

PREFACE

In the curricular structure introduced by this University for students of Bachelors Degree Programme, the opportunity to pursue Honours course in any elective subject is equally available to all learners. Instead of being guided by any presumption about ability level, it would perhaps stand to reason if receptivity of a learner is judge 1 in the course of the learning process. That would be entirely in keeping with the objectives of open education which does not believe in artificial differentiation.

Keeping this in view, study materials of the Honours level in different subjects are being prepared on the basis of a well laid-out syllabus. The course structure combines the best elements in the approved syllabi of Central and State Universities in respective subjects. It has been so designed as to be upgradable with the addition of new information as well as results of fresh thinking and analysis.

The accepted methodology of distance education has been followed in the preparation of these study materials. Co-operation in every form of experienced scholars is indispensable for a work of this kind. We, therefore, owe an enormous debt of gratitude to everyone whose tireless efforts went into the writing, editing and devising of proper lay-out of the materials. Practically speaking, their role amounts to an involvement in 'invisible teaching'¹. For, whoever makes use of these study materials would virtually derive the benefit of learning under their collective care without each being seen by the other.

The more a learner would seriously pursue these study materials, the easier it will be for him or her to reach out to larger horizons of a subject. Care has also been taken to make the language lucid and presentation attractive so that they may be rated as quality self-learning materials. If anything remains still obscure or difficult to follow, arrangements are there to come to terms with them through the counselling sessions regularly available at the network of study centres set up by the University.

Needless to add, a great deal of these efforts is still experimental-in fact, pioneering in certain areas. Naturally, there is every possibility of some lapse or deficiency here and there. However, these do admit of rectification and further improvement in due course. On the whole, therefore, these study materials are expected to evoke wider appreciation the more they receive serious attention of all concerned.

Professor (Dr.) Subha Sankar Sarkar
Vice-Chancellor



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Those who have specially contributed and co-operated in preparing this Module are :

Composition : Modules 1 & 2 :

Prof. Mihir Bhattacharya
Smt. Ratna Sanyal Bhattacharya

Composition : Module 3 :

Prof. Malini Bhattacharya
Prof. Nilanjana Gupta

Composition : Module 4 :

Prof. Indira Chowdhury

Editing :

Prof. Mihir Bhattacharya

Format Editing & Publishing Management :

Subhransu Maitra

Notification

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Professor (Dr.) Debesh Roy
Registrar

ENGLISH ELECTIVE HONOURS

COURSE—I

INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE : Course I of English Elective Honours is entitled READING POETRY. The Course is divided into FOUR MODULES which are subdivided into different UNITS. Each Unit is divided into sections and sub-sections dealing with various aspects of the Course. There are COMPREHENSION EXERCISES and SUMMING-UP of each discussion.

The Modules are as follows :

- Module — I** : The Language of Poetry
- Module — II** : (a) Poetry of the Renaissance
(b) Poetry of the Enlightenment
- Module — III** : (a) The Romantic Poetry and its Legacy
(b) Poetry and Modernity
- Module — IV** : Poetry and Contemporary Theory :
(a) Feminist Methods of Reading Poetry
(b) Colonialism, Imperialism and Poetry



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MODULE : I

UNIT 1 What is Poetry

Structure

- 1.0 Objectives
- 1.1 Study Guide
- 1.2 Elements of Poetry
 - 1.2.1 Source of Poetry
 - 1.2.2 Themes of Poetry
 - 1.2.3 Uses of Figurative Language
 - 1.2.4 Seriousness
- 1.3 An Example
 - 1.3.1 The Text
 - 1.3.2 An Analysis
- 1.4 Let us sum up
- 1.5 Comprehension Exercises

1.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit deals with the question “What is poetry?” and discusses various devices by which a poem is composed. This unit also provides an example of a famous poet. And analysis of the poem will enable you to approach a poem in its true light and spirit. After going through this unit you will be able to understand :

- (a) The distinctiveness of poetry as a literary work,
- (b) the distinction between Literal language and Figurative language which is the language of poetry.

1.1 STUDY GUIDE

The lyric written by Wordsworth discussed in this unit will give you an idea that poetry is an organised literary activity. You will know that

poetry is basically a metrical composition with a rhyme-scheme. The Comprehension Exercises will check your progress with the discussion. The "SUMMING UP" given at the end will help you to understand the nature and various elements of poetry.

1.2 ELEMENTS OF POETRY

1.2.1 Source of Poetry

Any language spoken by human beings has combination of sounds which are rhythmic and easy to remember. These sounds, of course, come to us in the form of words, phrases and sentences. Therefore, some meaningful combinations of words show marked features of rhythm and other aids to memory. Many of these features are also considered pleasing. Poetry originated from these special features of the human language. Proverbs, nursery rhymes and folk songs would be good example of early human attempts at such compositions. When writing started, many of the orally composed poems passed into written form.

1.2.2 Themes of Poetry

Poetry has come a long way from the earliest ballads to the most modern experimental poems, which may be written in free verse. This does not mean that the earliest kinds of poetry have lost their meaning or value. Many new kinds of writing poetry have developed in various societies; this body of poetry is the traditional stock which is constantly increasing, and out of which new combinations are discovered and used by generations of poets. This body of poetry in a natural language shows many concerns ranging from the most serious to the most comic; nature, gods and goddesses, personal emotions, philosophy, politics and many other major concerns of human beings find their place in poetry.

1.2.3 Uses of Figurative Language

A poem is usually a material composition, that is, its words and lines follow a particular pattern at regular intervals. A poem always, has rhythm, that is, a pattern of movement in sound. Very often a poem has rhyme, which is the repetition of similar or duplicate sounds at regular intervals, usually at the end of each line of verse. In the examples which follow we shall presently come across rhythm and rhyme. There are certain other features of poetry which are generally considered to be of great significance. One such

feature is known as figurative language. Figurative language can be distinguished from literal language. A literal expression usually has a single sense or a single reference. You can point to an object on the roadside and say "This is a tree", or point to a small human creature and say that this is a child. Figurative language, on the other hand, employs some features of language which add colour and interest to the expression. When the poet Burns writes "My love is a red red rose", he is using the figure of metaphor in which two unlike objects are compared by virtue of one characteristic which they share. Here, beauty and freshness are shared by both the rose and the young woman whom the speaker loves. These special features are available to the poet in any natural language, such as Bangla, English, Hindi, Tamil, Chinese, Spanish and so on. Each language will favour some particular classes of such features. As far as English is concerned these special effects have often been divided into tropes and figures. Tropes are expressions in which there is a change from the direct literal meaning to something deeper, usually involving comparisons between terms. The expression, "I will drink life to the lees" [From Alfred Tennyson's *Ulysses*] is a trope called metaphor, which we have seen in the earlier example from Burns. In Tennyson's line a comparison is made between life and a full glass of wine. Just as one may drink the full contents of a glass of wine. Ulysses wishes to experience everything that life has to offer. Here, the literal meaning of "drinking life" is both impossible and meaningless. A detailed discussion of tropes will be found in the section on **Figurative Language** under **The Language of Poetry**. Figures of speech are expressions in which there is a change in the pattern of words of their grammatical order, to bring about some additional effect of emphasis or novelty. The expression "Darkness visible" [From Milton's *Paradise Lost*] is a figure of speech called oxymoron, where the opposites, 'darkness' and 'visibility', are brought together for greater effect. Tropes are many, such as Metaphor, Metonymy, Hyperbole, Personification etc. and so are figures such as Alliteration, Antithesis, Climax, Anti-climax and so on. However, a composition which boasts of these devices may not be recognised as poetry.

1.2.4 Seriousness

Apart from rhythm, rhyme tropes are figures, another feature is usually demanded of poetry. That may be simply described as a certain degree of intensity or seriousness. In fact, it may be held that the special quality of poetic language is part of the unending human quest for meaning and value.

A poem is supposed to induce the reader to have a fresh look at human experience itself. She should be able to discover something of interest or pleasure in it. Such interest or pleasure is supposed to be related to what a poem speaks of. Meaning and experience, therefore, and very important in poetry, just as the properties of the language are.

1.3 AN EXAMPLE

This is illustrated in the following lyric by William Wordsworth, written in 1802. **1.3.1 The Text : *My Heart Leaps up when I Behold*. Refer Additional Notes**

My heart leaps up when I behold	a
A rainbow in the sky :	b
So was it when my life began;	c
So is it now I am a man;	c
So be it when I shall grow old,	a
Or let me die!	b
The Child is father of the Man;	c
And I could wish my days to be	d
Bound each to each in natural piety	d

1.3.2 An Analysis

There are some tropes and figures in the poem. For example. “My Heart Leaps Up” involves a metaphor comparing the heart and a live creature : “the child is father of the man” is an epigram (which will be explained later in the section on **Figurative Language**). But largely speaking this short poem avoids elaborate effects and employs a direct and simple language. Something very important to the poet is being said in this poem. The innocence of the child’s pleasure and wonder at the sight of the rainbow is being proposed as mark of practice of religion. Therefore, the poet is actually proposing that the state of innocence which can respond fully to the sight of the rainbow is something like a natural religion. A natural piety would be opposed to institutionalised religious practices such as worshipping God, going to temple, mosque and church, listening to priests, chanting prayers etc. The poem, therefore, offers a radical departure in an important area of social experience. Being a good man, it assumes, demands a kind of attention to the simple and primary experiences of life. There is also the sense that a determined effort is necessary to practise this kind of goodness, because a grown person’s involvement with society may, in fact, corrupt his/her original

purity of mind.

It is not difficult to see why a poem of this kind was written by Wordsworth in 1802. He, along with many other intellectuals of the period, felt that the commercial and industrial society of 19th century England was responsible for creating a distance between man and nature as well as between man and the primary conditions of goodness, many poems from the Romantic period describe this anxiety and discontent. The poets felt that the natural bond between man and man was also being eroded by the pursuit of self-interest. Therefore, nature becomes a concept of many different and complex meanings during this period.

1.4 LET US SUM UP

1. Poetry originated from a combination of sounds—rhythmic and easy to remember.
 2. Poetry deals with topics ranging from the most serious to the most comic. Early poetry deals with nature, gods and goddesses, personal emotions. Poetry also deals with all major concerns of human beings.
 3. Language of poetry is a specialised one with uses of tropes and various figures of speech.
-

1.5 COMPREHENSION EXERCISES

1. What is the origin of poetry? Mention some early forms of poetry.
2. Mention some themes of poetry.
3. What is the distinction between figurative language and literal language?
4. Mention some forms of figurative language used by poets.

UNIT 2 Different Themes of Poetry

Structure

- 2.0 Objectives
- 2.1 Study Guide
- 2.2 Themes of Poetry
 - 2.2.1 Poems of Serious Themes
 - 2.2.2 Poems of Lighter Themes
 - 2.2.3 Poems of popular culture
- 2.3 Summing up
- 2.4 Comprehension Exercises

2.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit discusses different kinds of poetry dealing with various themes. You will come to know that some poets deal with serious and solemn theme like the legendary King Arthur and the historical rule of Queen Elizabeth I. Some poets give vent to their personal emotions of love and friendship. In contrast, some poets deal with their personal hatred and disregard for individual and socio-political conventions. In modern times some poets deal with themes which appeal to popular imagination. This unit will enable you to :

- (a) understand that poets do not have common themes;
- (b) get acquainted with some terms like allegory, epic, satire, sonnet, limerick.

2.1 STUDY GUIDE

The poems included in this unit will give you an idea that poems deal with various themes. They are also different in their tone. The **Additional Notes** included in latter units will give you a more detailed understanding of the literary terms used in this unit. Comprehension Exercises which you will find at the concluding part of this unit will not only check your progress but provide you with a greater understanding of what poetry is.

2.2 THEMES OF POETRY

2.2.1 Poems of Serious Themes

The romances of the Middle Ages, of which Sir Thomas Malory's *Morte*

d' Arthur (1484) is one, is not only a narrative about the rule of King Arthur but is also a social history of the contemporary period.

Edmund Spenser's **The Faerie Queene** is an allegory which not only deals with the legend of King Arthur but strikes a contemporary note with the inclusion of Queen Elizabeth I within its allegorical framework.

The sonnets of William Shakespeare deal with love in the main, but also contain deeper philosophical truths. The love poems of John Donne are unique in their complex metaphors and extended analogies or comparisons, which often engage our intelligence as much as puzzles do. A celebrated love poem of the late Renaissance period is one by Robert Herrick (1591-1633) — **counsel of Girls** — where the lover urges his beloved to participate in the pleasures of love while she may, for youth and life shall soon wane.

Counsel to Girls

Gather ye rose-buds while ye may.
Old Time is still a-flying;
And this same flower that smiles to-day,
To-morrow will be dying.

The glorious Lamp of Heaven, the Sun,
The higher he's a-getting
The sooner will his race be run,
And nearest he's to setting.

That age is best which is the first,
When youth and blood are warmer;
But being spent, the worse, and worst
Times, still succeed the former.

Then be not coy, but use your time;
And while ye may, go marry;¹
For having lost but once your prime,
You may for ever tarry¹.

Key

1. Tarry — wait.

A more serious form of poetry is the religious and dovetional poetry by John Donne, George Herbert and Henry Vanghan in the sixteenth and seventeenth century.

The Epic is again a serious narrative centered around a heroic figure, on whose action depends the entire fate of a tribe or a nation. Valmiki's **The Ramayana** describes the exploits and rule of Rama, John Milton's **Paradise Lost** deals with God's creation of Adam and Eve and their consequent expulsion from the Garden of Eden.

2.2.2 Poems of Lighter Aspects

Apart from being serious, poetry also explores the lighter aspects of life. It may be satirical as the satires of John Dryden and Alexander Pope go on to show. John Dryden's (1631-1700) **Mac Flecknoe** (1682) is a mock-heroic satire of how the bad Irish poet Richard Flecknoe (d. 1678) chose a successor in Thomas Shadwell (1640-92) who thought himself to be a successor of Ben Jonson (1572-1637). here are a few lines from **Mac Flecknoe**.

(Refer Additional Notes)

All human things are subject to decay,
And when fate summons, monarchs must obey.
This Fleckone found, who, like Augustus¹, young
Was called to empire, and had governed long;
In prose and verse, was owned, without dispute,
Through alt the realms of Nonsense, absolute.
This aged prince, now flourishing in peace,
And blest with issue of a large incurse;
Worn out with business, did at length debate
To settle the succession of the state;
And, pondering which of all his sons was fit
To reign, and wage immortal war with wit,
Cried, 'Tis resolved; for nature pleads, that he
Should only rule, who most resembles me.
Sh —² alone my perfect images bears,
Mature in dulness from his tender years :
Sh — alone, of all my sons, is he
Who stands confirmed in full stupidity.

The rest to some faint meaning make pretence,
But Sh — never deviates into sense.

Key

1. Augustus — Octavins Caesar became first Roman emperor in 31 BC at the age of 32; he assumed the title of Augustus four years later and ruled for 45 years. It was under him that Rome emerged as the greatest political force of the world.
2. Sh — referring to Thomas Shadwell.

Nursery rhymes and limericks are also part of poetry. The limerick is a five-line stanza rhyming **aabba** and was popularized by Edward Lear in his **Book of Nonsense** (1846). The last line of this limerick is a variation of the first:

There was a young lady of Lucca,
Whose lovers completely forsook her;
She ran up a tree, and said "Fiddle-de-dee!"
Which embarrassed the people of Lucca.

2.2.3 Poems of Popular Culture

Apart from the tupes mentioned above, poetry may be influenced by popular culture as well. Thorn Gunn (1929-?), for instance, echoes the popular motor-bike culture of the late sixties in his poem **On the Move** :

On motorcycles, up the road, they come :
Small, black, as files hanging in heat, the Boys,
Until the distance throws them forth, their hum
Bulges to thunder held by cuff and thigh.
In goggles, donned impersonality,
In gleaming jackets trophied with the dust.
They strap in dount — by hiding it, robust
And almost hear a meaning in their noise.

The motorcylce became a power statement for the young men of the sixties, who desired to possess it specially for its speed and toughness. The speed and noise surrounding the motor-bike helped to create an atmosphere

of surprise and intimidation which brought in a new thrill for the pleasure — hungry generation. The motor-bike soon became a popular icon with Marlon Brando representing the youth in the films, so the icon-hero.

2.3 SUMMING UP

1. Poems have got different themes and forms.
2. “Morte d’ Arthur” is romance; “The Faerie Queene” is an allegory dealing with more serious themes than the surface narratives; “Counsel to Girls” is a love-poem whereas “Mac Flecknoe” is a satire.
3. Epics are serious poems.
4. The Limerick has a definite rhyme-scheme.

2.4 COMPREHENSION EXERCISES

1. Mention some types (or genre) of poetry.
2. Do Shakespeare and Edmund Spenser have the same theme?
3. make a comparative study between “Counsel to Girls” and “Mac Flecknoe” with special reference to their time, theme and tone.
4. Refer to the poem “In the Move”. Answer the following questions :
 - (a) What is the period to which the poem belongs?
 - (b) What does the poem symbolise?
 - (c) Would you call it a nonsense poem? If not, why?

UNIT 3 Poetic Diction

Structure

- 3.0 Objectives
- 3.1 Study Guide
- 3.2 What is Poetic Diction?
- 3.3 The wordsworthian experiment
- 3.4 Poetry and Verse
- 3.5 Let us sum up
- 3.6 Comprehension Exercises

3.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit deals with the particular language used by poets. This unit enables you to :

- (a) Understand that the language of poetry need not be stylized :
- (b) Make a distinction between prose and poetry :
- (c) discern the difference between poetry and verse;
- (d) understand the approach of the Romantics to poetry.

3.1 STUDY GUIDE

This unit will impart you the knowledge that poets of the 17th century used Latinisms or Latinate expressions to enrich their poetic diction which also includes **archaic** or obsolete words. The Wordsworthian Experiment will tell you the common man's language can well be the medium of poetic expression. In the sub-section "Poetry and Verse" you will know about the difference between Poetry and Prose which developed much later than Poetry.

3.2 WHAT IS POETIC DICTION ?

Regardless of the fact that poetry explores a wide range of subjects, poetry was, for a long time, to be written only in a particular set of words constituting a particular language, called poetic diction. The poets of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries used Latinisms, Which, they felt, gave their poems an exotic flavour. The poets of the seventeenth century continued to use a highly stylized poetic diction, with archaisms or obsolete words. Milton used not only Latin words but also followed the **rules of Latin** Grammar in **Paradise Lost**.

3.3 THE WORDSWORTHIAN EXPERIMENT

The thrust towards a separated language for poetry increased, when in the eighteenth century, Thomas Gray said that "The language of the age (that is, the common language) is never the language of poetry". However, William Wordsworth, in his **Preface to the Lyrical Ballads, 1800**, realized that the prevalent poetic diction used by the poets, was not only obscuring the meaning but also obstructing the full development of poetic excellence. Hence, he advocated that poetry should be written in the language of common man, which could be easily understood by all and in which, poetry would be natural and spontaneous. Many poets have, since then, tried to compose poetry in a language intelligible to all. The more recent examples of poetry show that it is best expressed in a colloquial diction.

3.4 POETRY AND VERSE

Poetry is composed in verse, while prose is written in sentences and paragraphs. Prose demands an analytical mind as well as a greater command over the language and is usually a much later development in any civilization. All written matters are composed in verse forms in the preliminary stages of any civilization, as the rhythmic structure of verse makes it easier to remember. Historical and other non-literary materials are then also written in verse, apart from the more literary creations. The Anglo Saxon (civilization in Britain around 7th century) **Ecclesiastical History of the Angles** written by the Venerable Bede (672-735), is in verse.

The difference between poetry and prose arises only when prose comes into being. The non-literary topics are then usually diverted to prose, and verse is usually reserved for poetry alone.

English Literature makes no difference between poetry and verse for a long time, that is, all matter composed in verse is taken as poetry, for a long time. The verse satires of John Dryden, the eighteenth century neo-classicist, were poetry. So were the essays of Alexander Pope, which were also composed in verse e.g., **The Essay of Criticism**.

The distinction between poetry and verse became prominent once again in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, in the Romantic Period. The Romantic poets laid more importance on the subject matter and content of the poem rather than on its verse pattern or form. A poem of higher sensibility and depth of feeling alone was considered to be poetry, irrespective

of its prosodic (verse) pattern. The lyric of Wordsworth, at the beginning of this study is an example of a Romantic poem.

The Romantic stresses on the individual sensibility and understanding of the reader, influenced the reading of all poetry from the individual's point of view, and laid more stress on the poetic content of the poem, rather than its 'formal' content.

The independence of 'Poetry' from 'verse' is clearer in the evolution of the free verse in poetry. Free verse consists of unrhymed lines without any rhyme-scheme. Example of free verse from Walt Whitman's **Leaves of Grass** :

(Refer Additional Notes)

A child said **What is the grass?** fetching it
to me with full hands,
How could I answer the child? I do not know
What it is any more than he
I guess it must be the flag of my disposition, out
of hopeful green stuff woven.

