to raise rashes on Rachels's body. So, Rachel breaks off with Nasser, remarking "It's not possible to enjoy being hated so much." (37).Tania drops by the launderette and informs Johnny that she is leaving home. She asks Johnny to come along but he refuses, expressing his unsaid desires for Omar: "I will stay here with my friend and fight it out . . . I couldn't leave him. . .. You ever touched him?" (49) Tania departs wordlessly. While Genghis patrols the roof of the laundrette with a nailed wood in his hands and other members lying in wait down the street, Nasser visits Hussain, to seek solace in his company. The two discuss their respective failures and Hussain suggests that they should go back home to Pakistan. Nasser is opposed to the idea and considers Pakistan to be "sodomized by religion" and that it interferes "with the making of money" (51). Kureishi thus foregrounds the divergent viewpoints of the two brothers. For Hussain, a leftist socialist, home can be only where one's roots are. But for the entrepreneur, Nasser, any place where one can amass wealth, is nothing short of a "heaven." But Nasser is unhappy as realities have hard hit him. His business and home front being on the verge of collapse, Nasser had taken refuge in his adulterous relationship which has failed too. He walks out into the balcony of Hussain's apartment only to witnesses Tania

on the platform magically evaporating behind the passing trains. Tania's disappearance remains an enigma and Nasser can only feel abandoned.

Salim waits for Omar's return with Johnny in the laundrette, while the gang vandalizes his car parked on the road. When Salim attempts to stop them, Genghis ambushes and ruthlessly beats him up. Johnny rushes out to stop Genghis and the two then engage in a terrible fight in which Johnny is brutally assaulted until Omar comes to his rescue. The gang members escape when the police siren sounds, but not before smashing the laundromat's glass window.

The film lacks a tidy ending by making it unclear as to whether Omar continues with his business enterprise, whether "Powders" closes down, or whether Omar returns tothe business world taking over two more laundrettes from Zaki. Instead, the final scene returns to the gay romance motif. Initially it appears that Johnny and Omar would part ways, as Johnny approaches the door, but when Omar hugs him from behind, Johnny cannot help but stay. No verbal resolution is offered and the two are seen dressing each other's wounds and splashing water at each other. Kureishi leaves it at this. Like Tania, their future too remains unresolved at the end.

4.16.5. Major Themes

Kureishi's *My Beautiful Laundrette* treats urgent issues of 1980's Britain with ease and competence. Poised between realism and fantasy, the film is remarkable for its engaging exploration of complex themes of racism, immigration, class, sexuality in the context of Thatcherian economic and social environment. A crossover film from television to the big screen, muddling realism and fantasy, the film even blurs the frontiers between representation, identity and belonging. Some of the prominent themes of the film are discussed below:

a) Social Class: The play is an exploration by Kureishi to present the economic plight of England during Thatcher. The aggressive monetarism of the era fostered greed and created jobs though not at par with the rising unemployment resulting from Thatcher's mission to dismantle heavy industries. Race and class are intertwined in My Beautiful Laundrette and this is evinced in the scene when we see the blacks evicting the white squatters, the unemployed British youths that Thatcherism has consigned to the gutters. In Thatcherite Britain, the unemployed of both races experience the same economic plight regardless of epidermal differences. But Nasser trying to curb a new identity for himself as an enterpriser attempts to forego his national identity and submerge himself in the new capitalist ethic for money. Nasser claims to Johnny that he is "a professional businessman not a professional Pakistani" (33) and Pakistan has nothing left to offer as it is "sodomized by religion" and has started "to interfere

with the making of money" (51). Salim too feels that it is only money that can combat racial discrimination in this country. Salim despises the jobless gang of Johnny while conservatism's xenophobia is reflected in the rhetoric of Johnny's gang who virulently objects to Johnny's working for the 'Pakis.' Going through a rollercoaster ride of tension, turmoil and conflict, Omar and Johnny step into the refurbished, neon-lit laundrette space and here in this dreamy atmosphere, they attempt to reconcile their class and racial differences by queering the setting through their queer lovemaking. Thus, the discourse of class, race and sexuality in this film cannot be segregated as these are overlapping and mutually influencing.

b) Race : *My Beautiful Laundrette* explores the issue of racism in 1980s Britain. The film depicts how people of diverse ethnicity are marginalized and discriminated, both by the society at large and within their own communities. The queer relationship between Omar and Johnny, which spans racial, cultural and sexual divides, subverts these stereotypes and prejudices. Omar for his business seeks the assistance of his former skinhead friend Johnny who is a member of the racist National Front and this is a constant source of tension in their relationship. While Papa rebukes Johnny for turning into a fascist, Omar uses this act of transgression to emotionally hurt him whenever problem arises in their relationship. But, however, during the first meeting of Omar and Johnny, when one witnesses, Johnny standing apart from his National Front gang while they harass Omar, Salim and Cherry, one realizes that Johnny is a youth in transition who sees through Conservatism's racist politics. Even though Omar's achievements come despite his minority ethnic status and Nasser's statement that there's "no race question in the new enterprise culture" (33), the violence that Omar, Salim and Cherry faces at the hands of the white nationalists, suggests otherwise. Thatcherism, far from eradicating racial distinctions, escalated racist violence because of the growing economic inequality and unrest. However, race is not a personal issue between Omar and Johnny and working in the laundrette has even raised the self-worth of the latter. Johnny's affiliation to the National Front had caused their estrangement in the past which Johnny now resolves to repair. Leaving behind his gang's mission to rid the country of its coloured immigrants, Johnny does his best to erase the scar in Omar's heart caused due to his past betrayal. Johnny's racial identity is now subservient to the fact of his unemployment and moreover, how can he bear racist thoughts for someone he has come to love.

Tania too subverts the stereotypes of Pakistani women by exposing her breasts to public gaze and upending the witch's concoction on Bilquis' lap. Tania thus explicitly suggests that she will not become a submissive Pakistani wife. Disappearing from the platform, Tania curves her own way to freedom from patriarchal control into the elusive exile. Thus, *My Beautiful Laundrette* systematically subverts all assumptions and stereotypes. The once colonial

Pakistanis are depicted to live affluent lives in Thatcherite Britain whereas, the white punks can only console themselves with the dole and violence. Outraged by the portrayal of Pakistani immigrants as Thatcherite capitalists, Mahmood Jamal, a member of the first British Asian film and video collective, complained that the film reinstated "all the prejudices that this society has felt about Asians and Jews-that they are money-grabbing, scheming, sex-crazed people." He even condemned Kureishi as an Asian intellectual "laundered by the British university system," one who liked to "reinforce stereotypes of their own people for a few cheap laughs" (Jamal 21). Kureishi, however, merely tries to present life as it was in Thatcherite Britain and Stuart Hall recognises the text as "one of the most riveting and important films produced by a black writer in recent years" (30).

c) Sexuality and Gender : The same-sex relationship between Omar and Johnny is surprisingly not a source of conflict in the film unlike the race issue or the relationship between Nasser and Rachel. Though operating in controversial waters, the film explores the homosexual relationship which is at the heart of the narrative, subverting taboos and promoting harmony in alternate sexuality. Affirming the naturality of the gay relationship, Kureishi asserts: "When the boys just kept wanting to do it with each other in the script, I let them. It seemed perfectly natural, not strange or particularly interesting. I hadn't set out to explore issues around gayness … I preferred just to take it for granted, the way we do in our lives now." (qtd. in Geraghty 32) Kureishi's unemphatic handling of homosexuality was received positively from different quarters. Omar and Johnny's joyous culmination lacks any indication of self-consciousness, and Finch commended it as "one of the most pleasurable gay representations ever to appear in cinema" (qtd. in Geraghty 24). Since Frears was not a gay filmmaker, some said that he could never justly represent the minority but Kureishi, disagreeing notes: "if it gives one person an erection and makes one person laugh that's good enough for me" and that "I want to cause laughter and sexual excitement at the same time" (qtd. in Geraghty 24).

Following their initial chance encounter during the attack on Salim's car, Omar and Johnny express a mutual wish to reunite and pick up where they left off. Starting with business relationship, they soon resume their romantic journey after the kiss in the dark, followed by the kiss on the car, a hug in front of the laundrette or the crazed love-making in the washeteria and the playful splashing of the final shot, though all of these are punctuated with moments of pulling away and rejection due to Johnny's affiliation to the National Front. Johnny suffers the lover's agony as a result of Omar's lackadaisical courtship of Tania to win his uncle's approval. At the night of the laundrette's inauguration, Omar seeks out Johnny in his apartment and instead of pouring out his heart, he reminds Johnny that he works under him and that if he does not get back to work, he would be fired. The two get back together for business and to repay

Salim's loan on time, but none articulate the intensity of their true desires. It is noteworthy that it is only to Tania that Johnny expresses his true feelings for Omar: "I'll stay here with my friend and fight it out" (49). Omar is even more oblique in expressing his desire: "We'll just have to do a job to get the money," says Johnny. "You want that, don't you?" Omar says "Yes" and then changing the meaning to implicate something else, "I want you" (43).