3.5 LET US SUM UP

1. Poets generally use a stylized language to make it look different from ordinary language.
 2. Wordsworth advocated a common man's language for poetry.
 3. Prose came into being much later than verse.
 4. Verse-pattern is not essential for poetry. Free verse is an innovation as it consists of unrhymed lines without any rhyme-scheme.
 5. Romantic put more emphasis on content than on form of a poem.
-

3.6 COMPREHENSION EXERCISES

1. What type of language did the poets of the 15th and 16th century use in their poetry?
2. What is Wordsworth's view on the language of poetry? To which age did he belong?
3. How is poetry different from Prose?
4. What is a Romantic's approach to poetry?
5. What is Free Verse?

UNIT 4 Poetry, Prose and Drama

Structure

- 4.0 Objectives
- 4.1 Study Guide
- 4.2 Poetry and Prose
- 4.3 Poetic Prose
- 4.4 Poetry and Drama
 - 4.4.1 Different Types of Drama —
Verse drama, Closet drama,
Poetic drama, Prose drama
- 4.5 Let us sum up
- 4.6 Comprehension Exercises

4.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit deals with three categories of prose and also with the basic purpose of drama and its various types. This unit will help you to :

- (a) Understand the areas in which prose is used;
- (b) be acquainted with such literary types as Fiction, Novel, Short Story;
- (c) discern how Prose and Poetry can be blended;
- (d) understand the very purpose of dramatic productions and their various types.

4.1 STUDY GUIDE

All the very beginning of your study of this unit you will know about the structural difference between prose and poetry. Then you will read the areas of Fictional Prose and the areas on Non-fictional Prose. In the section “**Poetic Prose**” you will find how elements of poetry can be employed in prose. In the section **Poetry and Drama** you will know about the peculiarity of drama as a literary work meant for the public. You will also know about different types of dramatic creations.

4.2 POETRY AND PROSE

Prose is written independent of any particular pattern and rhyme-scheme, in straight sentences.

Prose can mainly be of two types : fictional prose and non-fictional prose.

Fictional prose includes short stories and novels which are imaginative, in the sense that they do not have any historical or biographical truths in them. Fiction revolves around the lives of ordinary people through which the author tries to project some extraordinary and universal truth.

A short story might focus on a particular moment in a character's life, which might bring about an important change in his entire life. It might also have a "surprise ending" forcing the reader to think about the entire story, from a new angle. The stories of Katherine Mansfield and O'Henry are of such variety.

A novel, on the other hand, is based on a more elaborate canvas, having many characters, who are allowed to develop over a longer period of time. A novel is a sustained story, elaborating on the joys and sorrows of its characters. The novels of Charles Dickens amply illustrate the various types of characters that make up the human society.

Non-fictional prose include biographical studies, historical theses, essays (both personal and impersonal) and critical passages. They are primarily factual, analytical, informative and judgemental.

4.3 POETIC PROSE

A third category of prose is the **poetic prose** which is a more elaborate variety of prose, making use of rhythms, metaphors and other devices of verse, mainly for intensity. An example of the poetic prose may be found in the description of the mermaid in Oscar Wilde's short story — **The Fisherman and his Soul**

(Refer Additional Notes)

"Her hair was as a wet fleece of gold, and each separate hair as a thread of fine gold in a cup of glass. Her body was of white ivory, and her tail was of silver and pearl. Silver and pearl was her tail, and the green weeds of the sea coiled around it; and like sea shells were her ears, and her lips were like sea coral. The cold waves dashed over her cold breasts, and the salt glistened upon her eyelids."

The description of the mermaid is given in successive metaphors, that is, comparisons between the mermaid and various other things are suggested or implied, which help us to get a more vivid picture of the mermaid.

4.4 POETRY AND DRAMA

The main difference between poetry and drama is perhaps the fact that the former is, on most occasions, written for the private pleasure of the reader, or at most, a group of readers. Drama, on the other hand, is a literary work written in dialogues, to be represented on stage by a group of actors, for the general public. The essence of drama lies in the element of make-believe. The actors impersonate the characters of the play and we are made to believe that we are actually watching the characters in actions. For instance, when we see William Shakespeare's **Julius Caesar**, we assume that we are seeing the great Roman Emperor Julius Caesar in the period 44 BC, surrounded, by the Roman senators and speaking a language different from ours.

The 'public' nature of drama requires an awareness of the popular trends and the social and political problems of the day, on the part of the dramatist. Drama is a powerful medium where the dramatist acts as a representative of the society and offers his commentary on the contemporary period that he represents. It is a live medium, much like the television, and holds a similar popular appeal.

4.4.1 Different Types of Drama : Verse drama, Closet drama, Poetic drama, Prose drama

Drama may be written both in verse and prose. **Verse drama** is written in verse, which in English is usually blank verse, or unrhymed iambic pentameter lines. The plays of William Shakespeare are examples of such verse dramas.

Another form of drama, the **closed drama** is written in the form of a drama, inasmuch as it has dialogues, indicated settings and stage directions, but, is also a poem, intended for private reading, rather than performance on stage. Examples of such a type are John Milton's **Samson Agonistes** (1671) and P. B. Shelley's **Prometheus Unbound** (1820).

Poetic drama is yet another type of drama which may be written in verse or prose as T. S. Eliot's **Murder in the Cathedral** (1935) shows, where both verse as well as prose is present. It may also be written in poetic prose

as J.M. Synge's **Riders to the sea** (1904) shows. The play is packed with symbols which result in the concentration and intensification of the theme.

Prose drama, as the name suggests, is written in prose and conveys the effect of natural speech between the characters, in its dialogues. Examples are William Congreve's **The Way of the World** (1700), Henrik Ibsen's **A Doll's House** and G. B. Shaw's **Arms and the Man** (1894).

4.5 LET US SUM UP

1. Prose, as distinguished from poetry, is independent of any particular pattern and rhymescheme.
2. Prose is generally of two types — fictional prose and non-fictional prose.
3. Poetic prose blends poetry and prose by using elements of poetry like symbol, metaphors, rhythms.
4. Drama is for public entertainment whereas poetry is for private enjoyment.
5. Dramatists act as representatives of their societies they live in.

4.6 COMPREHENSION EXERCISES

1. What are the three categories of prose?
2. How do you distinguish a short story from a novel?
3. What does non-fictional prose include?
4. How is fictional prose different from non-fictional prose?
5. How is poetic prose different from the other two categories of prose?
6. What is the specific role of a dramatist? Why does drama appeal to you more than a poem?

UNIT 5 The Language of Poetry

Structure

- 5.0 Objectives
- 5.1 Study Guide
- 5.2 Rhythm
- 5.3 Meter
- 5.4 Scansion
 - 5.4.1 What is Scansion
 - 5.4.2 Scansion with Variations
- 5.5 Rhythm : Various Types
- 5.6 Rhyme ; Its functions and Varieties
- 5.7 Stanza
- 5.8 Let us sum up
- 5.9 Comprehension Exercises

5.0 OBJECTIVES

In discussing the language of poetry, we shall consider its rhythm, meter and rhymeschemes. We shall also consider the specific figures of speech which give poetry its special quality.

5.1 STUDY GUIDE

In this unit you will find that the language of poetry is different from ordinary language. It has rhythm, rhyme, meter, stanzas and rhyme-schemes. This unit will enable you to:

- (a) know about syllable and foot;
- (b) to scan a poem so that you can recite it meaningfully;
- (c) to discern various types of rhythm;
- (d) to understand the nature of rhyme and its varieties;
- (e) to discern th various divisions of a poem in its stanzas.

5.2 RHYTHM

Poetry has a musical quality about it. It uses words and expressions which are musical

in sound and meaningful in speech. This musical quality is attributed to its **rhythm**, which is a recognizable, but, variable pattern of strong and weak syllables. A strong syllable or vowel sound is that which is stressed, in the act of pronunciation, while a weak syllable or vowel sound is an unstressed syllable. An example of this variation is shown in the following example.

The cur/few tolls/the knell/of part/ing day/(Thomas Gray : **Elegy Written in a Countryyard**)

The stressed syllables are denoted by the symbols /, while the unstressed syllables are denoted by the symbol . Falling rhythm, rising rhythm, spring rhythm are some of the different types of rhythms. A fuller discussion of rhythm is only possible after we discuss Meter.

5.3 METER

Meter is the measure through which the pattern of a rhythm may be discerned. To understand meter, it is important to understand the concept of a **syllable** and a **foot**.

A **syllable** may be defined as a vowel sound, in a word. For example, in the word **No**, the syllable is the sound 'O', A word may be **monosyllabic**, consisting of a single syllable, **disyllabic**, having two syllables (**friendship**), **trisyllabic** having three syllables (**delightful**) or **polysyllabic** having more than three syllables as in **absolutely** (four syllables) or **inconsiderate** (five syllables).

It is these syllables, in a line of poetry, which are either stressed (accented) or unstressed (unaccented).

A single stressed and unstressed syllable consists of a single **foot**. Sometimes a single foot may contain three syllables, out of which two may be stressed and one unstressed, or two unstressed and one stressed and such combinations, A foot may also have both syllables either stressed or unstressed. These are known as variations and depending on the pattern of each foot, we have different names to describe them.

(a) **Iambic foot** — A disyllabic foot where the unstressed syllable is followed by a stressed syllable. Metrical sign for an iambic foot is / . Example : **become**.

(b) **Trochaic foot** — A disyllabic foot where the stressed syllable is followed by an unstressed syllable. Metrical sign for a trochaic foot is / . Example : **golden**

(c) **Anapaestic foot** — This is a trisyllabic foot where two unstressed

syllables are followed by a single stressed syllable. The metrical sign for an anapaestic foot is / .

Example : **catalogue**.

(d) **Dactylic foot** — Another trisyllabic foot where a single stressed syllable is followed by two unstressed syllables. The metrical sign for a dactylic foot is / Example : **galloping**.

(e) **Amphibrachic foot** — A trisyllabic foot where an unstressed syllable alternates with a stressed syllable, such that the metrical sign reads / . Example : **intestines**.

(f) **Spondee** — A disyllabic foot consisting of two stressed syllables. The metrical sign for a spondee is / . Example : **outcome**.

(g) **Pyrhic** — A disyllabic foot consisting of two unstressed syllables. The metrical sign for a pyrhic is. Example : **and so**.

It is to be remembered that in a line of poetry, feet divisions are not made according to words, but according to syllables. This is illustrated in the following example :

Much have/I trav/ell'd in/the rea/lms of gold./
And ma/ny good/ly states/and king/doms seen;/

(from John Keat's **On First Looking into Chapman's Homer, 1817**).

Basing on the number of feet a particular line of poetry has a metrical line is named. For example —

- (a) A line of a single foot is called Monometer.
- (b) A line of two feet is called Dimeter.
- (c) A line of three feet is called Trimeter.
- (d) A line of four feet is called Tetrameter.
- (e) A line of five feet is called Pentameter.

and hexameter for six feet, heptameter for seven feet and octameter for eight feet.

5.4 SCANSION

5.4.1 What is Scansion?

The art of dividing a verse into feet and meter is called **scansion**.

Examples of scanned lines :

- (a) In **Iambic Meter**

The Griz/zly Bear/is huge/and wild;
He has/derou/red the in/fant child

A. E. Honsman, "Infant Innocence."

The above lines are composed in **iambic tetrameter**. without any variations.

(b) In **Trochaic Meter**

Sing a/song of/sixpence
A poc/ket full/of rye
Four and/twenty/blackbirds,
Baked in/a pie.

— Anonymous

The first and third lines of the above stanza are in trochaic **trimeter** while the second and fourth lines are in iambic trimeter and dimeter, respectively.

(c) In **Anapaestic Meter**

Oh, he flies/through the air/with the great/est of ease.
This dar/ing young man/on the fly/ing trapeze.
His flg/ure is hand/some, all girls/he can please,
And my love/he purloined/her away.

The above stanza is predominantly composed in **anapaestic tetrameter** with an **iambic** variation in the first foot of the second and third lines.

(d) In **Dactylic Meter**

A was an/archer, who/shot at a/frog;
B was a/butcher, and/had a great dog;
C was a captain, all covered with lace,
D was a drunkard, and had a red face.

— Anonymous

The above stanza is composed in **dactylic trimeter**.

5.4.2 Scansion with Variations

A few lines from John Keats's **Endymion** (1818) are scanned as follows :

1. A thing/of beau/ty is/a joy/for ev/er :
2. Its love/liness/increa/ses;/it/will nev/er
3. Pass in/to noth/ingness/but still/will keep/
4. A bow/er qui/et for/us//and/a sleep/
5. Full of/sweet dreams/, and health/, arid qui/et breath/ing.

The prevailing meter of the above lines is **iambic pentameter**. The closing feet of lines 1,2,5 have an extra unaccented syllable. These are called **hypermetrical or feminine endings**. In contrast, lines 3 and 4 end with the standard accented syllable of an iambic foot and are said to have **masculine endings**.

The first foot of lines 3 and 5 are **trochaic**.

The second foot in line 2, and the third foot in lines 3 and 4 are **pyrrhic** with two unaccented syllables.

In lines 1 and 5, the pause at the end of the reading coincides with the end of the line. These lines are called **end stopped lines**.

Lines 2 and 4, on the other hand, are called **run-on lines** as the sense of these lines carries on till the next line.

When there is a strong phrasal pause within the line as in lines 2, 3 and 4 of the above passage, it is denoted by a **caesur** (symbol II) or pause.

5.5 RHYTHM : VARIOUS TYPES

Having discussed meter in length, we can now resume our discussion on the types of rhythms

Rising Rhythm — This is the rhythm of iambic and anapaestic feet. The following stanza by Lewis Carroll illustrates **rising rhythm**.

He thought/he saw/an El/ephant.

That practised on a fife :

He looked again and found it was

A letter from his wife.

“At length I realize,” he said,

“The bitterness of life?”

Falling Rhythm — This is the rhythm, of trochaic feet.

Georgie/Porgie/pudding/and pie,

Kissed the girls and made them cry;

When the boys came out to play,

Georgie Porgie ran away.

— Anonymous

Spring Rhythm — Spring rhythm was first measured by Gerard Manley Hopkins in his preface to **Poems** (1918) and is measured by feet of one to four syllables. Spring rhythm may contain a stressed monosyllabic foot, a trochee or a dactyl. Hopkins states that lines in spring rhythm are “rove

over”, that is, the scansion of one line may be carried over from a previous line. Hence, scansion is not limited to individual lines of a stanza, but, runs through it to the end.

In his preface to his poems, Hopkins points out that spring rhythm is that of common speech, written prose as well as that of music. It is also found in nursery rhymes as the following example shows :

Old Mother Twitchett has but one eye
And a long tail which she can let fly.
And every time she goes over a gap,
Ahe leaves a bit of her tail in a trap.

5.6 RHYME : ITS FUNCTIONS AND VARIETIES

The importance of rhyme in poetry is related to its sound pattern. The repetition of similar or identical sounds at regular intervals, usually those of words at the end of lines if called **rhyme**.

Rhyme play an important part in poetry as they pay attention to the sound of words. At times, rhymes function as markers, signalling the end of a rhythmical unit. Examples of such markers may be found in the concluding couplets of Shakespeare’s sonnets as the following sonnet shows :

So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,
So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

(Sonnets 18 — **Shall I Compare
Thee to a Summer’s Day**)

A couplet is pair of rhymed lines. The rhyme lies in **see** and **thee** of the above couplet, through its tone of finality brings a fitting conclusion to the sonnet.

Rhymes which occur at the end of a verse line are called **end rhymes**. **Internal rhymes** are those that occur within a verse line. The following stanza from S. T. Coleridge’s **The Rime of the Ancient Mariner** illustrates this :

1. In mist or **cloud**, on mast or **shroud**.
2. It perched for vespers nine;
3. Whiles all the **night**, though fog-smoke **white**,
4. Glimmered the wihite moon-**shine**.

In the above stanza, there are internal rhymes within lines 1 and 3, and end rhymes between lines 2 and 4.

The arrangement of rhymes in a unit of verse is called a **rhyme-scheme**. The rhyme-scheme is different for different forms of stanzas. The following stanza from William Wordsworth's **The Solitary Reaper** (1807) will illustrate a particular rhyme-scheme.

1. Whatever her theme, the maiden sang	a	} These letters denote the rhyme scheme.
2. As if her song could have no ending	b	
3. I saw her singing at her work	c	
4. And o'er the sickle bending —	b	
5. I listened, motionless and still ;	d	
6. And I mounted up the hill ,	d	
7. The music in my heart I bore ,	e	
8. Long after it was heard no more .	e	

Lines 5 and 6 & 7 and 8 are couplets and the rhymes end on a single stressed syllable. These are called **masculine rhymes**. On the other hands, the rhymes in lines 2 and 4 end on an unstressed syllable after the stressed syllable. These are called **feminine rhymes**.

5.7 STANZA

A stanza is a group of lines forming a division of a poem. The pattern of a stanza is determined by the number of lines, the number of feet per line, the meter and the rhyme-scheme.

Types of Stanza

Rhyme royal — This is a seven-line iambic pentameter stanza with the rhyme-

scheme **ababbcc**. This stanza was introduced by Geoffrey Chaucer in his **Troilus and Criseyde** (late 1380s). An example of this stanza may be seen in the following stanza form **Troilus and Criseyde** (Book I).

CANTUS TROILI — Song of Troilus.

'If no love is, > O god, what fele I so?	a	there is
And if love is, what thing and whiche is he?	b	
If love be good, from whennes > comth my wo?	a	Whence
If it be wikke, > a wonder thinketh me,	b	bad
When every torment and adversitee	b	
That cometh of him, may to me savory > thinke;	c	pleasant
For ay > thrust I, the more that I it drinke.	c	ever

The quatrain — This is a four-line stanza in iamblic pentameter with the alternate lines rhyming. Quatrains are most common in English versification. Here is an example from a Shakespearean sonnet;

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?	a
Thou art more lovely and more temperate :	b
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,	a
And summer's lease hath all too short a date :	b

Spenserian Stanza — This is a nine-line stanza devised by Edmund Spenser for **The Faerie Queene** (1590-96). Out of the nine lines, the first eight lines are composed in iambic pentameter while the last line in iambic hexameter or an **alexandrine**, with the rhyme-scheme **adaddcbcc**. The stanza form has been used by John Keats in **The Eve of St. Agnes** (1820) and by P. B. Shelley in **Adonais** (1821).

An example of the Spenserian stanza is shown from Book I, Cento I of **The Faerie Queene**.

A Gentle Knight was pricking > on the plaine,	a	spurring
Y cladde in mightie armes and silver shielde,	b	
Wherein old dints of deepe wounds did remaine.	a	
The cruell markes of many'a bloody fielde;	b	
Yet armes till that time did he never wield :	b	
His angry steede did chide his foming bitt,	c	
As much disdayning to the curbe to yield :	b	
Full jolly > knight he seemd, and faire did sitt,	c	brave
As one for knightly giusts > and fierce encountees fitt,	c	jousts

Heroic Couplet — Lines of iambic pentameter which rhyme in pairs as aa, bb, cc are called heroic couplets.

Blank verse — Blank verse consists of lines composed in iambic pentameter, without any rhymes. John Milton's **Paradise Lost** is composed in blank verse. Shakespeare's plays are also composed in blank verse.

Example from Book I of **Paradise Lost**.

Of man's first disobedience, adn the fruit
 Of that forbidden tree, whose mortal taste
 Brought death into the world, and all our woe,
 With loss of Eden, till one greater Man
 Restore us, and regain the blissful seat,

5.8 LET US SUM UP

1. Rhythm, meter, rhyme-scheme, stanzas—all these constitute the musical quality of a poem. j
2. All these are based on the sound-pattern and mode of expressions in a poem.
3. Meter shows the pattern of a rhythm in a poem based on the syllabic structure in the words used in the poem. You should know that words have both **stressed** syllables and **unstressed** syllables. Allocation of

stressed and unstressed syllables constitutes the meter or measure in a poem. Scansion is the principle to discern such allocations.

4. Poems have got different rhythms.
5. Poets use different rhyme-patterns.
6. You will find that poets of different ages used various types of stanza

5.9 COMPREHENSION EXERCISES

1. How is a metrical line in a poem determined? (Refer to Unit 5.3)
2. Write a short note on the following :
 - (a) hypermetrical or feminine endings
 - (b) end stopped lines
 - (c) masculine endings
 - (d) sprung rhythm
 - (e) a couplet
3. What is the rhyme-scheme for a Spenserian stanza?
4. What is the verse-pattern in the extract from **Paradise Lost** used in this unit?

UNIT 6 Figurative Language : A Further Study

Struture

- 6.0 Objectives**
- 6.1 Study Guide**
- 6.2 Trope:**
 - 6.2.1 Simile**
 - 6.2.2 Metaphor**
 - 6.2.3 Symbol**
 - 6.2.4 Metonymy and Synecdoche**
 - 6.2.5 Personification**
 - 6.2.6 Hyperbole**
- 6.3 Figures of Speech**
 - 6.3.1 Alliteration**
 - 6.3.2 Antithesis**
 - 6.3.3 Oxymoron**
 - 6.3.4 Epigram**
 - 6.3.5 Climax and Anti-climax**
 - 6.3.6 Chiasmus**
 - 6.3.7 Zeugma**
 - 6.3.8 Hyper baton**
 - 6.3.9 Allusion**

6.0 OBJECTIVES

This Unit deals with figurative language used in poetry as you know that poets use a specialised language which is different from everyday language. Your knowledge of such a language is essential for reading poetry.

6.1 STUDY GUIDE

In this unit you will know about various features of the specialized language used by poets. You have already read about Tropes. Now in this unit you will know about different examples of tropes and figures of speech. Additional

Notes will provide you with a better understanding of the topic discussed in this unit.

6.2 TROPES

Figurative language can be divided into tropes and figures of speech.

Tropes — Tropes literally mean ‘turns’ or ‘conversions’. In an expression containing a trope, words or phrases are used in such a way that they differ from their standard, literal meanings. Examples of tropes are simile, metaphor, symbol, metonymy & synecdoche, personification and hyperbole.

6.2.1 Simile

(a) **Simile** — A simile is a comparison between two distinctly different objects which are usually linked by the words “like” or “as”.

Example : Far off like floating seeds the ships
Diverge of urgent voluntary errands,
W. H. Auden — **Look, Stranger!**
And ice mast-high, came floating by
As green as emerald.
S. T. Coleridge—**The Rime of the Ancient Mariner.**

6.2.2 Metaphor

(b) **Metaphor** — A metaphor is, as it were, an implied simile, in which the comparison is merely suggested and not stated clearly.

Example : I will drink **life** to the less.
Tennyson : **Ulysses.**

Here, life itself is being compared to a tumbler of drink from which Ulysses hopes to drink the very last dregs; in other words, he hopes to live to the full.

Example : All the world’s a stage
And all men and women merely players.
Shakespeare : **As You Like It.**

Here, life itself is compared to a play where men and women are the actors and actresses.

6.2.3 Symbol

(c) **Symbol** — While a simile or in metaphor strikes a comparison between two objects, a symbol usually has a range of significance, the “cross”,

for example, is a religious symbol for Jesus Christ; it is also the emblem of Christianity, its faith and devotion. The colour Red is symbolical of courage, passion, youth, warfare and many such associated things. A Symbol, in literature may be conventional or may be personally devised by the poet or writer, It adds to the poetic depth of the literary work.

6.2.4 Metonymy and Synecdoche

Metonymy (derived from Greek, meaning “change of name”), is the literal term for the trope in which one thing is meant to be another. Examples :

I find all around me Shakespeare. Goethe. Kalidasa and Tagore patiently waiting on the shelves to help me.

Here Shakespeare. Goethe, Kalidasa and Tagore signify the works of these writers and not the writers themselves.

Sceptre and Crown
Must tumble down,
And in the dust be equal made
With the poor crooked scythe and spade.

James Shirley — **Death the Leveller.**

Here, **sceptre and crown** symbolize power and kingship while **scythe and spade** symbolize the much poorer peasantry.

Synecdoche (derived from Greek, meaning “taking together”), is the literal term for the trope in which a part of something denotes the whole, or the whole denotes a part.

Examples : The nineteenth **autumn** has come upon me

W. B. Yeats — **The Wild Swans at Coole.**

Here autumn signifies the nineteenth year,
The boast of heraldry. the pomp of power.
And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave.
Awaits alike thy inevitable hour;

Thomas Gray : **Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard.**

Here, the abstract ideas of **heraldry, power, beauty and wealth** signify respectively, men of high birth, powerful men, beautiful ladies and wealthy men.

6.2.5 Personification

Personification is a trope in which an inanimate object or an abstract idea is represented as person.

Death be not proud, though some have called thee
Mighty and dreadful.....

John Donne — **Death Be Not Proud.**

Here, Death is personified.
Come forth into the light of things,
Let Nature be your teacher.
William Wordsworth —
The Tables Turned.
Here Nature is personified.

6.2.6 Hyperbole

Hyperbole—A trope in which intensity is conveyed through extreme exaggeration.

Examples :

Sol thro' write Curtains shot a tim'rous Ray
And op'd those Eyes that must eclipse the Day;
Alexander Pope — **The Rape of the Lock.**

In order to convey the brightness of Belinda's eyes, a comparison has been instituted with the Sun itself, which is the source of all light.

I lov'd Ophelia : forty thousand brothers
Could not, with all their quantity of love,
Make up my sum.

Shakespeare — **Hamlet.** (V i 262-264)

Hamlet expresses his love for Ophelia in hyperbolic terms to Laertes. Ophelia's brother.

6.3 FIGURES OF SPEECH

In using figures of speech a change is brought in the grammatical order or pattern of words, and not in their meaning, as in the tropes. Examples — Alliteration, Antithesis with Oxymoron and Epigram, Climax and Anti-climax, Chiasmus, Zeugma and Hyperbaton.

6.3.1 Alliteration

The repetition of the same letter or syllable at the beginning of words

placed side by side or nearby, is called alliteration. The alliterative meter was the principal organizing device of the Old English verse which had four stresses in one line, Separated by a caesura or a pause. The opening linc of **Piers Plowman** by William Langland (medieval poet) represents this.

In a **Somer Seanon**. whan **Soft** was **Sonne**.

The figur is later employed for the rhythm it brings to the language;
Here Files of Pins extend their shining Rows,

Puffs, Powders, Patches, Bibles, Billet-dous,

Alexamder Pope — **The Rape of the Lock.**

6.3.2 Antithesis

Antithesis is a figure of speech where two contrasting ideas are placed side by side.

Examples — United we stand, divided we fall —Proverb.

He is willing to wound, and yet afraid to strike

Pope — **Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot.**

6.3.3 Oxymoron

This is a figure of speech in which two opposite or contradictory words or ideas are combined for strong emphasis.

Thus **idly busy** rolls their world away.

Oliver Goldsmith — **The traveller.**

Oxymoron — **idly busy**

And **painful pleasure** turns to **pleasing pain.**

Spenser — **The Fairie Queene.**

Oxymoron — painful pleasure,
pleasing pain.

6.3.4 Epigram

Epigram is an apparently shocking statement which hides a deeper meaning underneath.

Our sweetest songs are those thattall of saddest thought

P. B. Shelley — **To A Skylark.**

Though hard to believe, it is bur' saddest thoughts, which being sincere and honest, form themselves into the most memorable, melodious and sweetest songs.

Beware the fury of a patient man

Dryden

The fury of a patient man being rare, is itself proof of a justified and valid cause for anger, which being aroused, is expressed fiercely.

6.3.5 Climax and Anti-climax

Climax is a figure in which a series of words, ideas, images or sentiments are arranged in an ascending order of importance so that the most forceful one comes last of all.

To strive, to seek, to find and not to yield.

Tennyson — **Ulysses**.

I came, I saw, I conquered.

Shakespeare — **Julius Caesar**.

There is a chronological use of actions in the above examples.

Anti-climax is a figure in which the words, ideas or images or images are arranged in a descending order of importance so that the very last item is less important than those that have gone before.

No louder shrieks to pitying heaven are cast,

When husbands, or when lap — dogs breathe their last.

Pope — **The Rape of the Lock**.

“She lost her husband, her child, her purse and her pocket handkerchief”.
There is chronological diminution of values in the above examples.

6.3.6 Chiasmus

This figure consists in the inversion of the second of two parallel or same phrases or clauses. The purpose of this inversion is the emphasis of the statement.

Example :

The mind is its own place, and in itself
Can make a Heav'n of Hell, a Hell of Heav'n.

Milton — **Paradise Lost, Book — 1**

‘Beauty is truth, truth beauty’ — that is all

Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know

John Keats — **Ode on a Grecian Urn.**

6.3.7 Zeugma

Zeugma is applied to expressions in which a single word stands in the same grammatical relation to two or more other words, but with an obvious shift in its meaning. For example :

Or **stain** her honour, or her new brocade

Pope — **The Rape of the Lock.**

Here, the same word **stain** is used in connection with honour as well as brocade. While the usage is metaphorical in the first instance, it is literal in the second instance.

Another example — The moment and the vessel passed — Tennyson.

6.3.8 Hyperbaton

This is a figure of speech in which the grammatical order of words is inverted for the sake of emphasis.

Examples : Just are the ways of God

And justifiable to men

Milton — **Samson Agonistes**

The order is inversed here. Instead of saying “the ways of God are just and justifiable to men”, we have the above.

Another example :

Much have I travelled in the realms of gold

And many goodly states and kingdoms seen

John Keats—**On first Looking into Chapman’s Homer.**

6.3.9 Allusion

This is a figure of speech in which another place or person is mentioned to suggest some similarity, or dissimilarity or some associated meaning. For example :

Hence loathed Melancholy

or **Cerberus** and blackest midnight born

Milton — **L’Allegro.**

Here, there is an explicit allusion to the three headed watch-dog, **Cerberus** who guarded the entrance of hell.

UNIT 7 Different Kinds of Poetry

Structure

7.0 Objectives

7.1 Study Guide

7.2 Social Poetry

7.2.1 The Ballad

7.2.2 Other Form of Social Poetry of the Middle Ages.

7.3 The Epic

7.4 Lyric

7.4.1 The Sonnet

7.4.2 Shakespearean Sonnet

7.4.3 The Elegy

7.4.4 The Odes — Three Types

7.0 OBJECTIVES

In this section we shall discuss a few types of poetry with examples. The types discussed here will be — the Ballad, the Epic and among the Lyrics, the Sonnet, the Elegy and the Ode.

7.1 STUDY GUIDE

You will read that poets sometimes deal with social problems and they try to record their poetic sensibilities impersonally. Sometimes they are intensely personal in their feelings. Lyric, as such, is a fit device to register to questions of love and other human emotions. Social poetry is objective or impersonal and Lyric is subjective or personal.

7.2 SOCIAL POETRY

7.2.1 The Ballad

Ballads are short, anonymous, narrative poems, preserved by oral transmission and sung, often with musical accompaniment and dance, before gatherings of people. Their subjects is usually tragic, often dealing with death and lost love, and are frequently accompanied with supernatural

incidents. The motif and incident of these ballads may be taken from a folklore tradition stretching back many centuries, or from a comparatively recent historical occurrence.

The ballad meter is simple. The lines are in iambic tetrameter and arranged in quatrains or groups of four. Most ballads are devoid of any complex imagery as they were mainly meant for an audience who would appreciate them, on their first hearing.

Here is the example of a ballad, **The Unquiet Grave**, in which the lover mourns for his beloved who is dead and lies in her grave. The ballad records the conversation that the lover has with his dead beloved :

*** Refer Additional Notes.**

The Unquiet Grave

The wind doth blow today, my love.
And a few small drops of rain;
I never had but one true-love,
In cold grave she was lain.

I'll do as much for my true-love
As any young man may :
I'll sit and mourn all at her grave
For a twelvemonth and a day.

The twelvemonth and a day being up
The dead began to speak :
'Oh who sits weeping on my grave¹
And will not let me sleep?'

'Tis I, my love, sits on your grave
And will not let you sleep;
For I crave one kiss of your clay-cold lips
And that is all I seek'

'You crave one kiss of my clay-cold lips,
But my breath smells earthy strong;

If you have one kiss of my clay-cold lips
Your time will not be long.

Tis down in yonder garden green.
Love, where we used to walk,
The finest flower that ere was seen
Is withered to a stalk.

The stalk is withered dry, my love,
so will our hearts decay;
So make yourself content, my love,
Till God calls you away.'

Key.

1. Oh...grave - It is both an Oriental and a Western superstition that after a 'certain' time, mourning disturbs the dead, and brings them out to claim the disturber.

7.2.2 Other Form of Social Poetry of the Middle Ages

Besides the ballads, another form of **social poetry** existed in the middle ages in which a paradisiac and idyllic world of no-work was represented. The inhabitants of such a world enjoyed plenty of rest and freedom from all worldly responsibilities.

Life in this idyllic world was often considered to be the privilege of the richer aristocracy rather than the poorer labourers. In the middle ages, society was strictly divided into those who worked for their living and those who did not. The former formed the poorer labouring classes while the latter formed the aristocracy and gentry. Being land and property owners, the latter did not work but had people working under them. A paradisiac lifestyle seemed most suited to them. Many poems such as, the old English **Phoenix** (ninth century) and Guillaume de Lorris' **The Romance of the Rose** (thirteenth century) explore the motif of an idyllic state of life.

However, **The Land of Cockayne** (1315), of uncertain authorship is a poor man's version of what a paradise should be like. It is satirical and anticlerical that is, against the accepted beliefs of the clergy, showing how monks would have behaved, they were given ample freedom in such a land. A few lines from the poem are given below:

The Land of Cockygne

Far in the sea, to the west of Spain,
Is a country called Cockaygne.'

.....
.....
There are many sweetest sights,
All is day, there are no nights;
There's no quarrelling or strife
Nor is there death, but lasting life;
There's no lack of food or cloth
There's no man nor woman worth.

There's no serpent, wolf or fox
Horse or hack or cow or ox
There's no sheep, or swine, or goat
No. nor fifth there — God takes note —
Nor breeding stable, no, nor stud
The land is full of all things good.
There's no fly, no flea, no louse
In clothers, in town, in bed, in house;
There's no thunder, sleet or hail;
Nor any filthy worm, or snail;

Nor any storm, or rain, or wind;
Nor is there man or woman blind
But all is play and joy and glee.
Happy he that there may be.

There are rivers broad and fine
Of oil and honey, milk and wine;
Water scars there for no thing
But looking at or washing in
There are fruits of many sorts,
Endless pleasures, joys and sports.

There appears a fine abbey
Of white² monks and, also, of grey,³
There are bowers and there are halls,

All of pasties⁴ are the walls,
Of rich food, of fish and meat
Which are delectable to eat.
Cakes of them are the shingles all
Of church and cloister, bower and hall.

Key

1. Cockayne— the name has something to do with cakes and cookery.
2. White — Carmelites
3. Gray — Franciscan.
4. Pasties — meat pies.

7.3 THE EPIC

An epic is a long narrative poem on a serious subject, told in a formal and elevated style. It revolves around a heroic figure on whose actions depends the fate of a tribe, a nation or even the entire human race as in the case of Milton's **Paradise Lost**, where the actions of Adam and Eve determine the history of civilization.

Valmiki's **The Ramayana**. revolves around the exploits and rule of Lord Rama in Ayodhya.

The epic is divided into two groups — the Primary Epic (like **The Illiad** and **The Odessey** by the ancient Greek bard (poet) Homer, **Beowuddlf** in Anglo-Saxon England and the two great Indian epics) and the Secondary Epic (eg. **The Aeceid** by the Latin poet Virgil and **Paradise Lost** by the blind English poet Milton). The Primary Epic has a choric character reflecting sentiments and ambitions of a nation whereas the Secondary Epic, written in an elevated style (the "Grand Style") is mainly an exercise in literacy excellence.

Mock-Epic is another version of Epic poetry. Its objective is to burlesque or parody the literary conventions of an Epic. Fine examples of Mock-Epic are **Le Lutrin** by the French writer Boileau and **The Rape of the Lock** by Alexander Pope of the 18th century England.

7.4 LYRIC

A lyric is usually a short poem which is usually uttered in the first person "I". A lyric again may be of different types— the Sonnet, the Elegy and the Ode.

Example of a love lyric by John Donne : (This is called a song as it exists in a contemporary musical setting)

***Refer Additional Notes**

Song

Sweetest love, I do not go,
For weariness of thee,
Nor in hope the world can show
A fitter love for me;
But since that I
Must die at last, 'tis best,
To use myself in jest
Thus by feigned deaths to die.

Yesternight the sun went hence,
And yet is here today,
He hath no desire nor sense,
Nor half so short a way!
Then fear not me,
But believe that I shall make
Speedier journeys, since I take
More wings and spurs than he.

O how feeble is man's power,
That if good fortune fall,
Cannot add another hour,
Nor a lost hour recall !

But come bad chance,
 And we join to it our strength,
 And we teach it act and length,
 It self o'er us to advance,¹
 When thou sigh'st, thou sigh'st not wind.
 But sigh'st my soul away,
 When thou weep'st, unkindly kind,
 My life's blood doth decay.
 It cannot be
 That thou lov'st me, as thou say 'st,
 If in thine my life thou waste.
 Thou act the best of me.²

 Let not thy divining³ heart
 Forethink me any ill,
 Destiny may take thy part,
 And may thy fears fulfil;
 But think that we
 Are but turned aside to sleep;
 They who one another keep
 Alive, ne'er parted be.

Key

1. But come.....advance — if bad luck comes we lend it our strength, in spite of which it overwhelms and triumphs over us.
2. the best of me — through her sighs and tears she is wasting him. as she is his life.
3. divining — prophetic, foreseeing.

7.4.1 The Sonnet

A sonnet is a lyric of a single **stanza** of fourteen iambic pentameter lines linked by an intricate rhyme scheme. There are two types of sonnets — the Italian or Petrarchan sonnet and the English or Shakespearian sonnet.

The Petrarchan Sonnet, named after the Italian poet, Frances Petrarch, consists of an octave (first eight lines) rhyming **abba abba** followed by a

sestet by a sestet (six lines) rhyming **cde cde**. The subject of a Petrarchan sonnet mainly revolves around the hopes and pains of an adoring lover.

Here is an example of a Petrarchan sonnet by Sir Thomas Wyatt, where he employs the familiar Petrarchan metaphor of a lover's passionate soul being like a ship in its voyage in the storm-tossed ocean. The rhyme scheme of the sonnet is **abba abba cddc ee**.

My Galley Charged with Forgetfulness'

My galley 'charged with forgetfulness	a
Through sharp seas, in winter night doth pass	b
Tween rock and rock; ² and eke ³ mine enemy, also	b
That is my lord steeneth with cruelty	a
And every our a thought in readiness	a
As though that death were light in such a case	b
An endless wind doth tear the sail apace	b
Of forced sighs and trusty fearfulness	a
A rain of tears, a cloud of dark disdain,	c
Hath done the wearied cords ⁴ great hinderance,	b
Wreathed with error and eke with ignorance	d
The stars be hid that led me to this pain	c
Drowned is reason that should me consort,	e
And I remain despairing of the part	e

Key

1. My Galley.....Forgetfulness — from Petrarch **In Vita**, Sonnet CXXXVII.
2. Tween rock and rock—a reminiscence of Homeric navigational dangers; the whole poem transforms the Roman poet, Horace's "Ship of the State" (*Odes* 1.14) into a ship of self.

3. eke — also

* **Refer Additional Notes**

4. cords — rigging.

7.4.2 Shakespearean Sonnet

Pioneered by The Earl of Surrey, the greatest practitioner of this form of sonnet was William Shakespeare. The sonnet has three quatrains and a

concluding couplet with the rhyme scheme **abab cdcd efef gg**. Example of such a sonnet by William Shakespeare.

* Refer Additional Notes

Sonnet XVIII

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day? ¹	a
Thou art more lovely and more temperate :	b
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,	a
And summer's lease hath all too short a date ² :	b
Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,	c
And often is his gold complexion dimmed,	b
And every fair from fair sometime declines,	c
By chance or nature's changing course untrimmed, ³	d
But thy eternal summer shall not fade	e
Nor lose possession of that fair thou owest, ⁴	f
Nor shall Death brag thou wander'st in his shade.	e
When in eternal lines ⁵ to time thou growest . ⁶	f
So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,	g
So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.	g

Key

1. day — the season
2. date — the period of a lease
3. untrimmed — stripped of beauty
4. that... ..owest — that beauty then possesset
5. lines — such as the lines of this poem and the other sonnets
6. growest — becomes a part of.

7.4.3 The Elegy

In the classical period of Greek and Roman literature, elegy denoted any poem written in a particular meter, that of alternating hexameter and pentameter lines. Such a meter was consistently used to register complaints about love in Europe and England.

From the seventeenth century, however, the term **elegy** began to be limited to a formal and sustained lament in verse for the death of a particular person, usually ending on a note of consolation. John Dryden's **To the Memory of Mr. Oldham** (1684) is such an elegy.

* Refer Additional Notes

To the Memory of Mr. Oldham

Farewell, too little, and too lately known.
Whom I began to think and call my own :
For sure our souls were near allied, and thine
Cast in the same poetic mould with mine.
One common note on either Jyre did strike,
And knarves and fools we both abhorred alike
To the same goal did both our studies drive;
The last set out the soonest did arrive.
Thus Nisus¹ fell upon the slippery place,
While his young friend performed and won the race.
O early ripe! to thy abundant store
What could advancing age have added more?
It might (what nature never gives the young)
Have taught the numbers² of thy native tongue.
But satire needs not those, and wit will shine
Though the harsh condence of a rugged life :
A noble error, and but seldom made,
When poets are by too much force betrayed.
Thy generous fruits, though gathered ere their prime,
Still showed a quickness³; and maturing time
But mellows what we write to the dull sweets of rhyme,
Once more, hail and farewell; farewell; thou young
But ah too short, Marcellus⁴ of our tongue;
Thy brows with ively, and with laurels⁵ bound;
But fate and glory night encompass thee around.

Her clarion o'er dreaming earth, and fill	d
(Driving sweet buds like flocks to feed in air)	e
With Jiviiig hues and odours plain and hill :	d
Wild spirit, which art moving every where ;	f
Destroyer and preserver, hear, Oh, hear!	f

This Ode is addressed to the West Wind and commemorates its power over Nature.

Example of Irregular Ode — William Wordsworth's **Ode on Intimations of Immortality** is an irregular Ode where the length of all stanza are different and they all follow a different rhyme scheme.