Unfortunately, Tania is used by both these men to meet their ends; Omar to appease his uncle and Johnny to avenge Omar and sabotage Nasser's celebration. The problem is resolved when Tania rejects Omar and Johnny declines to go along with her. In the final scene, after the fight between Salim and Genghis' gang when a bruised Johnny was rescued by Omar, the reconciliation seems precarious as Johnny initially moves to leave but when Omar hugs him from behind, Johnny is not left with a choice. The two are seen splashing each other with water implicating that their relationship may be unstable outside but within the imaginary space of the laundrette, it would perhaps continue.

Written at a time when homosexuality was condemned in the name of Victorian values and eschewed for contributing to the AIDS epidemic, the film's homosexual love is not politicized, unlike Omar's enterprising zeal that is located in the context of Thatcherite economy. The text does not talk about gay rights and sexual orientations and simply offers the delights of a gay romance. Conventional heterosexuality is mocked in the scene of the opening day of the laundrette when Nasser waltzes with Rachel in the front room while Omar and Johnny celebrate the inauguration by making love in the back room, oblivious to the throngs of people waiting admittance. The scorching chemistry between the interracial couple surpasses all political issues and one of the British guides observes that in this text "Racism falls victim to the hormone fairy" (qtd. in Geraghty 92). However, Kureishi's unproblematic, handling of gay sexuality, makes it more a love story than anything else. In the magical space of the laundrette, the two men can surpass cultural expectations of a heterosexual marriage, class difference, moral obligations and simply unite as two men deeply in love with each other.

Kureishi problematises gender stereotypes by creating Tania who can bare her breast from the window of a room full of men simply to distract Omar from her father's male conversations. Her switch from Omar to Johnny as her potential spouse, or rather her escape route from the bindings of the authoritative, patriarchal family structures is underwritten. She is a figure who does not conform to the preconceived notion of a servile Pakistani woman. She is an agent with potential destabilizing properties and she effectively ruins, along with Johnny, Nasser's annual day party. She outright rejects Omar's tactical offer of marriage and asks Johnny to flee with her, not a plea rather a warning to protect himself from Nasser, Omar and

the likes. From the spoilt girl of the earlier scenes, Tania grows in confidence and emerges as a much stronger woman who wants to gain knowledge of business and relationships. When she disappears from the platform, it is understood that Tania, negotiating her frustrations, will find a way to freedom or will risk everything to strive for it. Though the real reason for Omar's mother's suicide is not given, one can well assume that whatever may be the case, she sought her way to escape. She had been a daring woman in her younger days but escape routes differ in different people. For Bilquis, it is the superstitious world of witch's potion that dispel adulteress from her husband's life.

The film's deliberate ploy not to articulate and problematize sexual identity and orientation leaves spaces for the discourses on class and race to be foregrounded. Tania, has to physically disappear to facilitate the union between the two men. This raises question as to whether the laundrette is a space where gender divides are transgressed in a fluid identity or an exclusively male utopia from where the women need to be forcibly eradicated. Thus, Omar and Johnny's union is earned at the expense of a woman of colour who by no means submitted to the Thatcherite ethics of heteronormativity.

d) Identity : In the aftermath of decolonization and immigration, British identity underwent a massive transmutation. Negotiating culture and ethnicity with other issues of class, gender and sexuality, unified monolithic identity became fragmented and decentred. The concept of a 'black' subject itself became a constructed category having no essentiality. Kureishi, born of parents of different races, strove to represent the diasporic experience that is rooted not in positionality and separation but in fluidity, instability, hybridity, recombination and heterogeneity. The other indicators, such as sexuality, class, and race too continually inform and shape racial identity. Kureishi's film with its central homosexual pair, the in-between characters like Omar and Tania and the ideologically incompatible patriarchs Papa and Nasser, interrogates the very concept of identity and the politics behind its construction.

My Beautiful Laundrette explores the contested areas of nationality and culture of Thatcherite 1980s, subverting traditional notions of race and celebrating the emergence of new hybrid identities. Hill appreciated Kureishi's vision in the text and claimed that he successfully expressed the "complex, plural and shifting identities characteristic of contemporary British society" (qtd. in Geraghty 96). Kureishi strove to hammer home the message that British identity is no longer a stable property. It is constantly changing as new components are incorporated. So, Kureishi's in-between and hybrid characters deconstruct the notion of a monolithic cultural identity, negotiating with other complex categories of identity markers.

Kureishi's film depicts the struggles of the Asian immigrants to carve out for themselves a niche in the multi-ethnic Britain. Papa, a former Pakistani journalist and friend to Pakistan's reformist Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto is unable to adjust to the austere economics of Thatcherite Britain, still considers Pakistan as home and believes that only education can bring true integration. Nasser, his brother, on the other hand, has submitted to Thatcher's monetary ethics, hoping to find integration by renunciating traditions and retaining a white mistress. However, Nasser could not shed his Pakistani identity altogether. He is still the patriarch at home where the women are made to follow the stringent rules set by the men of the family. He even plans an arranged marriage for Tania with Omar. However, the two brother's divergent worldviews establish the complex heritage of contending ideologies within the same community and family. Nevertheless, when we see Omar succeeding with the washing machines, dashing Papa's humanistic hopes and Tania escaping the shackles of an arranged marriage into the unforeseen future, one realizes that a generation has been superseded. The beliefs of the past have become debris of today and the initiation of a new era is conveyed through the inauguration of the refurbished laundrette where even the washing of dirty laundries is packaged into an entertaining past-time.

Omar and Tania born in England of Pakistani parents are different from the first-generation diasporas like Papa or Nasser. Omar rejects Papa's idealism by investing in the washeteria and Tania, ever defiant through her dressing, her behaviour and her disappearance at the end, rejects tradition and transforms into a new identity. Though racism is deeply pervasive in the British society, the belief in a pure British identity is absolutely impossible in the contemporary polycultural climate. The vision of a happy collective life with a shared sense of belonging, respecting diversity at the same time, is again a utopian impossibility. So, the likes of Omar and Tania develop a new discourse to define themselves that is essentially hybrid, crisscrossing cultural divides, subverting all postulations and upsetting the conservative assumption that the British identity is essentially an unchanging property.

e) Home and Belonging : In diasporic texts, the concept of 'Home' and 'belonging' are complicated. Cherry, Salim's wife exclaims, "You stupid, what a stupid, it's my home. Could anyone in their right mind call this silly little island off Europe their home? . . .I am so sick of hearing about these in-betweens. People should make up their minds where they are" (17). There are two more overt contrasting perspectives on home and belonging in the text from the first-generation diasporas. Nasser, is adamantly opposed to any sentimental association with Pakistan and considers it a country "sodomized by religion" (51) that is impeding the making of money while England is a "little heaven" (51). Papa still clings to his roots and resents the

monetary ambitions of Thatcherite Britain, claiming "This damn country has done us in. . . . We should be there. Home."

The film's exploration of the second-generation Asian diasporas sense of identification and belonging are more complex. Estranged from the motherland, yet not assimilated in the new homeland, compounded with the issues of race, class, sexuality, ethnicity, alienation etc. have made the second-generation diasporas even more conflicted and hybridised into something distinct. Omar is a representative of this second-generation Asian diaspora. The burden of immigration is readily shifted and blamed on the immigrants whenever there is a policy paralysis in the governmental level. The disillusioned white working class marginalized in society resented the immigrants and blamed multiculturalism for the prevalent social and economic disparities, rather than seeing through government's shortcomings in providing opportunities. This resulted in the white working-class to rethink themselves as another separate ethnic minority with their distinctive culture. One of Johnny's National Front gang members expresses this conflict between the immigrants and the indigenous working-class ethnic minority when he says: "I don't like to see one of our blokes grovelling to Pakis" (30). Johnny is representative of this indigenous white working-class ethnic minority. When Omar and Johnny unite, they must negotiate their differences and find a new home where both can belong.