The first two stanzas are given here :

*** Refer Additional Notes**

There was a time when meadow, grove and stream,	a
The earth, and every common sight,	b
To me did seem	a
Apparelled in celestial light,	b
The glory and the freshness of a dream	a
It is not new as it hath been of yore :-	c
Turn wheresoe'er I may,	d
By night or day,	d
The things which I have seen I now can see no more.	c
The Rainbow comes and goes,	a
And lovely is the Rose,	a
The moon doth with delight	b
Look round her when the heavens are bare,	c
Waters on a starry night	b
Are beautiful and fair;	c
The sunshine is a glorious birth;	e
But yet I know, where'er I go,	e
That there hath past away a glory from the earth.	d

The Horatian Ode — John Keats¹ **Ode to Autumn** is an example. These Odes are distinguished by their calm, Meditative tone. The first stanza initiates the note of calm that runs throughout the poem, which celebrates the season of autumn.

Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness,	a
Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun;	b
Conspiring with him how to load and bless	a
With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eves run;	b
To bend with apples the moss'd cottage-trees,	c
And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;	d
To swell the gourd, and plun the hazel shells	c
With a sweet kernel: to set budding more,	d
And still more, late flowers for the bees,	c
Until they think warm days will never cease,	c
For Summer has o'er brimm'd their clammy cells.	e

Draft — Anasuya Ghosh

UNIT 8 Additional Notes

Structure

- 8.0 Objectives
- 8.1 Study Guide
- 8.2 Additional Notes on Certain Poems
- 8.3 Mac Flecknoe -
- 8.4 Walt Whitman
- 8.5 Oscar Wilde (1856-1900)
- 8.6 Ballads: The Unquiet Grave
- 8.7 Love lyric of John Donne
- 8.8 Sonnet: Petrarchan Sonnet
 - 8.8.1 Shakespearean Sonnet
- 8.9 Elegy
- 8.10 Type of Odes
- 8.11 I Footnotes

8.0 OBJECTIVES

This Unit will give you a better understanding of Poetry as you will find annotations on the poets and their works discussed in the Unit 3.

8.1 STUDY GUIDE

In this unit the life-sketches of poets like Wordsworth, John Donne, Walt Whitman will enable you to comprehend the poems these poets discussed in the unit.

A short note on Free Verse in unit 8.4 will give you a concept of a new type of poetic structure. The footnotes in unit 8.11 will further increase your knowledge of structural divisions and fineness in a poem.

8.2 ADDITIONAL NOTES ON CERTAIN POEMS

PAGE-3

A preliminary introduction of the poet, period and his works, William Wordsworth's **My Heart Leaps Up When I Behold.**

William Wordsworth (1770-1850) was an eighteenth century poet and was educated in Cambridge. He is widely known as a Romantic poet because of the many poems he wrote about Nature. However, along with an external appreciation of nature. Wordsworth's poems have a deeper philosophy which unites the Natural and the human worlds with the Spiritual World.

Wordsworth was initially attracted by the revolutionary spirit of the French Revolution of 1789, where the oppressed French people cried out for Liberty, Equality and Fraternity, with the fall of the monarchy in 1789, however, there began a Reign of Terror in France, Characterised by anarchy and mass slaughter. Hence, what promised to bring liberation, brought misery along with it. This, along with the war that Britain declared over France, disappointed Wordsworth and other men of letters in England. Wordsworth was confused at the turn of the vents and questioned his own beliefs. The spiritual dilemma that Wordsworth faced is well-recorded in his autobiographical poem **The prelude Or Growth of a Poet's Mind** (1800)

Wordsworth turned to Nature and found in great joy and a harmonious spirit which he thought united all living beings. In an anthology called **The lyrical Ballads**, published with Samuel T. Coleridge in 1798, Wordsworth celebrated the spirit.

The lyric **My Heart Leaps Up When I Behold** composed in 1802, lauds the appreciation of a rainbow, which becomes a symbol of the natural world around us. The rainbow was appreciated in the poet's childhood, is appreciated new in his youth, and promises to be appreciated in the same vein of childlike innocence, in his maturer old age.

8.3 MAC FLECKNOE

Discussion of John Dryden's **Mac Flecknoe** (1682) **Please refer the footnotes** for a discussion on mock-heroic and satire.

Mac Flecknoe (1682) is a personal satire directed at the poet Thomas Shadwell. The personal satire has all the characteristics of the comic and the mock-heroic, with the pompous crowning of Shadwell, a prince among poetasters, by Flecknoe as an heir worthy of himself.

There is also a political undertone in the satire. Shadwell, the hero is also a Whig. In this connection, one might recall the feud between the Whigs and Tories regarding the succession of the Duke of York, the Catholic brother of King Charles II, to the throne in 1680. While the Tories were the supporters of the King and the Duke of York, the Whigs were opposed to the succession

of the Duke of York to the English throne. It is believed that king Charles II sought the help of Dryden in this connection, and shortly afterwards, *The Absalom and Achitophel*, a political satire was written.

The identity of Shadwell as a Whig is also ridiculed by Dryden, who is a Tory, in *Mac Flecknoe*. Hence, there is political satire mixed with personal satire.

8.4 WALT WHITMEN

A discussion on Walt Whitman in connection with free verse.

Walt Whitman (1819-1892) was an American poet whose greatest work was the *Leaves of Grass* (1855). Walt Whitman was the first poet in history to use the full possibilities of **free verse**, which consists of unrhymed lines without any rhyme scheme. The above example from Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* illustrates this.

Regardless of the unconventional verification, there has always been a compatibility between the form and its themes in Whitman's poems. Also, irrespective of the pattern of verification there is in Whitman's poems an abundance of various figures of speech.

8.5 OSCAR WILDE (1856-1900)

A discussion on Oscar Wilde and the poetic prose he uses in the given example:

Oscar Wilde was born on 15th October, 1856 in Ireland and was educated in Oxford, where he imbibed the influence of John Ruskin and Walter Pater, both distinguished writers of non-fictional prose in the Victorian Period. Wilde travelled extensively in Italy and Greece. He was, in many ways, a leader of the Aesthetic School of the Victorian Period, which was characterised by the worship of beauty.

Oscar Wilde distinguished himself equally in writing plays, short stories as well as poetry. The year 1888 marked the beginning of a period of progressive literary activity which continued uninterrupted till 1895. In this year (1895), Wilde was arrested and sentenced to two years' imprisonment on 27th May, as he lost a libel suit against the Marquess of Queensbury. He was released from the prison on 19th May 1897 and shortly afterwards, he left for Paris, where he lived until he died on 30th November 1900, on contracting cerebral meningitis.

The picture of Dorian Gary (1891) (a novel). **The Importance of Being Earnest** (1895) (a play) and **A House of pomegranates** (1891) (an anthology of stories) are important works.

The following excerpt is from the short story **The Fisherman and His Soul** published for the first time in 1891 in the anthology **A House of Pomegranates**. Other well-known stories contained in this anthology are, **The Young King, The Birthday of the Infanta and The star child**.

The Fisherman and His Soul is a story about a young fisherman who falls in love with a mermaid after hearing her singing. The extent of the fisherman's love for the mermaid is so great that he even parts with his soul to win the mermaid's love.

The following paragraph from the story describes the mermaid as she is seen for the first time by the young fisherman. Wilde describes the mermaid by employing successive metaphors or implicit comparisons between the mermaid's features and objects of exquisite beauty. Thus, the mermaid's hair is comparable to a "wet fleece of gold", her fair body is comparable to white ivory and so on, and so forth. The metaphors give us a more vivid picture of the mermaid. The description of the mermaid bears signs of exquisite beauty, which pervades through the entire story which tells us an amusing tale of how love and beauty triumph all adversities.

The poetic quality of this prose piece lies not only in the metaphors but also in the evocation of beautiful feelings.

8.6 BALLADS : THE UNQUIET GRAVE

The Unquiet Grave

A Paraphrase:

The above ballad describes how on a windy day, a young man promises to mourn for his beloved who has recently died. He promises to dutifully mourn beside her grave, for a year and a day.

At the end of the said period, the grave seems to be disturbed by the presence of the young man. It questions his identity and in answer, the young man introduces himself as the mournful lover who craves for one little kiss from his beloved's cold lips. With a touch of humour, the dead beloved replies that her breath bears strong, pungent and earthy odour which would most definitely prove uncomfortable for the young man and might in turn hasten his own death, if the kiss is offered. She further adds that all things, from the finest flower to the hearts of men are subject to decay. The

young man, her lover, must therefore wait for his appointed hour when God himself would call him away from the mortal world and unite him with the dead. Till then, he must be satisfied with his life on earth.

It is interesting to note that the ballad is based on the popular belief that excessive mourning disturbs the dead in their graves. The poem gives voice to this tradition. Ref. KEY to the poem.

8.7 LOVE LYRIC OF JOHN DONNE

A short introduction on John Donne and his poetry, along with a paraphrase of the given love lyric **Sweetest love, I do not go**.

John Donne (1572-1631) was an Elizabethan poet who was born and bred a Roman Catholic. However, in 1598, he renounced Roman Catholicism to become a Protestant and a secretary to the Lord Keeper Sir Thomas Egerton. He took Holy Orders in January 1615. In 1621 he became the Dean of St. Paul's and remained so, till the time of his death.

Donne is generally regarded as the father of the "metaphysical school" of poetry which flourished in the beginning of the seventeenth century. John Dryden wrote pejoratively about John Donne in 1693 saying that "he affects the metaphysics", that is, he emulates the metaphysical or abstruse philosophical realities of the universe beyond the physical, real and phenomena world. John Dryden was, of course, using the epithet to comment upon the complex metaphors and extended comparisons that Donne used in his love poems (later to be published as **Songs and Sonnets** in 1633). In these poems, Donne instituted elaborate and learned comparisons between the lovers' minds and certain intellectual and scientific concepts. For instance, the two lovers are compared to the two arms of a compass in **A Valediction forbidding mourning**. The lady is the fixed arm while the lover is the rotator) one — one who has to go on various errands. Just as the fixed arm of a compass leans forward while a circle is drawn, the lady — love eagerly awaits the arrival of her lover while he is abroad, but, becomes firmer when the circle is complete and the lover comes hence to her.

Such elaborate comparisons abound in the poems of John Donne. Their purpose is never to boast of the poet's learning, but to impress the reader with the ingenuity of the comparison. The reader is thus compelled to exercise his intelligence through his active participation in the poet's sentiments.

The above love poem "Sweetest love, I do not go" is devoid of such

complex metaphors, but is impressive in the depth and tenderness of the lover's sentiments.

The lover here is taking leave of his beloved. He, however, assures her that he is going away not because he is tired of her, or that he has found another love, but having realised that he must die once, he takes his leave now, as if to get his beloved accustomed to his absence. Just as the sun rises and sets everyday without variation, the lover hopes that he, too, would come back.

He reflects on the general situation of man when he is unable to prolong the hours of joy. On the other hand, all his strength put together, does not help man alleviate his hours of sorrow. They still overwhelm him.

The beloved's tears and sighs waste away the lover too, for he is but an extension of the beloved's self. The lover forbids her to mourn, for even if destiny fulfils her worst fears, that is, even if Death does triumph over Life, the love between them need not suffer. Love does not necessarily attain permanence over any length of time, it becomes everlasting while it lasts, even if it does for a moment. It then binds the lovers for ever in everlasting memory.

The above poem may be described as conversational, where we might suppose the silent presence of the beloved, who with her responses seems to urge the lover, as it were. The beloved over here, is a human entity, with human fears and apprehensions, unlike the conventional mistresses of Donne's contemporary period, who were worshipped as the pinnacle of perfection and the paragon of virtue by their fawning lovers.

8.8 SONNET : PETRARCHAN SONNET

A note introducing Sir Thomas Wyatt and a summary of the sonnet **My Galley Charged with Forgetfulness**.

Sir Thomas Wyatt (1503-1552) - Born in 1503, Sir Thomas Wyatt was educated in Cambridge. In 1525, he was in attendance at the court of King Henry VIII, where he soon distinguished himself as a poet. While he was at the court, he was sent on many diplomatic missions. In 1537, he was sent as an ambassador to the Spanish Court, from where he went to Rome. He returned from Rome with a strong liking for the poetry of Francis Petrarch, the Italian poet, and wished to fashion English verse on the model of the Italians. Sir Thomas Wyatt shares the honour of founding English lyrical

poetry, particularly the sonnet, with his younger friend the Earl of Surrey. The ninety-six poems by Sir Thomas Wyatt were published in **The Tottel's Miscellany** in 1557.

The sonnet **My Galley Charged with Forgetfulness** is **Petrarchan**, although it ends with the English couplet-ending. It employs the fundamental Petrarchan metaphor of a lover's soul being compared to a ship which has lost its way in the storm-tossed ocean. The lover, being constantly buffeted by the blows of his fair-cruel mistress wanders without any specific destination just as a directionless ship wanders between rock and rock. The storm mentioned here, is the storm of passion that arises within the soul of the lover. The rain of tears causes further hindrance of his movement, which becomes increasingly erroneous. He plays that the stars which brought him to this hopeless state of helplessness and unreason, be hidden.

A dominant note of the Petrarchan sonnet is the self-abnegation of the lover and the idolization of the mistress. This sonnet describes the hopelessness of a lover in abnegated anguish who is totally outwitted by the pangs of a passionate love.

8.8.1 Shakespearian Sonnet

An Introductory Note and a Paraphrase

William Shakespeare (1564-1616) — Apart from the plays, William Shakespeare is also credited to have written the poems **Venus and Adonis**, **The Rape of Lucrece**.

and about a hundred and fifty-four sonnets, all of which were completed before 1598. We find mention of all these works in Francis Meres' **Parnassus Tamia**, which was produced in 1598. In his book, Francis Meres refers to the Sonnets as the "sugared Sonnets among his [Shakespeare's] private friends," which shows that these sonnets were written for the private enjoyment of a few and not for the reading public at large. Shakespeare's sonnets were most probably written for a young male friend and a certain elusive 'dark lady'. The identity of the young friend has not been ascertained, although the sonnets were dedicated to a certain Mr. W.H. (Whose identity has been merely suggested, but not ascertained) in the first edition of the Sonnets published by Thomas Thorpe in 1609. The first 126 sonnets are addressed to this young friend while the remaining are addressed to the 'dark lady' whose identity is, once again, not known.

The above sonnet is the Sonnet XVIII written in three quatrains and a concluding couplet, with the rhyme-scheme.

abab cdcd efef gg

In this sonnet the poet marvels at the beauty of his young friend. He wonders whether he should compare him to a bright summer's day, but realizes that his friend surpasses the beauty of summer. While summer is brief and blemished with rough winds and the scorching sun, the beauty of the friend is unblemished, pure and chaste. All things are subject to change and mutability, but none can mar the friend's beauty, which to preserve, is the poet's sole purpose. He promises to give everlasting life to the friend's beauty through his verses "lines", which he believes would withstand Time and Mutability, unlike Life and Beauty itself which are subject to decay.

The first seventeen sonnets of the series urges the friend to marry and have children so that his beauty may be propagated through a line of descent. From sonnet eighteen onwards Shakespeare shifts his stance towards the propagation of beauty through his own verses.

Shakespeare's love for the young friend is the love of an elderly man for a younger man and has often been identified with homosexual love, by a school of critics. The issue is, however, debatable and one should not arrive at any definite conclusion.

8.9 ELEGY

An introductory note on **To the Merory of Mr. Oldham** (1684)

The Elegy *To the Momery of Mr. Oldham* (1684) by John Dryden commemorates the death of John Oldham (1653-1683) who died prematurely at the age of thirty. John Oldham was a satirist with a strong and harsh tongue much similar to the Roman satirist Juvenal. He had written several satires in imitation of the classical satirists Horrace and Juvenal and had also written original satires such as **Satires on the Jesuits, A satyr upon a Woman** and others.

Dryden seems to have developed a strong liking for this young satirist and praises him in the above poem, for learning to hate strongly live himself. He wonders what literary genius would have blossomed had Oldham lived. Perhaps, he would have mastered the art of English satire. He says that Oldham's genius manifested itself in an early age and once again hails him as a praiseworthy poet.

8.10 TYPES OF ODES

Irregular Ode—An introductory note on **The Ode on Intimations of Immortality**

The **Ode in Intimations of Immortality** by William Wordsworth was published in 1806, although it was begun much earlier. Wordsworth's note on the composition of the poem is interesting. "This was composed during my residence at Town-end, Grassmere Two years at least passed between the writing of the first four stanzas and the remaining past."

The Ode is an irregular ode where the length of all stanzas are unequal and they all follow a different rhyme-scheme.

The poem begins on a note of loss. The poet recollects that there was a time in the past, probably in his early childhood, when he could discern a particular glow, a heavenly light surrounding all material objects. Then, it seemed that the meadows, the grove, the stream and all other material and natural objects were encased in this light. Now, however, when he has acquired age and maturity, that glow and dream-like aure seems to have disappeared and everything appears in the familiar of the real world.

The sense of loss spills over in the next stanza. The rainbow has its splendour, the rose blooms in its glory and the moon shines in all its brightness. The sunshine too, is glorious, yet, the heavenly glory which surrounded them before, seems to be missing.

Wordsworth believes in the divine quality of childhood. The child being closer to the Heavenly Father, seems to discern a heavenly glow around all objects which seems to disappear with the child's coming of age. The Ode celebrates this divine quality of childhood, which, Wordsworth believes, gives eternal life to a human being.

8.11 FOOT NOTES

1. **Tropes**—Expressions in which there is a change from the direct literal meaning to something deeper, are called tropes in poetry. The expression, "I will drink life to the lees" (from Alfred Tennyson's **Ulysses**) is a trope called **metaphor**, where a comparison between life and a full tumbler is suggested. Just as one drinks the contents of the tumbler, till the last dregs, Ulysses wishes to live life to the full. The literal meaning of 'drinking life' is both impossible and meaningless..A

detailed discussion of tropes is found in the section on **Figurative Language**, under **The language of Poetry**.

2. **Figures of speech**—These are expressions in which there is a change in the pattern of words or their grammatical order, to bring about some additional poetic effect. The expression **idly busy** is a figure of speech called oxymoron, where the opposites 'idle' and 'busy*' are placed together for greater effect. A detailed discussion of figures of speech is found in the section on **Figurative Language**, under **The Language of Poetry**.
3. **Lyric**—A short, subjective and rhythmic poem.
4. **Iambic tetrameter**—A type of rhythm in which the vowel sounds are alternately stressed, beginning with an unstressed sound. The line contains four such stresses. A detailed discussion on iambic tetrameter is found in the section on **Meter**, under **The Language of poetry**.
5. **Anaphora**—This is a figure of speech in which there is a repetition of word or phrases in the beginning of several consecutive lines. An example of **anaphora** is found in the repetition of the word So in the above poem.
6. **Epigram**—This is also a figure of speech in which an apparently shocking statement hides a deeper truth within it. The statement "The Child is father of the Man", is apparently shocking as a child cannot literally become the father of a man, but it appears to be meaningful when we realise, that the child will father men in future. It is also true that a childlike innocence in some is in many ways superior to men without it. More examples of Epigrams are to be found under **Figures of Speech** in **The Language of poetry**.
7. **Allegory**—An allegory is a fictional narrative in which one set of events actually signify another. An allegory can be moral, political or religious Edmund Spenser's **Faerie Queene** is an allegory.
8. **Mock-heroic**—A mock-heroic poem makes use of the elaborate style of an epic for a comparatively trivial or unimportant subject. John Dryden's **Mac Fleckone** uses the serious style of an epic only to ridicule the poet Thomas Shadwell. The comparison between the Roman Emperor Augustus and the poet Richard Flecknoe in the Opening lines, elevate the poet to the level of Augustus only to ridicule him. While Augustus

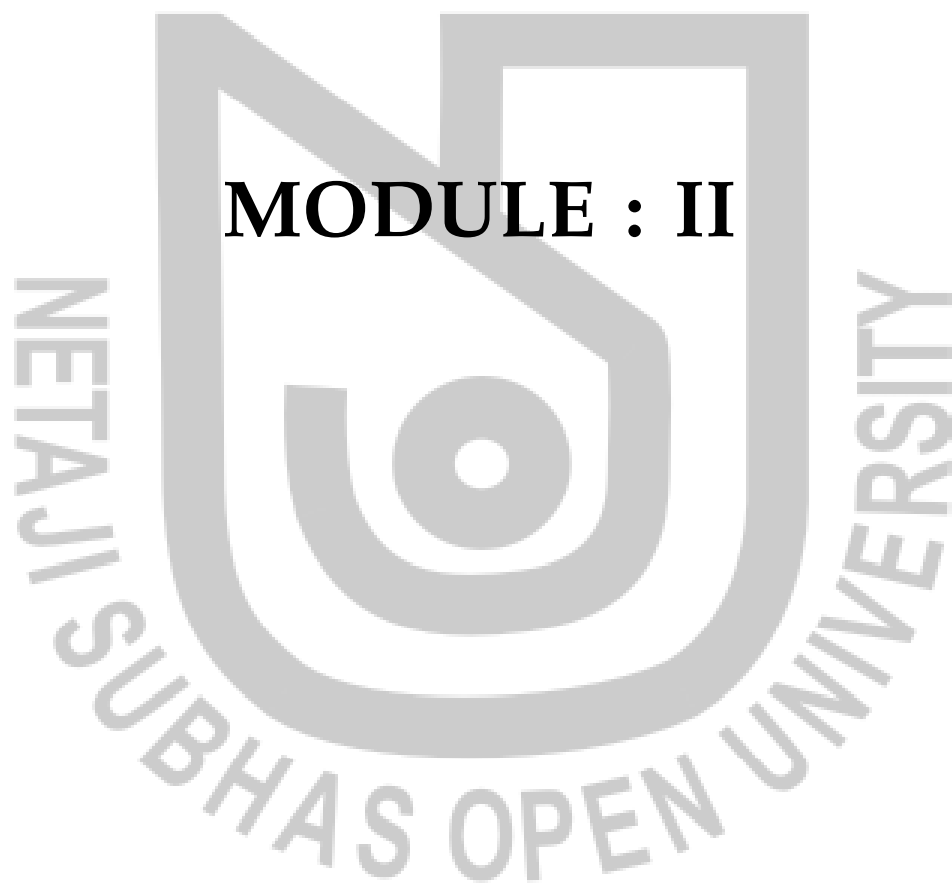
was the ruler of the great Roman Empire, Richard Fleckroe is, as Dryden says, the ruler of the realm of **Nonsense**. Hence, there is mockery, along with the apparent seriousness is style.