Home is more than a site of habitation where the body and place harmonize in an experience of belonging and nation. It is often contradictory to these traditional notions especially in the diasporic context where the immigrant's home is simply where he is not, cannot be stated as easily since they experience a perpetuation of the colonial hegemony in an upgraded form, even after they have migrated to new locations. Kureishi in his screenplay interrogates the concepts of home and belonging and implicitly recommend a revision of these concepts in the diasporic context. The concepts of home and belonging are things that need re-evaluation when one traces the trajectories of the formerly subjugated people who are transported to the subjugator's land. The Thatcherite context too is pertinent here given the setting of the text. Omar, Johnny, and Tania in Kureishi's text problematises and resists Thatcherism's insistence on Victorian moralities, bourgeois materialism, and its eligibility criteria for being considered "British," thus queering the very circuits on which Thatcherism pulsated. Home, in this film, is conceived in three different ways. First, it is a place where one originally belongs, as is the case with Papa and Cherry for whom home can only be Pakistan. Second, home is the heaven where one can revel in one's fortunes like Nasser and Salim. The third conception of homeas the site of an alternative belonging is more imaginary that the second-generation Asian diasporas like Tania and Omar or the white working-class Johnny constructs for themselves, rejecting the bourgeois decree of heteronormativity. It is around this third perception of home

that the interracial queer relationship between the second-generation diaspora Omar and the white working-class Johnny finds erotic gratification. Hence the traditional definitions of 'home' and 'belonging' need to be revised in the context of the multiracial Thatcherite Britain for youths like Omar and Johnny. Tania too is a queering agent who rejects the Thatcherite economics by not surrendering to the heteronormative institution of marriage and migrating into the unknown. Thus, Omar, Johnny and Tania resist neo-colonialism practised in the form of neoliberal capitalism by violating the bourgeois mandates of heteronormativity and curbing out their own sense of belonging by appropriating and queering space, identity and sexuality.

Tania 'queers home' by freely moving from the women's space of the drawing room to the patriarchal space of Nasser's bedroom where she even destabilizes it by controlling the commodification of her own body. Her rejection of bourgeois values and heteronormativity is articulated when she rejects Omar and vanishes from the platform before her father's very eyes. Tania's identity as a non-heteronormative subject becomes more conspicuous when contrasted to Bilquis, the dependent housewife dressing traditionally, casting spells by inflicting rashes on the transgressors of heteronormativity like Nasser's mistress. Incidentally, it is quite significant that it is at the very moment when Nasser and Papa agree to marry Tania to Omar that she disappears from the platform which harbours the memory of Mary's suicide, escaping the stifling heteronormative bonds. Though the actual cause of Mary's suicide is never stated but, one never commits suicide at the height of marital bliss. Defying heteronormative expectations, Tania evaporates into the unknown and her exile subverts the dominant male discourses of nationalism, capitalism and colonialism and also her rejection of the restrictive family structures of 'home' that are designed to restrict women within its walls.

Thus, it may be concluded that Tania's exilic unknown and the indefinable laundrette that Omar and Johnny constructs are spaces of alternative belonging for them, rejecting heteronormative institutions of arranged marriages and queering space and sexuality, they recode Thatcherite ambitions that thrive on consolidating capital and eradicating queerness. This not only liberates them from economic exploitation but gives them the agency to subvert traditional systems and visualize their 'belonging' in British society by redefining the concept of home which is no longer based on the prerequisites of class, race and sex, thereby un-anchoring 'home' from its conservative moorings.

4.16.6. Major Characters

My Beautiful Laundrette is a multi-layered play and film that has diverse and complex characters, each with their own struggles and aspirations making most of them dynamic as

their arcs evolve throughout the filmic time-span when confronted with various challenges and obstacles. The film's portrayal of these characters reflects the nuanced and varied experiences of immigrant communities in Britain during the 1980s.