9. **Satire**—A Satire is a form of literature used to degrade a person or a whole body of people. It does so, by evoking scorn, contempt and laughter. Dryden's **Mac Flecknoe** is a satire directed towards Thomas Sheddells.
10. **Marlon Brando**—(1924-)—American stage and motion picture actor who shot into fame as Stanley Kowalski in the film version of Tennessee William's famous play **A Streetcar Named Desire** (1974), Since then, he had acted in many films, through a long career. He received the Oscar for **On the Waterfront** (1954) and refused the same for **The Godfather** (1972), where he played the title character.

The Wild One (1954) enhanced his reputation as actor and as a rebel in his personal life. The young generation of the fifties and sixties was so greatly influenced by his acting, his costumes and his mannerisms, that they worshipped him as their rebel-hero.

11. **Latinisms**—The use of Latin words, or words derived from Latin, which are polysyllabic, flowery and ornamental. Examples-**Certitude** (for **certainty**), **Juvenile** (often used in matters related to youth), **edify** (used by spenser in the concrete sense of 'building up') are some of the examples.
12. **Iambic Pentameter**—A type of rhythm in which the vowel sounds are alternately stressed, beginning with an unstressed sound. The line contains five such stresses. A detailed discussion of iambic pentameter will be found in the section on **Meter**. A detailed discussion of **Blank verse** will be found under the types of **Stanzas** in **The Language of Poetry**.

Anasuya Ghosh



MODULE : II

MODULE - II : POETRY OF THE RENAISSANCE AND OF THE ENLIGHTENMENT

UNIT 9 Reading Renaissance Poetry

Structure

- 9.0 Objectives
- 9.1 Study Guide
- 9.2 Reading poetry of two different ages : TWO TEXTS
- 9.3 A Comparative Study
- 9.4 Comprehension Exercises

9.0 OBJECTIVES

This Unit introduces you to the Renaissance Poetry through a comparison between a romantic poem of Wordsworth and a sonnet, a classical form, of Shakespeare. Renaissance Poetry was written against a particular socio-literary setting. A knowledge of such a setting is essential for understanding Renaissance Poetry.

9.1 STUDY GUIDE

In this Unit you will find that a lyric is generally personal and intimate whereas a sonnet, as practised by Shakespeare, is impersonal. This Unit will enable you to discern the difference between a romantic poem and a renaissance poem from linguistic point of view.

9.2 READING POETRY OF TWO DIFFERENT STAGES : TWO TEXTS

Read the two poems given below :

- {1} She dwelt among untrodden ways
Besides the springs of Dove

A Maid whom there were none to praise
And very few to love.

A violet by a mossy stone
Half hidden from the eye!
- Fair as a star, when only one
Is shining in the sky.
She lived unknown, and few could know
When Lucy ceased to be;
But she is in her grave, and, oh,
The different to me!

{2} Since brass, nor stone, nor earth, nor boundless sea
But sad mortality o'ersways their power
How with this rage shall beauty hold a plea,
Whose action is no stronger than a flower?

Oh how shall summer's honey breath hold out
Against the wrackful seige of battering days,
When rocks impregnable are not so stout
Nor gates of steel so strong but time decays?

Oh fearful meditation ! where, alack,
Shall Time's best jewel from Time's chest lie hid?
Or what strong hand can hold his swift foot back?
Or who his spoil of beauty can forbid?

Oh none, unless this miracle have might -
That in black ink my love may still shine bright.

9.3 A COMPARATIVE STUDY

The first of these poems is by the English Romantic poet William Wordsworth. It was written around 1799, and is one of a group usually referred to as the 'Lucy poems'. The second is a sonnet by William Shakespeare, written perhaps some time around the end of the 16th century and first published in 1609. Nearly 200 years separate the second from the first, and the writing of poetry has changed in many ways. Modern readers are in many ways more accustomed to reading the kind of poetry of which Wordsworth's poem is a good example. It is direct and simple, and appears to be related to personal experience: the poet's description of the girl and

his frank confession of sorrow at her death. The first impression of reading the Shakespearean sonnet is considerably different. There is nothing of the intimacy of the poem by Wordsworth : the poet is talking about general themes such as time, beauty and poetic power. A close examination of the poem would show allusions to earlier texts and the careful use of figures of speech.

One of the main differences between the two poems could be thought to be simply in terms of 'difficulty'. Renaissance poetry, separated so far from us in time is often thought to require special skills of reading, as also the training to recognize the ways the poems reach back to earlier poetic traditions. To leave the question here, however, would be a mistake, for a close study of Wordsworth's poetry reveals difficulties of a different kind, relating for instance to the kind of experience that is sought to be conveyed. What is the relationship of the poet with the girl? What are the functions of the comparisons with natural objects and processes? In a sense, reading *all* poetry requires some kind of discipline. There is also no doubt that a knowledge of the poet and his times, a familiarity with the main currents of his poetry, enriches our understanding and appreciation of poetry, whether it be ancient or modern.

9.4 COMPREHENSION EXERCISES

1. Who is the writer of the first poem? Select the literary type of the poem with justifications : (a) an elegy (b) a sonnet (c) lyric (d) ode.
2. To which group of Wordsworthian poems does it 'belong'?
3. How is the poem by Shakespeare different from the poem by Wordsworth?

UNIT 10 The Poetic Process : Poem-Poet- Audience-World

Structure

- 10.0 Objectives**
- 10.1 Study Guide**
- 10.2 M.H. Abrams's Scheme for Understanding Poetry**
- 10.3 The World : The Subject-matter of Poets**
- 10.4 Language and History : Two Tools of Understanding Poetry**
 - 10.4.1 The Importance of Language**
 - 10.4.2 History : Its Relation to Poetry**
- 10.5 Comprehension Exercise**

10.0 OBJECTIVES

This Unit deals with a useful scheme for understanding the nature of poetry. You will know that there is a poetic process working in the composition of a poem, short or long. You will further know that the poet has an audience in his mind and the nexus or connection between the poet and his audience is an important feature in literature.

10.1 STUDY GUIDE

In Unit 10.2 you will read about the four important elements in the poetic process. The Unit 10.3 will give you the concept that a poet deals with his or her perception of reality. The Unit 10.4 will enable you to comprehend the importance of Language and History as two tools of understanding poetry.

10.2 M. H. ABRAMS'S SCHEME FOR UNDERSTANDING POETRY

The North American critic M. H. Abrams provides in his book *THE MIRROR AND THE LAMP* a useful scheme for understanding the various theories about the nature of poetry. We may adapt it to our needs here to summarize a few things about the poetic process. Abrams distinguishes four major elements in theories of how poetry works : first of all there is a *poem*,

the work of art itself, which forms the object of our study. It may be long or short, a few words or a long epic. Secondly, there is a *poet*, a creator who writes the poem. This creator may be historically identifiable, like Wordsworth of Shakespeare or Rabindranath; or anonymous, as we find in the case of much folk poetry and traditional writing. One might even think of a process of successive revisions through which a poem has reached the form in which we now know it. A good example would be a traditional epic like the *Ramayana* or the *Mahabharata* which, as we read it now, seems to be composed over a long period of time, with countless additions and accretions. Thirdly, there is an audience for which the poem is written. This notion needs a little thought. The audience may be one with the poet has contact, an audience which he or she can identify or address; but equally, the audience may be an unseen one, or one in the future. Some poets claim to write only for themselves. But the point to be noted is that the act of poetic creation assumes a reader or hearer for whom the work is composed.

10.3 THE WORLD : THE SUBJECT-MATTER OF POETS

Finally, Abrams says, we must think of something that we might call the *world* or the *universe* or *reality*. That is what the poets write about. A little reflection tells us that this nothing changes over time. Obviously, changes occur in what constitutes the subject-matter of poetry. Ancient poets wrote about heroes, gods and goddesses. Shakespeare writes about time and beauty: Wordsworth about a girl's death. But the question is not really one of the choices of subject-matter but about what we mean by the *real*. This may be rather difficult to grasp fully at this stage, but one might remember that for some people the 'real' is what we can see and touch: the table in front of me is real. For the epic poet, on the other hand, the gods and goddesses may be more 'real' than anything else; for yet others, imaginative truth constitutes 'reality'.

10.4 LANGUAGE AND HISTORY : TWO TOOLS OF UNDERSTANDING POETRY

10.4.1 The Importance of Language

Abrams' identification of four basic notions in the poetic process provides with a useful tool for understanding how poetry operates. Two others

may also be considered in this connection. The first of these is *language*. All poems are linguistic entities; poets use the linguistic resources at their command to create structures which we call poetry. In doing so they are required to pay great attention to both the *choice of words* and the organization of words through grammar, syntax, rhetoric and so on. It may be said tentatively that poetry and prose organize linguistic resources in different ways; this is something we almost instinctively realize when we are able to distinguish between a prose piece and a poem.

10.4.2 History : Its Relation to Poetry

Finally, all poems—like other forms of human activity—are conducted in *history*. Poets write at particular historical junctures, and their works have to be understood in terms of the historical conditions of their times. Romantic poetry—as much as **that of** the Renaissance—draws upon themes and conventions that are shaped by the general currents of thought of the period.

10.5 COMPREHENSION EXERCISE

1. What are the major elements in the scheme for understanding poetry?
2. How is Shakespearean theme different from that of
(a) the ancient poets, and that of (b) a romantic?
(Refer to Unit 2.2)
3. What are the two tools of understanding poetry?
4. “All poems are linguistic entities.”—Elucidate.
5. Is a knowledge of contemporary history needed for understanding poetry of a particular age?

UNIT 11 The English Renaissance Poetry

Structure

- 11.1 The Period
- 11.2 Structure of the Renaissance Poetry
 - 11.2.1 Text: Wyatt, '*Whoso list to hunt I know where is an hind*'
 - 11.2.2 Discussion on the poet
 - 11.2.3 Glossary
 - 11.2.4 Discussion on the text
- 11.3 Comprehension Exercises

11.1 THE PERIOD

The subject of our study is the ways of reading the poetry of the English Renaissance. The period is itself a long and diverse one, and the examples that we shall discuss range from the reign of Henry VIII to the early decades of the Resroration era. It is not likely that the themes and conventions used in poetry will remain the same over a period of a hundred years and more. In fact, when we know more about this period, we shall come to know of the different labels used to describe and differentiate literary productions : 'Petrarchan', 'Spenserian', 'Metaphysical' are terms commonly used in histories of literature. The best way of trying to understand what these terms are all about is to start to read some of the poetry itself.

11.2 STRUCTURE OF THE RENAISSANCE POETRY

Renaissance poetry, in a general way, calls attention to the ways in which the text is structured. This is quite easy to understand, and so we might start by looking at these aspects of the poetry. The poem by Shakespeare that we have just read is in the form of a *sonnet*. The form, which is of fourteen lines, is in a particular rhyming sequence. In our example there are three groups of four lines each, followed by one of two lines. A group of four lines is called a *quartrain** while a group of two is called a *couplet*. The usual way of remembering rhymeschemes in poetry is by designating a letter of the alphabet to the rhyming word at the end of each line. Thus 'sea' rhymes with 'plea' 'power' with 'flower' : the way we would remember it is by

calling the first rhyme A and **the** second B. We thus have for the first four lines a scheme which looks like this : **ABAB**. In the next group of four lines we have a different set of rhymes: 'out* / 'stout* and 'days' / *decays\ which we could describe as CDCD. Thus the rhyme scheme of the whole poem would be as follows : ABAB CDCD EFEF GG. All sonnets are of fourteen lines; not all of them have the same rhyming scheme. Broadly one distinguishes between the 'Shakespearean' sonnet with three quatrains and a couplet and the 'Italian' or 'Petrarchan' form which is divided first of all into a group of eight and a group of six : these may be further subdivided, the eight-line group (or *octave*) into two groups of four and the six-line group (or *sestet*) into groups of three or two. Let us look at a Petrarchan sonnet. Here there are two quatrains (arranged ABBA ABBA) and a sestet (intricately rhyming CDD CEE* the 9th and 12th line rhyming, leaving two couplet-like structures (10/11 and 13/14).

11.2.1 Text: Wyatt, *'Whoso list to hunt, I know where is an hind'*

WHOSO list to hunt, I know where is an hind,
 But as for me, *helas*, I may no more.
 The vain travail hath wearied me so sore,
 I am of them that farthest come behind.
 Yet may I by no means my wearied mind
 Draw from the Deer, but as she fleeth afore
 Fainting I follow. I leave off therefore,
 Since in a net I seek to hold the wind.
 Who list her hunt (I put him out of doubt)
 As well as I may spend his time in vain.
 And graven with diamonds in letters plain
 There is written her fair neck round about:
 'Noli me tangere, for Caesar's I am,
 And wild for to hold, though I seem tame.'

11.2.2 A Discussion on the poet: Wyatt

This poem was written by Sir Thomas Wyatt (1503-42), one of the earliest English poets who may be called a 'Renaissance' writer. He served in the Continent as a diplomat under Henry VII and came under influence of new poetic styles. This sonnet is roughly modelled on a sonnet by the Italian poet Francesco Petrarca, better known in England as Petrarch (1304-1374). As we see, there are nearly two centuries between Petrarch and Wyatt: by the time

the influence of Italian poetry started coming to England, the great achievements of the Italian Renaissance were already complete. In a sense England was a little isolated from the mainstream of European poetry.

Wyatt, and his contemporary, Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey (1517?—47), first adapted Petrarchan styles into English poetry, and their work became widely popular through the mid-century anthology *Songs and Sonnets* (1557), published by Richard Tottel (better known as *Toitell's Miscellany*). At the time when Wyatt and Surrey wrote their poetry, in the reign of Henry VIII, the influence of Petrarch was the single most important one in secular lyric poetry all over Western Europe. Petrarch revolutionized the form of the sonnet which was in vogue from the thirteenth century among Italian poets. The great Italian poet Dante Alighieri, who is best known for *The Divine Comedy*, also wrote a sequence of sonnets joined by a prose commentary called *La Vita Nuova* (The New Life).

Petrarch's own lyrics (which include many poems in verse forms other than the sonnet too) are among the greatest achievements of early Renaissance culture. A recurrent theme in his poetry is his love for a woman who is called Laura; but the real focus of the poetry is the powerful characterization of the figure of the lover himself, who experiences bewilderment, sorrow and loss as well as joy and hope. Laura at all time stands for beauty, virtue and grace, and the poet's love for her is seen as being potentially uplifting and spiritual. At the same time the lover continually experiences feelings of unworthiness and confusion as he recognizes his inability to seek after perfection.

As we have learnt, Petrarch's influence on his successors was very strong, but as the style became popular and widely practised, it suffered from conventionality and sentimentality. Wyatt, reading Petrarch after nearly two centuries, adapts him in a very individual way. In this poem, which is somewhat loosely modelled on poem no. 190 in Petrarch's collection called the *Rime Sparse*, ('Scattered Rhymes') there is a tone of sombre melancholy and a strength of utterance that is often missing, in many of Petrarch's continental followers.

11.2.3 Glossary

Read the poem again. Some of the words and expressions are a little unfamiliar, but, once they are explained to us the poem is not difficult to follow. The notes given below are arranged by line number.

1. Whoso : whosoever, whoever.

1. list: wishes, likes.
1. hind : deer.
2. helas : an exclamation of sorrow or exhaustion.
3. travail: effort, labour.
4. I am of them : I belong to those people (that follow farthest behind).
6. fleeth afore : escaps ahead, goes ahead.
7. leave off: stop (trying to capture the deer).
13. Noli me tangere : "Do not touch me" (Lat.); in the Latin Bible, Christ says these words to Mary Magdalene (John 20:17).
These words, were supposed to have been written on collars on the necks of Caesar's deer in ancient Rome.
14. Caesar's I am : I belong to Caesar : perhaps alluding to another Biblical statement : 'Render therefore unto Caesar's the things which are Caesar's (Matthew 22:21)

11.2.4 Discussion of the Text

Let us now look at the poem again. The poet speaks of his long pursuit of a deer. The deer here clearly stands for the woman the poet loves, but has not been able to win the love of. The poem thus starts with a comparison between love for a woman and the hunting of deer. The poet says that he will be able to tell other people where to find the deer, should they wish to join in the hunt, but he has become tired with this fruitless pursuit. He has fallen far behind the other hunters, but he is unable to keep his mind away from it. We have, in the poem, the feeling that the poet is trying to reason himself out of this self-imposed task. Trying to capture the deer, he says, is like trying to catch the wind in a net.

Characteristically in the 'Italian' sonnet there is a subtle change between the octave and the sestet (italians called this change the *volta*). In Wyatt's poem, the deer is now no longer the unattainable and exhausting object of the chase, but something which cannot be touched : the mention of 'Caesar' gives the sense of secular power, that the 'hind' is protected by law. But the whole idea is placed in a Biblical context too, so the feeling that the deer is something sacred is as strongly present in the end of the poem. In Petrarch's version the deer is Laura, and the mention of Caesar seems to suggest that Laura's love is directed towards God, not towards a human being. The collar of diamonds (in Petrarch it is studded with both diamonds and topazes) is

a symbol of constancy. At the end of the poem the beloved appears to be distant and unattainable : it seems 'tame' but is actually a creature of the wild.

11.3 COMPREHENSION EXERCISES

1. What is the structure of a Shakespearean sonnet? (Refer to Unit 11.2)
2. Do all sonnets have the same rhyme-scheme? How is the Petrarchan sonnet different from the English or Shakespearean sonnet?
(Refer to Unit 11.2)
3. Who among the English poets introduced the Petrarchan styles in sonnet-writing ? (Refer to Unit 11.2.2)
4. Write short notes on :
 - (a) Petrarch
 - (b) Tottel's Miscellany

UNIT 12 Some Characteristics of the Renaissance Poetry

Structure

- 12.1 Rhetoric
- 12.2 Philip Sidney
 - 12.2.1 Text: *Loving in truth and fame in verse my love to show.....*
 - 12.2.2 The Source
 - 12.2.3 The Structure
 - 12.2.4 Glossary
 - 12.2.5 Discussion
- 12.3 Comprehension Exercises

12.1 RHETORIC

Renaissance poetry typically makes use of figures of speech. For many readers this is one of the major stumbling blocks in reading, for 'rhetoric' is regarded with some suspicion, being related, on the one hand, with a certain kind of floridity and ornateness of style, and, on the other, with insincerity. It is only after the Romantic period that rhetoric has fallen into such disfavour : nevertheless, a glance at the second stanza of Wordsworth's lyric Module II Unit 1 -2 goes to show that he too is using two such figures : *metaphor* ("A violet by a mossy stone') and *simile* ('Fair as a flower'). The art of rhetoric was studied from ancient times in Europe, and though its principal field of application was the art of *oratory* or public speaking, its relevance to the study of literature was also much discussed. Renaissance scholars showed great interest in the study of classical writers on rhetoric, such as Quintilian and Cicero (though the influence of the latter was much deeper than just a consideration of rhetorical rules) and a thorough knowledge was thought to be an integral part of the poet's craft.

Of course, there is much simpler way of thinking about rhetoric altogether. All uses of language-written and spoken-are more or less structured and organized : basic levels of intelligibility are ensured by rules of grammar and syntax. Rhetoric studies the ways in which we organize language to make it more effective and attractive : as Sukanta Chaudhuri puts it, rhetoric is nothing but a systematization of the natural, untutored principles of effective

expression, (Anthology, p. 15). Of course, as Wyatt's poem, and indeed all the other examples of Renaissance included here will show, literary rhetoric is often more sustained and deliberate in its application.