Omar, the British-born adolescent of South Asian immigrant background, is constantly torn apart by the ideologies of his socialist father on one hand and his materialist uncle on the other. Possessing a zest for economic enterprise, Omar chooses his uncle's ways and endeavours to negotiate between the obligations of his extended family and his ambition to be independent and successful. Dreaming to make success out of his uncle's failing laundrette, Omar seeks the assistance of his childhood, white, working-class friend Johnny and rekindles their homoerotic relationship. Omar's intelligence lies in the fact that as per the socially accepted model of Britishness, the South-Asian immigrant, homosexual Omar would find himself at the very bottom of the totem pole. So, he does not hesitate to use unlawful means to finance his business plan and wants to marry Tania to maintain appearances and social and familial expectations. As the film progresses, Omar gains confidence in his business dealings with Zaki and Salim, but he falters where his love-life is concerned. Though Johnny's ex-membership to the National Front causes tension in their relationship, it is almost always followed by intense love-making. Rejected by Tania and the laundrette shattered by Genghis' gang at the end of the movie, Kureishi does not state whether Omar finally succeeds in his entrepreneurial enterprise, instead, he is shown playfully splashing water at Johnny from a basin in a moment of homosexual pleasure. A hybrid of Britishness and Asianness, at odds with his family and Thatcherism due to his homosexuality, frustrated with the limited opportunities available to him as a man of colour, Omar Ali takes refuge with his partner, in the constructed space of the laundrette that knows no class, race, or sexuality.

Johnny is Omar's lover and employee, a rebellious white British punk who is from the working-class, aligned with the aggressive nationalist racism advocated by Thatcherite England but not its class ethos. Troubled and aimless character, disillusioned with his working-class background and the lack of opportunities, Johnny too is conflicted over his sexuality and initially hesitant to explore his attraction for Omar. As the film progresses, Johnny forms a close relationship with Omar for business and eventually becomes his romantic partner though their romance is often interrupted by his National Front past. Even Papa chastises Johnny for turning into a 'fascist.' But reminiscing the attack on Salim's car, when Johnny was seen standing apart from his National Front gang, one realizes Johnny is a youth in transition, who is not really confident in British conservatism's bigotry and disillusioned with his unemployed status. Employed by Omar in his laundrette, Johnny acquires a sense of self-worth and is regenerated both economically and romantically. But Omar never fails to use Johnny's National

Front background as a punishing stick whenever there is problem in their relationship. Johnny often serves as the moral compass of the film, warning Omar not to get too greedy, or arguing against eviction with Nasser. Foregoing racism may not have been that easy for Johnny but his pangs of unemployment far surpass his racial hatred that Thatcherism inflicted. Rekindling his romance with Omar, Johnny goes out of his way to erase the scar left on Omar's mind due to his past betrayal of joining the racist group. He even goes to the extent of committing burglary and selling drugs to help Omar in his business enterprise. Understanding the essence of hybridity, Johnny confesses his love for Omar to Tania. However, Johnny and Omar's relationship goes through many ups and downs due to social expectations and taboos on homosexuality. But in the dreamily lighted laundrette, the two can shed all differences and taboos and unite in unadulterated jubilation.

Papa or Hussain is Omar's father, a traditionalist who struggles to accept his son's choices and aspirations. Papa represents the tensions between the older and younger generations of immigrants and the struggle to reconcile tradition with modernity. Formerly a leftist socialist journalist, friend to Pakistan's reformist Prime Minister Bhutto, Hussain is unable to adjust to Thatchervs aggressive monetarism and racism. His wife's suicide and his inability to find for himself a comparable role in Britain has compelled him to seep into alcoholism, cared for by Omar in his miserable flat. Despite being confined to the bed and the bottle, he insists that education is the key to the immigrant's life in Britain "in order to see clearly what is being done and to whom in this country"(42).But Omar's elation over the washing machines dashes the aged humanist's hopes and in desperation he alternately admonishes and pleads Johnny with "Or are you still a fascist?" (41) and then "Help me" (41), realising Johnny's power over his son. Hussain probably succeeds in pricking the conscience of Johnny who goes beyond his ways to help Omar in his business and also bears his humiliation without a wince. The opening day of the laundrette, was a moment of mixed emotions for Hussain, feeling pride at Omar's economic assimilation in Britain despite being an immigrant and also realizing his futile idealism now that Omar has adopted the greedy economics of Thatcherism. When personal losses drive Nasser to his brother, their different perspectives is perceived when we see that for Hussain 'home' can only be Pakistan while Nasser asserts that 'home' is where one can make the maximum money. Omar, born of a Pakistani father and an English mother is not only a hybrid in terms of race only but also torn between the conflicting ideologies of his father and uncle, is an ideological hybrid too.