One of the classes of rhetorical figures (or 'tropes') most commonly used is that of comparison. We may say 'Ranji't Singh was the lion of Punjab', where we really have in mind a comparison based on strength, courage, forcefulness of personality, or the like. Such a style of comparison is termed *metaphor*. A *simile*, on the other hand, is a comparison like 'He ran like a deer', the word *like* driving home the comparison (look once again at the examples from Wordsworth above). Wyatt uses a sustained metaphor as the basis of his poem, that between pursuit of the beloved and the *hunt*. Note that here the beloved is hardly mentioned (apart from the use of the pronoun 'she', which in fact could also refer to the deer). Nevertheless, the slightest knowledge of poem's tradition tells us that it is not one about hunting, but rather one about love.

Once this comparison is established, the subtle elaborations of the notion of hunting becomes clearer : the deer that is the object of the chase, the weary hunter lagging behind his fellows, the net being used to catch the deer, the use of history and legend in the comparison between the deer being hunted and Caesar's deer.

Note also the play on *sounds* : the use of *alliteration* in line 1 (hunt/hind) and line 7 (fainting/follow) and *assonance* in line 9 (ought/doubt; an earlier version spells the words owte/dowbte). Look up the meaning of alliteration and assonance in a dictionary if necessary.

12.2 PHILIP SIDNEY

Wyatt is, as we have seen, the earliest of the English followers of Petrarch. Let us now look at another poem : again, a sonnet. This is by Philip Sidney, and is the first poem in his sonnet-cycle *Astrophel and Stella*.

12.2.1 Text

{ } *Loving in truth, and fame in verse my love to show.....*
LOVING in truth, and fain in verse my love to show,"
That She, dear She, might take some pleasure of my pain,
Pleasure might cause her read, reading might make her know,
Knowledge might pity win, and pity grace obtain,
I sought fit words to paint the blackest face of woe;

Studying inventions fine, her wits to entertain.
 Oft turning others' leaves, to see if thence would flow
 Some fresh and fruitful showers upon my sun-burn'd brain
 But words came halting out, wanting Invention's stay;
 Invention, Nature's child, fled stepdame Study's blows;
 And others' feet still seem'd but strangers in my way.
 Thus- great with child to speak, and helpless in my throes,
 Biting my truant pen, beating myself for spite,
 'Fool', said my Muse to me, look in thy heart and write;

12.2.2 The Source

Petrarch's *Rime Sparse* records the many moods of the lover as he records his feelings about Laura. English poets often chose the form of the sonnet-cycle, a sequence of poems following the lover's fortunes in wooing his beloved. Among the most famous of these cycles are Sidney's *Astrophel and Stella*, Edmund Spenser's *Amoretti* and Shakespeare's *Sonnets*. There has been much speculation as to whether these sequences are some kind of autobiographical accounts. It seems best to avoid such discussion at the present time, and concentrate on the fact that the veily presentation of the idea of *love* in these sequences is carefully structured out of traditional material: understanding poetic convention and literary allusion are in fact more immediately helpful to us than trying to search out relationships between poetry and biography.

Philip Sidney (1554-86) is best remembered for his prose romance *Arcadia*, *Astrophel and Stella* and the critical essay *An Apology for Poetry*. *Astrophel and Stella*, a collection of 108 sonnets interspersed with 11 'songs' of varying metrical structure, tells of the love of Astrophel (the name means 'starlover') for Stella ('the star'). It was composed some-time around 1582 but published only after Sidney's death in 1591. In real life, Stella was Penelope Devereaux, who married Lord Rich in 1581. The poems trace a certain progression of Astrophel's wooing of Stella, but the emphasis is more on states of mind than on action.

12.2.3 The Structure

The introductory sonnet of the sequence, as W. A. Ringler observes in his edition of Sidney's poems, 'performs the double function of praising Stella as the ground of all poetic innovation and of providing a brief essay in the proper method of writing love poetry' (*Poems*, 458). The first visual

impression of this poem is that its lines are longer than the two examples we have seen earlier. Side by side with the use of rhetoric, Renaissance poetry also shows great subtlety and deliberation in its use of prosody, the metrical structuring of poetic language. Read the first line of Shakespeare's sonnet:

Since brass, nor stone, nor earth, nor boundless sea

Counting the syllables in the line we find that there are 10 in this line. When we read the line aloud, we find that a natural stress falls on the even syllables (2, 4, 6, 8, 10)

Since | brass, | nor | stone, | nor | earth, | nor | bound | less | sea

The line therefore resolves itself into combinations of unaccented and accented syllables; the particular pattern used in this line (and in most sonnets) is 5 groups of 2 syllables arranged so that the accent falls on the second syllable of each group. Such an organization of prosodic elements is called iambic pentameter: an iamb is the the name for such a group *ox.foot*. As there are five feet in each line it is called an iambic *pentameter*. Sidney is something of an innovator in using a six-feet (12 syllable line in this sonnet. This kind of line is often referred to as an 'alexandrine'.

12.2.4 Glossary

The following notes might help you to read the poem.

2. my pain ; this could mean either the pain which the lover experiences because of his unrequited love or the labour that he has put in the writing of poetry.
- 2-4. an example of the rhetorical figure *climax* or *gradatio*, the gradual building up of a statement (pleasure is followed by reading, reading by knowledge, knowledge by pity and pity by grace).
5. fit: suitable
8. sun-burnt brain : the 'intellect, whose capacity or vital moisture has been dried up by the flames of love' (Ringler, Poems, 459).
10. step-dame : step-mother; 'invention', or the discovery of ideas and themes is seen as being opposed to the imitation of other writers.
11. feet: a play on two meanings : (a) walking in the footsteps of others; (b) feet as metrical units, *i.e.*, the poems of other poets.
12. great with child : in a state of pregnancy; the poet compares himself with a woman unable to give birth to the child that she is bearing.
13. truant: disobedient.

12.2.5 Discussion

This is less a poem about love than a poem about how to write the poetry of love. As a poem about the best mode of composition, it evidently seeks to validate its own argument about avoiding sterile imitation and looking in the heart for inspiration. It is, however, easy to miss the point being made about rhetoric. Writers on rhetoric often divided the act of composition into three parts ; *inventio* ('invention*') *dispositio* ('organization') and *elocutio* ('expression'). As we have seen (note on line 10, above) invention involved the 'discovery' or 'conception*' of things to say; once that had been done, the questions of literary organization and suitable language came into consideration. Here, the poet gets the order wrong: instead of finding themes and ideas himself, he seeks "fit words", (*elocutio*) which should actually come last. Therefore, words move in a halting and uncertain fashion, lacking the support of invention. The poem explores the distinction between 'nature' and 'study' : invention, which should be a product of human nature, does not come from the study of other people's writings. This brings us to another consideration : that of imitation. From ancient times onwards the poetic process has been linked to an act of *imitation*, the representation of *nature*, a word used to describe both the natural universe and human nature. This is a view that we find deeply rooted in classical Western aesthetic theory. However, later in the classical period, this ideal of imitation was applied chiefly to the imitation of the writings of others, and this idea gained currency from the rhetoricians' advocacy of models to be emulated- Sidney appears to be contrasting one kind of imitation with another: the study of the writings of others is what he fruitlessly attempts at first. He studies the "Inventions" of others, hoping for inspiration (expressed powerfully in the image of rain). But this is not to be : invention needs to come from within the poet, not from the writings of others. There is extended word-play on 'feet'. The poet not only fails in trying to walk in others' steps but also his own words, unsupported by invention, are lame. This leads to a state of inarticulate anguish : the poet reproaches himself for his own failure, and his desperation grows.

The last line of the poem needs to be understood in this context. It is not a simple distinction between 'nature' (represented by the heart), and 'art' (the traditional arts of poetic composition). Rather, the distinction itself is a rhetorical one. for now the poet will find the true source of 'invention in his heart the seat or location of his love for Stella. 'Heart' would include here the mind 'the seat of all the faculties'.

12.3 COMPREHENSION EXERCISES

1. Why is “Rhetoric” regarded as a stumbling block (or hindrance) in understanding the Renaissance poetry? (Refer to Unit 12.1)
2. Mention two famous classical writers on rhetoric.
3. Should literature be devoid of any rhetoric? What is “rhetoric” in its simpler use? (Refer to Unit 12.1)
4. Give some examples of Rhetoric as applied to poetry. (Refer to Unit 12.1)
5. What are the popular divisions or parts in a rhetorical composition? (Refer to Unit 12.2.3)



UNIT 13 Poets, Patrons and Manuscripts

Structure

- 13.1 Manuscripts
- 13.2 Patrons
- 13.3 Spenser
 - 13.3.1 The Shepherd's Calendar
 - 13.3.2 Pastoralism
 - 13.3.3 Glossary
 - 13.3.4 Discussion
- 13.4 Comprehension Exercises

13.1 MANUSCRIPTS

The poems of both Wyatt and Sidney, we learnt, were published well after their deaths. Normally we think of printing as being essential to the circulation of all kinds of literature : how else can a work reach its audience? A little thought, however, reminds us that whereas we can still read works written nearly 3000 years ago, printing has been available for just about 500 years. Most of ancient literature—from various cultures— has come down to us in hand-written form. Of course, after the introduction of printing in Europe in the middle of the 15th century, most literature has circulated in the form of printed books. Elizabethan lyric poetry offers some interesting variations on the pattern. Poems by Wyatt, Surrey, Sidney and a number of other Tudor poets were first circulated in manuscript form. In many cases they were not printed at all, and many European libraries have large collections of unpublished Elizabethan manuscripts. Of course, the popularity of a poet like Sidney hastened the publication of his works soon after his death.

13.2 PATRONS

For whom were these lyrics originally written? They were read, it seems, by members of exclusive, even aristocratic circles: the poems circulated in manuscript form, passed from hand to hand. The opinion of these cultured — and wealthy — readers was what the poet valued, and found no reason

to search for a larger audience* through *th*^ printing press. Many of the poets were themselves of noble birth* Sidney himself is the best example. But this kind of relationship, between an aristocratic poet and an-audience of his peers, would account for only a part of the poetic output *>i the Tudor period. We also find poets from lower down in the social **hierarchy**, looking to win the approbation of high-born or wealthy readers . mis brings us to the question of *patronage*. A courtly or aristocratic patron was the first requirement of the ambitious poet who had no advantage of high birth. Such patrons could lead poets to important appointments and financial rewards, not to speak of power and prestige.

13.3 SPENSER

Edmund Spenser (1552-99) came into prominence through his contact with the Sidney family. Together with the Leicester and the Pembroke families, to which they were closely related, the Sidneys were the most celebrated patrons of literature. Spenser dedicated his *The Shepherd's Calendar* to Philip Sidney. Spenser's search for preferment culminated in his being sent as a government official to Ireland. This was seen very much as a kind of banishment from the centres of power as well as those of cultural activity. However, this enforced isolation in Spenser's case resulted in the composition of *The Faerie Queene*, a poem that many consider to be the greatest non-dramatic poetic achievement of the age.

Spenser wrote in many of the styles of poetic composition that were popular at the time. His sonnet-cycle *Amoretti* is among the finest of its kind : he also wrote pastoral, epic and a variety of miscellaneous forms.

13.3.1 The Shepherd's Calendar

We shall study a short extract from *The Shepherd's Calendar*. The work is in twelve sections (in the form of separate poems, or Eclogues) corresponding to, and named after, the twelve months of the year. We shall read two stanzas from the fifth Eclogue entitled 'June'. The speaker of these lines is the shepherd Colin Clout who is addressing another shepherd called Hobbinoll. The *pastoral* form, of which *The Shepherd's Calendar* is one of the earliest and finest English examples, was an important one in the Renaissance. Aspiring poets were advised to practise this style first-perhaps because the pastoral Eclogues of the great Latin poet Virgil are traditionally regarded to be his earliest compositions !

{5} Text : *The God of Shepherds, Tityrus...* 'June', 81-96
Spenser, from the *Shepherd's Calendar*, 'June'

The God of Shepherds, Tityrus, is dead,
Who taught me homely, as I can, to make.
He whilst he lived was the sovereign head
Of shepherds all that bene with love y-take.
Well couth he wail his woes, and lightly slake
The flames which love within his heart had bred,
And tell us merry tales, to keep us wake
The while our sheep about us safely fed.
Now dead is he, and Heth wrapt in lead
(O why should death on him such outrage show?),
And all his passing skill with him is fled,
The fame whereof doth daily greater grow.
But if on me some little drops would flow
Of that the spring was in his learned head,
I soon would learn these woods to wail my woe,
And teach the trees their trickling tears to shed.

13.3.2 Pastoralism

The pastoral (the name comes from the Latin word from 'shepherd', *pastor*) describes the lives of shepherds in a (often idealized) natural setting. The form was first practised by poets in ancient Greece, but the principal influence on Renaissance poets was undoubtedly that of Virgil. In the Renaissance, however, the pastoral is more a convention rather than a form as such; it could be used in forms as diverse as lyric poetry, prose romance and drama. Traditionally, the 'shepherds' of pastoral literature often were allegorical representations of real people—including the poet himself. In the Middle Ages and the Renaissance we find the pastoral being used as a means of commenting on a variety of issues : social, political and religious.

The pastoral convention has often been accused of extreme artificiality : the very idea of idealized shepherds leading happy and carefree lives in natural surroundings is evidently a product of poetic imagination, rather than something which might be encountered in real life. But Renaissance poetry, far from rejecting, or feeling uncomfortable about the use of such conversions, interpreted them as ways of understanding and valuing human life. Whether the pastoral is turned to the use of satire or the aim is to convey

the purity and joy of life in natural surroundings, the Renaissance poet has no difficulty in investing the mode with authenticity and power.

The following annotations may be useful.

13.3.3 Glossary

1. Tityrus : One of Virgil's shepherds is called by this name, this figure is taken to stand for Virgil himself. Commonly used in later pastoral poetry, it is often used to allude to great poets of the past. Here Tityrus, the dead shepherd who taught the poet his craft, may stand for Geoffrey Chaucer (1340-1430). perhaps the greatest of medieval English Poets.
2. homely : plainly; the poet is describing his art as a rustic and simple one.
2. can : to know, to have skill.
2. make : write poetry ; thus the poet is often called a 'maker'.
4. all that bene with love y-taken : all that are seized or captured by love (bene : an older version of 'are', y-taken ; an archaic form, meaning seized).
5. couth : could
5. wail; express.
5. slake : extinguish.
9. lead : a lead coffin.
10. outrage : violent injury of harm.
11. passing : great, surpassing.
12. fame...grow : the speaker says that the fame of Tityrus' poetic skill is growing everyday even after his death.
14. spring : standing here for the fountain of artistic creativity : perhaps an allusion to the fabled Helicon on Mt Parnassus, described in Greek myth as the fountain of inspiration.
15. learn : teach.

13.3.4 Discussion

The speaker of these lines, Colin Clout, is speaking in this eclogue of his love for the fair Rosalind : he loved her, and lost her. The disappointment in love as well as his advancing years has made him weary of the poetry of love. It is clear that his sense of unhappiness comes most of all from his experience in love. Even though Colin speaks of the seriousness that has come with passing years and how he has renounced the 'weary wanton toys',

it should be remembered that this too is very much of the traditional of love poetry that we have encountered earlier. The rejection of love by the disappointed lover strengthens the basic premise that love is the central experience of human life.

In these two stanzas, Colin speaks of his master Tityrus. Tityrus is a name that we often find in traditional pastoral literature; as such it has a classical ring about it. On the other hand, Colin Clout is very much the English shepherd, and indeed the whole of *The Shepherd's Calendar* reflects the poet's attempt to give the traditional elements of pastoral an English habitation. Tityrus may stand for Virgil himself and may be a way of expressing the English poet's relationship with the European tradition. However, Tityrus has been differently identified too. *The Shepherds Calendar* first appeared in 1579 along with copious notes by a commentator who is known only by the initials 'E.K.' In his notes, Tityrus is identified as the poet Geoffrey Chaucer.

Whether or not E.K.'s identification is correct, there is no doubt that Spenser greatly admired Chaucer. To him, probably, Chaucer represented the height of English poetry, unequalled ever since: Spenser's own preference for deliberately 'old-fashioned' language may be in part explained by his choice of Chaucer as a stylistic model. It may also be that Spenser is trying to give his language a slight rustic roughness, in keeping with his pastoral subject. 'Bene', 'can', 'y-take' are forms which are typical of the work as a whole. Look also at the rhyme-scheme of the two stanzas. It is somewhat like a sonnet without the concluding sestet, but it rhymes AB AB BA BA. Spenser made many experiments with stanzaic form in *The Shepherd's Calendar*.

13.4 COMPREHENSION EXERCISE

1. What was the role of the patrons of the early Renaissance poetry? (Refer to Unit 13.2)
2. Mention some poetical compositions of Spenser. Which Latin poet influenced him?
3. Write a short note on Pastoralism.
4. Attempt a brief but critical appreciation of the poem by Spenser quoted in your text.

UNIT 14 Shakespeare's Sonnets

Structure

- 14.1 Patrons of Shakespeare
- 14.2 Time and Source
- 14.3 Autobiographical Elements
 - 14.3.1 Two Sonnets of Shakespeare
 - 14.3.2 Sonnet 30
 - 14.3.3 Sonnet 130
- 14.4 Comprehension Exercises

14.1 PATRONS OF SHAKESPEARE

Like the writers of lyric and narrative poetry, dramatists too were anxious to secure patrons. Patronage was in fact part of the structure of the profession of acting, with the actors being organized into companies which bore the name of their patrons : William Shakespeare joined a company which had as its patron the Lord Chamberlain, high court official. After the accession of King James-I to the throne of England, the company came under the direct patronage of the king. However, Shakespeare seems to have been cultivating other connections too. Early in his career he dedicated his two long narrative poems, *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece*, to Henry Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton. Some speculate as to whether friends like Southampton supported Shakespeare in a controversy he became entangled in around the turn of the century. The pamphleteer and dramatist Robert Greene attacked Shakespeare in a death-bed pamphlet; subsequently, one of Greene's friends, Henry Chettle, apologized in print, noting that 'divers of worship' (i.e., many people who deserved respect) had praised Shakespeare's character and abilities. Some critics feel that this is an indication that Shakespeare had influential—and socially prominent—friends : perhaps a courtly patron.

14.2 TIME AND SOURCE

Shakespeare's sonnets, which appeared in print in 1609, may have already been circulating in manuscript for a few years. In a work *Palladis*

Tamia by Francis Meres. which appeared in 1598, we find mention of his 'sugard (i.e., sweet) Sonnets among his private friends'. The 1609 edition contains a publisher's dedication which has been the source of an enormous body of speculation and research. The work is dedicated to a certain 'Mr. W. H.' who is described as the 'only begetter' of the sonnets. We do not know anything more about the matter, but generations of readers have tried to read the dedication and the sonnets in a biographical spirit, feeling that the sonnets tantalizingly hint at a hidden chapter of Shakespeare's life.

The enormous amount of highly varied speculation that has already accumulated around the Sonnets makes it seem unlikely that we will know anything for certain. Indeed, some scholars would prefer to read 'W. H.' as misprint for 'W.S.' that is William Shakespeare himself. Other contenders are the Earl of Southampton, the initials standing for 'H.W.' In any case, in the absence of any confirmatory evidence, it seems best to read the Sonnets as a fictional exercise; the tradition of the sonnet sequence, as we have seen, has habitually stylized and conventionalised—and also transformed—whatever personal facts it may refer to.

14.3 AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL ELEMENTS

Shakespeare's Sonnets speak of the poet's relationship with two unnamed figures, a young and aristocratic male friend, and a woman, who is neither beautiful nor constant, but who possesses and exercises a powerful attracting force for the poet. There is also the shadowy presence of another figure, a rival poet, who engages the young friend's attention. Obviously, Shakespeare is stretching the form of the sonnet-cycle as it is known in the time, by making it deal with on the one hand, male friendship, with more than a hint of homosexuality, and on the other, a heterosexual relationship that alters most of the recognized conventions of the love-sonnet. It should be remembered, though, that the ideal of male friendship (as being superior to the love between men and women) has been celebrated in classical philosophy. As a humanist intellectual Shakespeare would be aware of the reputation of Cicero's *De Amicitia* (On Friendship), a work which defined Roman ideals of friendship.

14.3.1 Two Sonnets of Shakespeare

Let us look at two of the sonnets : one a powerful meditation on change and failure which finally declares the transformative power of friendship; the other, a sardonic catalogue of all the desirable qualities that the mistress

lacks, but which ends in a frank recognition of her power over the poet,

14.3.2

*Sonnet 30 : 'When to the sessions of **sweet** silent thought' :*

When to the sessions of sweet silent thought
I summon up remembrance of things past,
I sigh the lack of many a thing I sought,
And with old woes new wail my dear time's waste.
Then can I drown an eye, unus'd to flow,
For precious friend hid in death's dateless night
And weep afresh love's long since cancelled woe,
And moan th' expense of many a vanish'd sight.
Then can I grieve at grievances foregone,
And heavily from woe to woe tell o'er
The sad account of fore-bemoaned moan,
Which I new pay as if not paid before.
But if the while I think on thee, dear friend,
All losses are restor'd, and sorrows end.

Glossary

1. Sessions : a legal image; 'sessions*' being a kind of law court at which this examination is being held. "Summons' in the next line continues this image. Ingram and Redpath comment in their edition of the Sonnets :
The atmosphere suggested by the language of the sonnet is that of an enquiry at a manorial court, presided over by Thought, the Lord of the Manor, or his Steward, into the condition of the estate, its losses and resources. Relevant words are 'waste', 'dateless', 'cancell'd, expense', 'vanished; 'tell o'er', 'account', 'pay', "losses', restor'd'.
1. silent: the sessions is 'silent' because it is of thought, rather than of words.
4. woes...wail...waste : alliteration. As the poem emphasizes the sorrows of human life the word 'woe' is repeated several times (lines 7, 10).
4. dear times waste : 'dear means both 'loved' and 'precious'. The phrase could be interpreted either as 'times waste of dear things' and 'the destruction of the most valuable part of my life'. However, when one

takes into account the feeling of self-indulgence (old woes new wail) it is difficult to wholly exclude the sense of 'waste of my valuable time': the poet recognizes that what he is doing is of little value.

6. dateless : endless.
- 7-8. cancell'd woe...vanished sight: the fruitless and unproductive character of the poet's activity seem to be indicated here. Note also 'fore-bemoaned' (line II), something which has already been sorrowed for.
9. foregone : that which has gone before, that which is past.
10. tell: count.
14. The sense of regained happiness is conveyed here by the image of the accounts (which are earlier seen to be only of loss and destruction) are here 'restor'd', i.e., reconciled.

Discussion

Sonnet 30 offers one of the most idealistic visions of friendship in the whole of the sonnet-cycle. The poet meditates over his experience of loss and grief : as the notes show, there is a consistent strain of imagery in the poem about a legal enquiry into a business or estate which has been running at loss. But this framework does not in any way lessen our perception of the sorrow and confusion in the poet's mind. As he surveys the past, he thinks of all the losses and grief that he has suffered. This is seen as being a kind of activity that the poet does not habitually undertake, for tears come to his eyes which are 'unused to flow' (5). At the same time there is also an awareness that this introspection is of little value. Grief, one might say, is part of the process of living; and the suggestion that it is a kind of uncharacteristic activity is countered by words such as ! fore-bemoaned \ The dues of sorrow are paid at the time of experience, and so there is the suggestion that it need not be paid through this repetitive and self-indulgent attempt to live in the past.

The contemplation of the friend is seen, by contrast, to be enlivening and conducive to happiness. All accounts are settled and grief comes to an end.

In contrast to the idealizing tone of the poems about the young friend, who is consistently seen as being fair and noble, the tone of the poems written about the poet's mistress is charged with bitterness and shame. The following poem comes near the beginning of the sequence (which begins at Sonnet 127), and seems to be a comment on the entire tradition of love poetry eulogizing the mistress' beauty.

14.3.3

Sonnet 130 : 'My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun'.

My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun;
Coral is far more red than her lips' red;
If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun;
If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head.
I have seen roses damask'd red and white,
But no such roses see I in her cheeks;
And in some perfumes is there more delight
Than in the breath that from my mistress reeks.
I love to hear her speak, yet well I know
That music hath a far more pleasing sound.
I grant I never saw a goddess go :
My mistress, when she walks, treads on the ground.
And yet by heaven, I think my love as rare
As any she belied with false compare.

Glossary

All the comparisons that are being discussed here are to be found in the love poetry of the time.

1. sun : referring to the comparison of the eyes of the mistress with the sun : compare Sidney, *Astrophel and Stella*, song 8, line 31, 'Stella, star of heavenly fire'.
2. Coral: the comparison of the mistress' lips with various kinds of precious stones (including coral) is being alluded to Sidney, *Astrophel and Stella*, compares the mistress' lips with 'porphyry', another kind of semi-precious stone.
3. white : the point at issue is the whiteness of the mistress' skin : intentionally, it might be remembered that artificial aids were employed to emphasize whiteness by ladies of fashion. This is very common in love poems, Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, Bk 2, uses the phrase 'snowy breast'.
3. dun : greyish-brown.
4. if hairs be wires : alluding to the habit of flatteringly comparing the mistress' hairs fine golden wire.
4. black : apparently black hair was unfashionable. Shakespeare's 'mistress' is often alluded to as the 'dark lady'; modern critics have pointed out that there is little evidence to support either the contention that she was

dark-complexioned (i.e., a black woman) or even, indeed, a lady in the restricted sense that it was applied at the time, i.e., belonging to the aristocracy or higher gentry.

5. damask'd : the original colour of the damask or Damascus rose was a shade of pink (a mixture of *red and white*, 1.5).
6. no such roses : apart from pointing to the convention of describing the mistress' rosy cheeks, there seems to be a continuation of the slighting reference to the colour of the woman's skin.
8. recks : though 'recks' could be applied in Shakespeare's time to smells in general, there seems to be a clearly unflattering sense here, contrasting the sweetness of perfumes and the unpleasantness of the mistress' breath. Compare Spenser, *Amoretti*, 64, 11.5-6 : 'Her lips did smell like into gillyflowers./Her ruddy cheeks like unto roses red.s
- 13-14, The ironic tone of the catalogue of the lady's charms' is modified by the poet's confession of the strength of his passion for the lady. In spite of his rejection of the conventional terms of love, there is a powerful recognition of the fascination that his mistress holds for him.
14. any she : any woman.
14. belied : misrepresented, falsely praised.
14. compare : comparisons, referring to the list given in the poem.

Note that the poem upholds the idea of the supreme power of love; its criticism is directed towards the extravagant—and often insincere—terms of praise lavished on the mistress in love-poems. In other poems of this sonnet sequence, Shakespeare occasionally expresses a feeling of world-weariness and cynicism. His mistress is often unfaithful : the profession of the poet's love for her is all the more striking because of this awareness.

14.4 COMPREHENSION EXERCISES

1. Name the patrons of Shakespeare
2. Write short notes on:
 - (a) Palladis Tamia
 - (b) W.H.
(Refer to Unit 14.2)
3. Write a brief note on autobiographical elements of Shakespeare's sonnets.
4. Attempt a comparative study of the two sonnets of Shakespeare discussed in your text.
(Refer to Units 14.3.2 and 14.3.3)

UNIT 15 Donne and the Metaphysicals

Structure

- 15.1 The Rival Poet
- 15.2 John Donne
 - 15.2.1 A Metaphysical
 - 15.2.2 Donne's Love Poetry : The Good Morrow with Glossary
 - 15.2.3 The Religious Lyrics
- 15.3 The Metaphysicals : The School of Donne
 - 15.3.1 Text: Herbert, *Jordan*
 - 15.3.2 Glossary
- 15.4 John Milton
 - 15.4.1 Text: *When I Consider how my Light in Spent*
 - 15.4.2 Glossary
- 15.5 Comprehension Exercises

15.1 THE RIVAL POET

While discussing Shakespeare's Sonnets we learnt that one of the figures who appears in the sonnets is that of another poet (often referred to as the 'Rival Poet') who succeeds in winning the favour of the Friend. Naturally, many readers have speculated on who this may have been in real life. Of the many contenders one of the strongest has been John Donne (1572-1631), best known for being the pioneer of the 'Metaphysical' style. Even though Donne is often thought of as a 17th century poet he had in fact launched on a poetic career by the 1590's and thus was a younger contemporary of Shakespeare's. We shall probably never know for certain who the Rival Poet was—if indeed there was such a person in real life—but the mention of Donne directs our attention to important changes in the styles of poetry around the turn of the century.

15.2 JOHN DONNE

Most of Donne's poetry circulated in manuscript form during his lifetime, and the first printed edition of his poems appeared only in 1633. Donne wrote in a wide variety of poetic styles, and about both secular and

religious subjects. Among the best known groups of poems are a series usually referred to as the 'Songs and Sonnets' and the "Holy Sonnets", after the manner of their classification in early editions of Donne's poetry.

15.2.1 A "Metaphysical"

The term 'metaphysical' has become inextricably linked with the poems of Donne and his 'school', though modern scholars are less confident in their use of this term. The term is derived from a comment made by the poet John Dryden, who said that Donne 'affected the metaphysics' referring to the abstruse and learned ideas that Donne incorporated into his love poems. Dr. Johnson gave further currency to the term, and characterised the 'Metaphysical' style as presenting ideas 'yoked by violence together' specifically drawing attention to the unusual and often brilliant use of comparison in Donne and other 17th century poets ;

My vegetable love should grow

Vaster than empires, and more slow (Andrew Marvell, *To his Coy Mistress*)

As noted earlier, the term 'Metaphysical' was adopted as a general description of the poetry of what was called the 'school of Donne'. Modern critics have pointed to the fact that poets commonly included in this group—Donne, George Herbert, Andrew Marvell, Henry Vaughan—are actually markedly different in their poetic styles. We shall avoid the term in our discussion of the poems of Donne and Herbert that follow.

15.2.2 Donne's Love Poetry

Donne's love poetry has often been seen as marking an entirely new phase in the history of the Renaissance love-lyric. Critics have discussed at length the way in which he rejects the conventions of the Petrarchan love-poem, and writes an entirely new kind that combines erudition, passion and wit with cynicism and irony. It is certainly true that Donne pioneers an extremely original style in his love poetry, but it needs also be remembered that the 'Petrarchan' line that he is apparently rejecting itself is one that contains a good deal of variety : the poems of Wyatt, Sidney and Shakespeare are very different in subject, tone and feeling. At the same time, we encounter in Donne's poetry a continuation of the belief in centrality of the experience of love in human life : Donne, like his Petrarchan predecessors, identifies love as being the central and **defining** experience in the formation of human consciousness.

A fine expression of this is the poem "The Good-Morrow".

Text:

Donne : *'The Good-Morrow'*
I wonder, by my troth, what thou and I
Did, till we lov'd ? were we not wean'd till then?
But suck'd on country pleasures, childishly?
Or snorted we in the Seven Sleepers den?
Twas so; but this, all pleasures fancies be :
If ever any beauty I did see.
Which I desir'd, and got, 'twas but a dream of thee.
And now good-morrow to our waking souls,
Which watch not one another out of fear;
For love, all love of other sights controls,
And makes one little room, an everywhere
Let sea-discoverers to new worlds have gone,
Let maps to others, worlds on worlds have shown,
Let us possess one world, each hath one, and is one
My face in thine eye, thine in mine appears,
And true plain hearts do in the faces rest;
Where can we find two better hemispheres,
Without sharp North, without declining West?
Whatever dies, was not mix'd equally;
If our two loves be one, or, thou and I
Love just alike in all, none of these loves can die.

Glossary:

1. by my troth: i.e., in truth, truly.
2. wean'd : referring to the time before the infant is weaned from his mother's milk : an image of absolute infancy, and consequently, of a lack of awareness.
3. country pleasures: rustic pleasures, and therefore unrefined and coarse. Redpath in his edition of *Songs and Sonnets* summarises the first three lines as follows :
'Weren't we satisfied in childish way with pleasures which, when compared with our love, were like that of country people as compared with those of people in the City or Court?'
4. snorted : nored.
4. Seven Sleepers' Den : Donne is here alluding to an old Christian legend, preserved by the medieval historian Gregory of Tours in his

De Gloria Martyrum. The story runs as follows : during the reign of the Emperor Decius, who was an enemy of Christianity, seven young Christians from the town of Ephesus took refuge in a cave in order to escape their pursuers. Their enemies walled up the entrance to the cave in order to starve them to death. The young men, however, fell into a deep sleep and awakened only to find that two centuries had passed in what had seemed to be single night and that Christianity had been established as a religion. Donne is saying that falling in love is awakening into a new and wonderful life.

6. fancies : Imaginary and insubstantial things.
- 6-7. Donne is here paying an elaborate compliment to the beloved, saying that if he has ever seen any beautiful thing before this time, it has been a 'dream', in the sense of shadow or presentiment, of her.
8. good-morrow : the central idea of awakening is stated here : the souls of the lovers greet each other as they come into consciousness in a new dawn.
9. souls : note that the awakening is characterised as an awakening of the soul or spiritual part of the individual; it is contrasted to the rustic and crude pleasures mentioned in stanza-I.
- 9-10. Which watch...controls : the lovers' souls, now fully awake, regard each other closely; but this is not because of suspicion, but because of their mutual love. This love is so absorbing that it does not allow them to consider anything else. Not that 'fear' and 'love' are contrasted as rival sources of power or authority ('controls').
11. Because of the all-encompassing nature of their love, the room in which the lovers are situated becomes the whole universe.
- 12-13. the syntax is difficult, though the meaning is clear : i.e., 'Let (us agree or accept that) sea-discoverers have gone to new worlds...let maps have shown worlds to others*. The phrase 'worlds on worlds' probably refers to new geographical discoveries of land-masses (referred to here as 'worlds'), which are shown in the maps.
14. one world : compared to the activity of geographers and voyagers who discover new worlds, the lovers are content with themselves. They form, together, a little but self-sufficient entity. Compare 1. 11., and also the description of the two lovers as 'hemispheres' in 1.17. The sense here is that the lovers form a world of their own ('hath one, and in one') of which they are mutual possessors ('possess one world').

15. My face...appears : the lovers' faces are mirrored in each other's eyes. This underlines their spiritual oneness. Variations of this image are to be found in a number of Donne's poems.
16. true plain hearts: as the eyes mirror the faces, the faces reflect the constancy of their hearts.
17. hemispheres : being equal parts of their private world, the lovers can be compared to the two hemispheres of the earth. But as he goes on to say in the next line, these hemispheres are more perfect, because they are not affected by change or climatic variation.
18. sharp North...declining West : the cold North wind, standing for intemperate weather in general; as the West is the direction in which the sun sets, it stands for change in general. It may also refer to the lovers' feeling that their love will be eternal, unlike other forms of love which soon turn to bitterness and fall off.
- 19-21. The last three lines of the poem develop the claim of the eternal love. Donne is referring here to an idea which was to be found in ancient writers on medicine, that things decay because of the fact that they are improperly mixed. If things were mixed in the correct proportion they would not decay. Pure substances too were not subject to corruption. Here because the love of the two lovers is equal, and perfectly alike in all respects, their love will remain for ever.

It is easy to see why Dryden somewhat sardonically dubbed Donne's poetry 'Metaphysical': it is not metaphysical in the sense of dealing with things beyond the physical (natural) world (from the Greek *meta*, beyond, and *phusis*, nature), but simply difficult and abstruse : out of the ordinary. In this short poem, there are allusions to Christian history (Seven Sleepers'den), geographical and astronomical discoveries, and ancient science. There are a number of philosophical ideas regarding the soul as well, but the distinctive feature of Donne's love poetry is the way these disparate and distinctive ideas are welded into a single unified statement. The ideas are validated not by appealing to their learned sources, but by emphasizing the passion and intensity of the experience of love. There is little attempt at idealizing the beloved (in spite of the use of the conventional idea that all beautiful things are shadows of the beloved, 1.6-7).

15.2.3 The Religious Lyric

In Donne's religious poetry, the force and intricacy of the argument has to do with relationship between the individual and God. As human beings

reflect of the question of their salvation, the need for divine mercy and the sense of human weakness and imperfection become apparent. The intellectual background of 17th century religious poetry is very complex. The Protestant Reformation pioneered in the 16th century by thinkers like Martin Luther and John Calvin had raised many new religious disputes, and through the 16th century right till the end of the 17th, English political and social life is coloured by religious controversies. We shall not go into these complexities, for the poems we have chosen can be understood without entering into them.

15.3 THE METAPHYSICALS : THE SCHOOL OF DONNE

Donne's poetry inspired many of his successors, but, even so, 'Metaphysical' religious poetry is an even more contentious term. Even while we admit the importance of the model afforded by Donne, the poems of George Herbert or Henry Vaughan raise very individual and distinctive questions.

Let us now look at a poem by George Herbert (1593-1633). It is taken from his collection *The Temple*, which appeared posthumously in 1633.

15.3.1 Text:

Herbert: Jordon- II ('When first my lines of heav'nly joyes made mention')

When first my lines of heav'nly joyes made mention,
Such was their lustre, they did so excell,
-That I sought out quaint words, and trim invention;
My thoughts began to burnish, sprout, and swell,
Curling with metaphors a plain intention,
Decking the sense, as if it were to sell.

Thousands of notions in my brain did runne.
Off ring their service, if I were not sped :
I often blotted what I had begunne;
This was not quick enough, and that was dead.
Nothing could seem too rich to clothe the sunne,
Much less those joyes which trample on his head.

As flames do work and winde, when they ascend,
So did I weave my self into sense.

But while I bustled, I might heare a friend
 Whisper, *How wide is all this long pretence!*
There is_ in love a sweetnesse readie penn 'd:
Copie out onely that, and save expense.

As Sidney's 'Loving in truth' is a poem about the correct way of writing the poetry of love, Herbert's poem raises the same question with regard to writing religious poetry. But as Sidney's poem moves from what might be called the 'wrong' use of rhetoric to the 'right' one, there appears to be a more radical rejection of the artifices of conventional poetic style. There appears to be a number of points at whichy Herbert seems to be alluding to Sidney's poem directly.

15.3.2 Glossary

1. Lines : i.e., poetry; the poet is talking about the time when he first started writing about divine subjects ('heav'nly joys').
3. quaint: unusual; compare 'fit words', Sidney 'Loving in truth' 1.5.
3. trim invention : neat, attractive : Sidney has 'Inventions fine*.
4. burnish : used in the special sense of 'to grow plump, spread out, to increase in breadth' (OED). Compare Sidney's description of the poet as being pregnant and yet unable to give birth to poetry; also his attempt to read others' works to fertilize his barren brain.
5. Curling with metaphors : in the sense of 'beautifying' : as hair is curled and braided, the 'plain intentions' are beautified with metaphors. In the next line this is related to an image of selling : the 'sense' is decked' (adorned) to make it more attractive of purchasers.
- 7-12. This stanza describes the poet in a sense of bewilderment: his mind is full of ideas and images and he does not know which to chose. Unlike the parched brain of the poet in Sidney's poem, the speaker here experiences a sense of confusing variety and plenty.
8. sped : a word with many menaings. 'Sped' may mean her 'completed' or 'successful'; the ideas teeming in his mind offer their service, enquiring whether he has successfully completed his poem.
9. blotted : erased, cut out.
10. quick: lively.
11. sun : a play on sun and son, i.e., the Son of God, born on earth as Jesus Christ. Herbert is saying that he is trying to decorate the sun, something thought to be perfect in itself-therefore both a useless and an ambition

- action; again, to try to clothe the Son of God smacks of impiety. The poet is here talking about his attempt to use florid and ornate language to describe divine things, which require no such verbal ornamentation.
12. The impiety involved in talking about God in figurative language is made clear here. As opposed to the heavenly joys of line 1, the joys alluded to here are those which are in direct opposition to the teaching of religion. Any attempt to talk about God in the conventional language of poetry leads to a surrender to those things which are opposed to him.
 13. work and wind : describing the movement of the flames as they rise.
 14. self into the sense : the poet describes his absorption in the task; presumably it involves over-emphasis on the *act* of writing poetry, and too little attention on the *end* or *purpose* of writing sacred poetry.
 16. whisper: the unidentified voice which admonishes the poet is that of conscience, often described as the voice of God within the human mind.
 16. wide : in the sense of 'wide of the mark', futile.
 - 17-18. These lines offer an alternative version of the role of the Christian poet. His subject—divine love, personified in the figure of Jesus Christ, is self-sufficient and perfect. So the artifices of poetic composition are unnecessary. All the poet has to do is to express what is already contained in love that God has for mankind. The poetic act is described as not one of rhetorical elaboration, but rather one of simple expression.

Note how in this poem there is a rejection of the rhetorical mode of love poetry. The techniques of *elocutio* and *inventio* (see discussion of Sidney, above) are specifically mentioned. But whereas Sidney's poem establishes correct procedure for composition, Herbert reject poetic convention altogether, suggesting a new formula for writing which involves simplicity, devotion and the need to express divine love.

15.4 JOHN MILTON

John Milton (1608-1674), the greatest religious poet of the 17th century, is principally known for his epic on the fall of mankind, entitled *Paradise Lost*. Milton also wrote in a great variety of poetic styles, including the sonnet. We shall next look at a sonnet in which Milton considers the terrible personal calamity which befell him in the middle of his life. Milton, after suffering from failing eyesight for many years, went completely blind around 1651 or

1652. This poem may have been composed in or around 1652.

15.4.1 Text:

Milton : *'When I consider how my light is spent'*
When I consider how my light is spent,
Ere half my days, in this dark world and wide,
And that one talent which is death to hide,
Lodged with me useless, though my soul more bent
To serve therewith my maker, and present
My true account, lest he returning chide.
Doth God exact day-labour, light denied,
I fondly ask; but Patience to prevent
That murmur, soon replies, God doth not need
Either man's work or his own gifts, who best
Bear his mild yoke, they serve him best, his state
Is kingly. Thousands at his bidding speed
And post o'er land and ocean without rest:
They also serve who only stand and wait.

15.4.2

1. light: i.e., eyesight.
2. half my days : i.e., half of his life; Milton was in his early 40s at this time.
3. talent : the gift of writing poetry. 'Talent' is also a sum of money or precious metal; There is an allusion to a Biblical story here which is to be found in one of the parables which Christ told his disciples. In the Gospel of St. Matthew (Chapter 25, verses 14-30) we find the story of a householder, who, before going on a journey, gave his three servants sums of money amounting to five, three, and one talents respectively. The first two servants used the money wisely and doubled their wealth; the third servant, however, did nothing with his. On returning, the householder asked for accounts, and the idle servant had to confess that he hidden his money away and not utilised it. He was reprimanded and punished by the householder. This parable is usually interpreted to mean that we are supposed to utilise the gifts that God has given us : if we do not do that, we shall be punished by God. The poet compares

himself with the idle servant, for his only 'talent'—poetic ability:—is lying useless and he fears divine punishment for his incapacity to use it.