Nasser is Omar's uncle and is an antithesis to Hussain. He is a corrupt Pakistani entrepreneur and opportunist who has adopted Thatcherite ways. He hates England for its racism but loves it too as in this country "you can get anything you want" (14). Separating race and money

making, Nasser considers himself "a professional businessman not a professional Pakistani" (33). Amassing great wealth, Nasser has diversified his business into different ventures, and has also made a luxurious home in the rich suburb of London. Nasser symbolizes the pragmatic, self-made man who has completely benefited from and engaged in the British economy. Nasser offers Omar a path to social mobility by handing over the dilapidated laundrette, hoping that he can turn it around to make profit. The ethically grey figure Nasser personifies the paradoxes and complexity of immigrant life. Nasser's success comes at a great cost as his relationships at home leaves much to be desired and to escape his failure and assimilate in the British society, he keeps a white mistress. But when his appearances fall, his business suffers and his mistress leaves, Nasser goes to meet his brother. The diametrically opposed ideologies of the two brothers are manifested in their contradictory opinions regarding what 'home' is. Nasser is not sentimentally attached to Pakistan and a "heaven" for Nasser can only be a materially luxurious one, that is, Thatcher's England.

Salim Ali is a henchman and relative of Nasser. He is a nouveau riche drug trafficker who shares a reciprocal hatred with the racist National front gang. Salim is responsible for the eviction of the squatters that included Johnny and Genghis, in the first scene and establishes himself as an antagonist to Johnny. Salim introduces Omar into the shady business of pornography and drug trafficking. Salim believes that it is only money that can protect the Pakistanis in Britain. By giving Omar little errands to run, Salim claims to have saved him from standing in the "dole queue" and that even "Mrs. Thatcher will be pleased" (14) with him since he is not only giving jobs but also participating in the Thatcherite discourse of belonging and exclusion. It is during the first fateful drives that Omar takes with Salim that he meets Johnny and rekindles their homoerotic relationship. Witnessing little moments of tenderness between them, Salim soon realises that their relationship goes beyond the limits of employer-employee rapport. He creates a rift between the two by breaking the news of Omar and Tania's upcoming nuptials. Salim clearly establishes himself as a disruptive force, destabilizing peaceful living or harmonious relationships. Omar uses Salim's business to his own advantage and procures the refurbishment money for the laundrette by stealing and selling Salim's drugs. Discovering Omar's deception, Salim threatens him to return the money which Omar manages to do by accomplishing a burglary with Johnny. Salim does not take the money back and claims that it was a test to check how well-suited Omar was to the Thatcherite environment. Omar even initiates business dealings with Salim but Johnny is opposed to it. During the second fateful journey in Salim's car, Moose, one of Jonny's ex-companions is deliberately hit and injured by Salim. The gang members avenge by bashing Salim brutally and this has repercussions on the laundrette too as one of the them smashes the laundrette's glass window and even beats up Johnny, who tries to intervene.

Tania is Nasser's daughter and the pivotal female character in the text. She is a second-generation immigrant who dresses in western attires rather than traditional outfits. Tania despises her father for deceiving her mother, Rachel for leeching on her father and her family for its patriarchal inhibitions. She is a disruptive comic force who bares her breast to Omar to hinder the patriarchal conversation going on in Nasser's bedroom. Both Omar and Johnny try to use Tania for their own purpose, Omar trying to appease his uncle by agreeing to marry Tania and Johnny trying to get back at Omar by flirting with her and disrupting Nasser's party. But Tania, an independent-minded woman refuses to be used and rejects Omar. In moments of defiance, she upends the witch's concoction on Bilquis lap and confronts Rachel in Omar's laundrette. She attempts to join forces with Johnny to escape her family but Johnny decides to stay with Omar. Tania's request to Johnny was motivated not only for her own escape but rather to free Johnny from the exploitative clutches of her father and Omar. As the film progresses, Tania appears to be a stronger woman with a sound sense of purpose, clearly implicating that she would not become a submissive wife like Bilquis or choose suicide as a means of escape like Mary. Her disappearance from the platform symbolically removes her from the patriarchal control into a more fulfilling and empowering future.

Rachel is an Englishwoman with whom Nasser is having an adulterous relationship but she is not a disruptive factor. She is the balanced embodiment of the sexual being and the motherly woman and acts as an intermediary between Nasser and Omar. She eases Omar's way into business by influencing Nasser to give him a car. Nasser seems more comfortable with Rachel than with his own wife Bilquis who is a submissive Pakistani woman, physically confined within the periphery of home and linguistically confined for not knowing English. She is the inarticulate, subaltern diaspora who expresses her annoyance at her husband's infidelity by making potions that causes rashes, a punishment for transgressing heteronormativity. She is the type of immigrant that Thatcher disparaged, having no contributions to the neo-meritocratic society. Naturally, England could never become a home for Bilquis, or for Cherry, even though Salim and Nasser have so exorbitantly profited here. Mary, Omar's mother who committed suicide by self-electrocution on the railway tracks, is not even present as a tattered bedside photo in the film, but her absence is compensated by her husband's chronic depression and alcoholism. It is surprising to know that Mary had been quite a daring woman in her younger days and was caught making out with Hussain in the balcony. The cause of her suicide is not given and unlike Tania, she chooses her own way of escape in the railway tracks that for her, led nowhere.

Thus, Kureishi's screenplay has a complex range of characters, grappling with race, class, identity, sexuality and belonging in the context of Thatcherite England.

4.16.7. Significance of The Laundrette

In Kureishi's film, the laundrette serves as a symbolic space and metaphorical home for those living in the fringes of Thatcherite Britain. The laundrette of the title, owned by the Pakistani protagonist Omar and its refurbishment aided by his white supremacist friend Johnny, becomes a space where the complex social issues of the time, such as racism, homophobia, and class inequality are negotiated. Here in this laundrette the interracial queer relationship between Omar and Johnny is consummated and the "frontiers between gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, and class" are dissolved (qtd. in Gairola 45). It is an un-gendered space, unlike Nasser's glitzy bourgeois house, bringing together diverse communities, identities and sexualities. Rueschmann, in her analysis of the film, notes, "The laundrette becomes an ironic utopian paradise where characters act out their desires and fantasies" (xix). Transformed into an urban oasis, the laundrette becomes a home away from home for Omar, Johnny and the other working-class men who congregate there and Leonard Quart's observes that the refurbished laundrette has metamorphosed itself into "a glittery Ritz of poor people's fantasies" (qtd. in Gairola 45).

The inauguration of the laundrette is celebrated by Omar and Johnny by having sex in the back room after a heated exchange over Johnny's National front past, dissolving the boundaries of race and class along the way. Foregrounded against a one-way mirror, the sexually engaged couple share a moment of panoptic power as they witness the waltzing and kissing of Nasser and his white mistress, transgressing the boundaries of heteronormative propriety, while no one can see their manifold transgressions. Amidst these interracial, non-heteronormative, equally transgressive couplings, a crowd of working locals wait admittance into the newly refurbished laundrette. It is no wonder, that Omar changes the name of the laundrette from the purely English sounding "Churchill" to the more fluid and non-gendered "Powders" where different identities may come together, different sexualities may erotically climax, the authoritative heteronormative institutions may be transgressed and the different races may coalesce in harmonized hybridity. The laundrette thus becomes a home that shelters and nurtures differences and subversions.

4.16.8. Summing Up

The mix-race writer Kureishi provoked an outcry with his *My Beautiful Laundrette* depicting conflicts between the English and the Asian immigrants, rich and poor, straight and gay, adults and their children and finally, between first- and second-generation immigrants. Kureishi and Frears foreground the serious issues of their times in a humourous and compassionate way. The duo does not provide any solution to the problems that are raised in the film, rather,

creates an imaginative space of escape in the beautiful laundrette which acts as a melting pot where barriers of race, class, sexuality and identity dissolve to accommodate and celebrate differences. Outside the laundrette, England is still a deeply divisive place marked by homophobia, racism and economic greed but within the magical laundrette, the cares of the day are forgotten with Omar and Johnny, flicking soapsuds at each other in an optimistic image of hybridity, homoerotic union and 'rupturous' euphoria.

4.16.9. Comprehension Exercises

Long Answer Type Questions :

1. How does Hanif Kureishi's *My Beautiful Laundrette* depict the tension between Pakistani immigrants and the white British population in 1980s London?
2. How does the text explore the intersection of class and race in Thatcherite Britain?
3. How does the text use humour to address serious social issues like racism, homophobia, and economic inequality?

Medium Length Answer Type Questions :

1. How does *My Beautiful Laundrette* challenge traditional notions of masculinity and gender roles?
2. What is the significance of the laundrette as a symbol in the text?

4.16.10. Suggested Reading

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Notes