7. day-labour : the poet 'fondly' (i.e., foolishly) thinks of God as an exacting taskmaster, who will demand an account from him, regardless of his blindness.
8. Patience : an example of personification; one part of the poet's mind experiences fear and anxiety, but another part, here signified by patience, expresses unquestioning confidence in God's kindness.
- 9-10. Patience assures the poet that God requires nothing from man; neither the 'works' that human being may perform nor the gifts that God himself has conferred upon man. The belief in the all-sufficiency of divine grace for salvation, irrespective of the works or actions human beings may perform was especially marked among Protestants.
11. mild yoke : subjection to God is easy and does not impose any strain upon human beings. This counteracts the fear expressed earlier about God being an exacting task-master.
12. Thousands : a reference to the angels who stand in wait upon God.
13. post: move about.
14. The last line of this poem makes a very important point. God is described earlier as great king with many to obey his commands. The poet finds comfort in the realization that everyone must do what they have been made capable of. Thus somebody who simply waits upon God's will is no less obedient to God. This is the role that he now envisages for himself.

Both Herbert and Milton, in two rather different kinds of poems, move from a sense of doubt, confusion and anxiety to conclusions which quieten them and give them greater confidence about the ways they are supposed to act. Herbert realises what the Christian poet must try to do; Milton, struggling against blindness and a sense of inability, finds consolation in the belief that his role in life is to quietly depend upon God's will.

15.5 COMPREHENSION EXERCISE

1. Who are the "Metaphysicals"? Name some of them. Who first used the term? (Refer to Unit 15.2.1)

2. What is Donne's attitude to love? Is he a follower to Petrarch?
(Refer to Unit 15.2.2)
3. Discuss **The Good-Morrow** as a typical love-poem of Donne. Is it metaphysical in its true sense?
(Refer to Glossary in Unit 15.2.2)
4. What does the religious poetry of Donne deal with?
5. Discuss Jordan (II) as a devotional or religious poem.
6. Milton's poem discussed in the text is a sonnet. What kind of sonnet is it? What does Milton mean by "talent" in line 3?



UNIT 16 Women Poets in the Renaissance

Structure

- 16.1 The Background : The male attitude to women**
- 16.2 Queen Elizabeth and other female poets**
 - 16.2.1 Text: Katherine Philips : Orinda upon little Hector Philips**
 - 16.2.2 Glossary**
- 16.3 The Worlds of Renaissance Poetry**
- 16.4 Comprehension Exercises**
- 16.5 Anthologies**

16.1 THE BACKGROUND : THE MALE ATTITUDE OF WOMEN

Most of the poetry of love written in the Renaissance are by men about women. They offer us differing views of woman as the object of male desire. Women are idealized, turned into goddesses, lauded for their physical and mental charms; also reviled and criticized as being faithless, hard-hearted and fickle. In every case women are cast in various roles by the men who write about them. But did women, too, have a voice of their own in the Renaissance? Most earlier anthologies have few or no poems at all by women. Scholars and anthologists are now increasingly becoming sensitive to the fact that a number of women wrote poems which were circulated in manuscript or even printed. Some humanist scholars of the Renaissance had championed the cause of women's education. Yet the possibilities of the entry of women into the public world were fairly limited. Many of the women whose poems have survived were from wealthy or aristocratic families. Even from the relatively small body of material which we possess now it is possible to see that women wrote different kinds of poems, and contributed to the development of many forms in the Renaissance.

16.2 QUEEN ELIZABETH AND OTHER FEMALE POETS

Queen Elizabeth herself was a poet; she translated a number of the psalms and wrote miscellaneous verses. Philip Sidney's sister, Lady Mary Wroth, wrote love-poems from a woman's perspective and was herself a

patron of poetry. In the revolutionary decades (1640-1660) we find a number of women poets, who wrote both secular and religious poems, like Margaret Cavendish, Anna Trapnel, An Collins and Katherine Philips.

Katherine Philips (1632-64) wrote a number of poems celebrating female friendship, offering thus a restatement of the themes of heterosexual love and male friendship. The poem that we have chosen is one that could only have been written by a woman : a poem in which a mother mourns her dead child.

16.2.1 Text {11} Katherine Philips : *Orinda upon little Hector Philips'*

1

Twice forty months of Wedlock I did stay,
Then had my vows crown'd with a Lovely boy,
And yet in forty days he dropt away,
O swift Visissitude of humane joy.

2.

5

I did but see him and he dis-appear'd,
I did but pluck the Rose-bud and it fell,
A sorrow unforeseen and scarcely fear'd,
For ill can mortals their afflictions spell.

3

10

And now (sweet Bade) what can my trembling heart
Suggest to right my doleful fate or thee,
Tears are my Muse and sorrow all my Art,
So piercing groans must be thy Elogy.

4

15

Thus whilst no eye is witness of my mone,
I grieve thy loss (Ah boy too dear to live)
And let the unconcerned World alone,
Who neither will, nor can refreshment give.

5.

20

An Off ring too for thy sad Tomb I have,
Too just a tribute to thy early Herse,
Receive these gasping numbers to thy grave,
The last of thy unhappy Mother's Verse.

16.2.2 Glossary

1. twice forty months : the child was born about 7 years after marriage (wedlock).
4. visissitude : change, more usually spelt *vicissitude*.
8. spell: forecast, prophesy.
11. Tears...sorrow...piercing groans : the poet says that she is not able to translate her grief into poetry; all she can do is to express her grief.
12. elegy : elegy, song of sorrow.
13. The grieving mother describes herself as mourning privately, ignored by a callous world.
18. herse : vehicle used for carrying the bodies of the dead; more commonly spelt *hearses*. Here it probably stands for the grave.
19. numbers : lines of verse.
20. last of thy unhappy Mother's verse : i.e., the last poetic offering from the mother.

The poetic name that Philips uses in her poetry is Orinda. She has a number of poems written to a female friend called Lucinda. The elegy was a popular form in the Renaissance, and were written to commemorate both the passing of public figures and to record private grief. Ben Jonson wrote a famous elegy on his dead child in which we find the oft quoted lines :

Rest in soft peace, and asked, say here doth lie
Ben Jonson his best piece of poetry.

Philips' elegy imparts to the form a new tone, as the mother tries to turn private tragedy into the artistic form of the elegy.

16.3 THE WORLDS OF RENAISSANCE POETRY

We have looked here at some of the forms of Renaissance poetry. Of necessity the poems chosen were among the most accessible; they are also all relatively short poems. We have tried to study through them a few of the important currents of 16th and 17th century English poetry.

We should remember that the Renaissance was a period of great poetic experimentation and variety and many of the most important forms could not be studied here. In particular the longer forms—the many varieties of epic and narrative poetry, the epyllion, the satires, the topographical poems—

could not be touched upon at all. The most useful way to increase one's knowledge of the subject is by looking at anthologies of 16th and 17th century poetry.

16.4 COMPREHENSION EXERCISES

1. What is the attitude of the male poets towards women revealed in the Renaissance poetry?
(Refer to Unit 16.1)
2. Attempt a critical appreciation of the poem by (Catherine Philips. What poetic name did she take?
3. To which class did the few women poets in the Renaissance England belong? Did they write the same kind of poems like their male counterparts (male poets)?
(Refer to Unit 16.1)
4. What is an elegy? How did Katherine Philips spell it in her poem?

16.5 ANTHOLOGIES

The following anthologies are recommended :

The Penguin Book of Renaissance Poetry : sel. D. Norbrook, ed. H. L. Woudhuysen. 1993.

Silver Poets of the 16th Century : ed. G. Bullett, 1947.

An Anthology of Elizabethan Poetry : ed. Sukanta Chaudhuri, 1992.

The Metaphysical Poets : Ed. Helen Gardner, 1957.

The Oxford Book of 17th Century Verse : ed. H. Grierson and G. Bullough, 1934.

UNIT 17 Reading Poetry of the Eighteenth Century

Structure

- 17.1 The Legacy of the 17th Century
- 17.2 The Restoration
- 17.3 Contemporary Realism
- 17.4 A new trend of precision
 - 17.4.1 The Scientific Spirit
 - 17.4.2 The Role of the Philosophers
 - 17.4.3 The Restoration Stage
 - 17.4.4 The Enlightenment
- 17.5 Different Phases

17.1 THE LEGACY OF THE 17TH CENTURY

Any study on the eighteenth century English poetry must begin from the poetry after Restoration of Charles II in 1660. With the Restoration of Charles II to the British throne, the Stuart Dynasty which began with James I in 1603 was re-established in England. The poetry of the seventeenth century influenced that of the eighteenth century in a major way so much so that we can say that the poetry of the eighteenth century was a result of the poetry that began after the Restoration. This is chiefly because John Dryden (1631 - 1700), whose poetry influenced the other great poets of the eighteenth century, namely Alexander Pope (1688-1744), Jonathan Swift (1667-1745) and Dr. Samuel Johnson (1709-1784), lived during the seventeenth century. The poetry of the seventeenth century, and what would later become the poetry of the eighteenth century was a product of the multi-faceted age in which it was written. It is therefore necessary to mention some of the important aspects of this age.

17.2 THE RESTORATION

The Restoration of Charles II not only brought a political change in England; the change was felt in all walks of British life. Even the nature of poetry changed. The poetry of the Elizabethan and even that of the Jacobean

period was meant to be circulated among close friends and acquaintances. It was thus of a more private nature. The poetry of the Restoration, the late seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries was, however, meant for the wider public in the sense that now, poetry was meant for all and sundry and not for the privileged beloved or the special friend. Poetry, and also all literature, was furthermore made more accessible to everyone, as readership was given an impetus by the popularity of the printing industry.

17.3 CONTEMPORARY REALISM

The poetry of this period is realistic, in the sense that contemporary events, both political and social, are reflected and echoed here. John Dryden's political satire **Absalom and Achitophel** (1681) is the poet's way of looking at the contemporary political feud between the Whigs and the Tories, during the reign of Charles II. We shall discuss this work in greater detail later, in this study. Another aspect of the contemporary realism in poetry was the faithful description of the contemporary London in poetry. The reader could easily identify himself or herself with the London that is depicted in John Dryden's **Mac Flecknoe** (1678), a personal satire against Thomas Shadwell (1640-1692), a contemporary poet. This was very different from the imaginative poetry of the Elizabethan and Jacobean period.

17.4 A NEW TREND OF PRECISION : SOME REASONS

The excessive of this period was sophisticated and polished, it was characterised by reason and understanding, it was logical and wellknit. Thus Dryden's poetry expressed lofty sentiments in polished heroic couplets, and Pope could shape his imagination and feeling to the disciplined meter of the same kind.

17.4.1 The Scientific Spirit

The exercise strain on reason and understanding was the obvious consequence of the spirit of scientific enquiry fostered by scientists of the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It was during this time that the genius of Sir Isaac Newton (1642-1727) flourished. Besides Newton there were other renowned scientists. The scientific spirit of enquiry in turn encouraged experimentalism and made people sceptical. The mathematical principles of deduction by observation began to be followed in all walks of

life and people longed to arrive at the 'correct' conclusion, inspired by the correctitude of science.

17.4.2 The Role of Philosophers

The enviable certainty displayed by science also inspired philosophers who wanted to arrive at correct and certain conclusions verifiable by mathematical speculations. Thus John Locke in his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690) lays primary stress on human experiences after birth which he believes impresses themselves on the mind of the human being, which is like a clean sheet or a tabula rasa at birth. All sensations and materiality, he says, springs from these experiences. Along with Locke, there was George Berkeley with his **Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge** (1710) and David Hume with his **Treatise of Human Nature : An Attempt to Introduce the Experimental Method of Reasoning into Moral Subjects** (1739-1740) and other philosophers.

17.4.3 The Restoration Stage

It was this trend for precision and correctitude which prompted the poets to sculpt their thoughts according to the restrictions of form. There was, however, another reason for the excessive stress on reason and understanding in poetry at the end of the seventeenth century. The Restoration Stage, with its Restoration Comedies encouraged by Charles II were notorious for the licentiousness and immorality depicted in them. To strike a balance with the profligacy and immorality of the stage, the poetry became full of reason and logic with measured wit and humour.

17.4.4 The Enlightenment

The manifold intellectual activities of the Restoration period and the eighteenth century have often earned itself the name of the "Age of Enlightenment". The intellectual ferment of the period was, however, not an island factor reserved for England alone. There was, all over Europe, a stress on the values of reason and understanding. Along with Locke, Newton, Shaftesbury and the other English thinkers, there were a group of French **philosophers** like Voltaire and Rousseau, in the middle and later years of the eighteenth century who influenced the British philosophers.

17.5 DIFFERENT PHASES

It is clear from the above discussion that the eighteenth century was a period of much happening. Its poetry being a reflection of the contemporary period evolved through different phases. The first phase of poetry began from the Restoration and continued roughly around 1740. The poetry of John Dryden, Alexander Pope and Jonathan Swift flourished during this period. The second phase from 1740-1770 was represented by Samuel Johnson and third phase 1770-1798 marks the final period which finally leads to the flourishing of the Romantic Period.



UNIT 18 A Literary Perspective

Structure

- 18.1 Influences working on the 18th century poetry : French and Latin
- 18.2 French Influence
- 18.3 Classical Influence

18.1 INFLUENCES WORKING ON THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY POETRY : FRENCH AND LATIN

The poetry of the eighteenth century was primarily influenced by French and Latin.

18.2 FRENCH INFLUENCE

It is believed that Charles II maintained good relations with Louis XIV, the contemporary French King. The great French dramatists Corneille, Racine and Moliere, the satirist Boileau and critics like Le Bossy were the senior contemporaries of John Dryden. They were still at work when Dryden began his literary career, and needless to say, influenced his literary style to a great extent.

Corneille had a strong influence on Dryden, in as much as Dryden owes his lengthy critical prefaces to his works from the explanatory **Discours** and **Examens** prefixed to Corneille's plays. Dryden had a great admiration for Boileau's critical treatise **Art of Poetry** and in his own critical piece **An Apology for Heroic Poetry** (1677), he coupled Rapin, and Boileau as 'the greatest of the age'. The lasting contribution of the French in this intellectual era, was perhaps the encouragement of skeptical thought as against dogmatic beliefs. The French philosopher Voltaire and Rousseau contributed to a great extent in shaping the thoughts of the mid-eighteenth century thinkers.

18.3 CLASSICAL INFLUENCE

The eighteenth century is also called the Augustan Age of English Literature, as in this Age the Roman Augustan poets, Horace, Juvenal and Martial became the models of the great English satirical poetry. The English

emulated the clarity, the definiteness and the harmony of the ancient classical writers. Their purpose was to imbibe the discipline, the verbal skill and a vigorous group of social themes that so characterised the ancients. They were also encouraged to write in a range of literary types such as the epic, the ode, the epistle and the epigram.

The English writers were often accused of slavishly copying the works of their classical predecessors, but in actuality they merely imitated the 'manner' of the classical writers to express their own contemporary, social themes. Hence Pope's **Imitations of Horace** merely emulates the form of the Horatian satire, (that is original satires written by the Roman poet Horace) which he uses to express his contemporary social mores. It is merely the form, used with the disciplined heroic couplet that conveys the sense of order and clarity so dear to the Augustan poets.



UNIT 19 Nature of Augustan Poetry — Its Major Genres

Structure

- 19.1 A Distinct type of poetry**
- 19.2 Prosody : Its Predominance**
- 19.3 The Genres of Augustan Poetry ; The Predominant Types**
 - 19.3.1 Panegyrics**
 - 19.3.2 Satire**
 - 19.3.3 The Elegy**

19.1 A DISTINCT TYPE OF POETRY

Augustan poetry is different from the poetry of the Elizabethans, Jacobean or even the Romantics who came before and after them. This poetry is closer to the narrative, the epic or the discursive modes rather than the dramatic mode. It lacked the sense of mystery and imagination which characterised the poetry of the Romantics. The beauty of Augustan poetry lies in its melody and the force of the heroic couplet within the narrow space of which they fit their thoughts in a disciplined, restrained and dignified manner.

19.2 PROSODY : ITS PREDOMINANCE

To enjoy Augustan poetry we must be able to realize the strength contained in the confined space of the couplet, and in the pauses offered by the caesura. The words— deep, clear, gentle, strong and full—must be isolated to realize the total impression and the mood it conveys.

The language of the Augustan poets is necessarily simple and they are consciously proud of its simplicity. Yet, its simplicity is certainly different and might be misunderstood or even overlooked by readers who are accustomed to reading Shakespeare, John Donne, S. T. Coleridge and John Keats, whose simplicity is markedly different from Augustan simplicity.

19.3 THE PREDOMINANT TYPES

The major genres of poetry from the Restoration to the middle of the eighteenth century are the panegyric, the satire and the elegy.

19.3.1 Panegyrics

A panegyric may be defined as a speech of praise or a laudatory poem. It is different from the short lyric of admiration or affection which the Romantics write for their friends or fellow poets. A panegyric proper is not a poem about friendship at all. It is, on the other hand, a celebration of virtue, nobility, and splendour and qualities which can be represented by a monarch, hero, or a statement and such personalities, to whom appreciation cannot and should not come privately. They should be lauded publicly.

Many of Dryden's poems are examples of panegyrics which are written in a sincere vein and are not merely poems of adulation written to please his patrons.

Apart from isolated examples of panegyrics, many poems might also contain panegyric elements in them. Dryden's **Absalom and Achitophel** contains panegyric passages and we shall study them.

19.3.2 The Satire

The satire, as we have defined in the earlier section on **The Language of Poetry** is a where a person, a nation or an institution is ridiculed and degraded. The degradation is achieved mainly by evoking scorn, contempt and laughter. Satire was the predominant form of poetry in the Restoration period and the early eighteenth century.

The satire, as is known, aims at correcting the follies and foibles of the masses by ridiculing them in public. It thus has a corrective aim, behind the facade of scorn and contempt.

The period after the Restoration was marked by political turmoils, laxity of morals and religious conflicts. Alongside such social problems, there was also social progress, with the spread of culture and education as well as the growth of trade and commerce. The overall effect of all these changes was that there was an increase in social consciousness. The poet felt that he was socially committed to comment on these affairs such that they may be corrected. Thus he chose the satire as his medium of expression.

These satires were critical, analytical, objective and strongly topical. Examples of contemporary satires are Samuel Butler's (1613-1680) **Hudibras**

(1663), John Oldham's (1653-1683) **Satyr upon the Jesuits** and John Dryden's (1631-1700) **Absalom and Achitophel** (1681).

The Augustan satire was not an empty rant by the Augustan poet. It has its own justification. Satire arises out of anger and indignation; it is a cultured and political way of venting the poet's anger. The Restoration poet wrote satires with recognisable political as well as social issues, such that the readers were able to enjoy them. The poet, in his own way, invites the participation of the readers by commenting on a mutually known problem. The Augustan satires argue and persuade for a cause, and yet delight at the same time by witty ridicule. Even when a satire is outrageously contemptuous, it assures its readers of the mind of the poet which is aware of the correct mode of values and which hopes to retribute the existing state of affairs.

19.3.3 The Elegy

The third form of poetry was the elegy or the lament over the dead. Most of the elegies comment on the brevity of life and the inevitability of death. They begin with lamentation for the dead and ends on a note of consolation when the poet accepts death. John Dryden's **To the Memory of Mr. Oldham** (1684) is, however, an elegy which does not end on a note of consolation. We shall study the elegy in greater detail, in this section.

Along with these three main genres, there were Alexander Pope's **Imitations of Horace** which have been mentioned before.

UNIT 20 Some Leading Poets

Structure

- 20.1 John Dryden
 - 20.1.1 Biographical Note
 - 20.1.2 *Absalom und Achitophei*
 - 20.1.3 To the Memory of Mr. Oldham
- 20.2 Alexander Pope
 - 20.2.1 Biographical Note
 - 20.2.2 Imitations of Horace
 - 20.2.3 The Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot
- 20.3 Comprehension Exercises
- 20.4 Jonathan Swift
 - 20.4.1 Jonathan Swift's Poetry : A Note
- 20.5 Comprehension Exercise

20.1 JOHN DRYDEN (1631-1700)

20.1.1 Biographical Note

John Dryden (1631-1700) was born in 1631 and was educated at Trinity College, Cambridge. Soon after his graduation in 1654, he went to London, to try out his fortune, when he eventually became a poet. He, however, did not become a poet immediately. He became a civil servant under the Government of Oliver Cromwell, the Puritan ruler of England preceding Charles II. Soon after the death of Oliver Cromwell, Dryden published his **Heroic Stanzas Consecrated to the Memory of His Highness** (1658), Oliver Cromwell, in which he described the military exploits of his Lord Protector. This was Dryden's first appearance as a poet.

Soon after this, Dryden composed **Astraea Redux** to celebrate the Restoration of Charles II in 1660 and followed it up by a **Panegyric** on Charles II's coronation. This was sudden considering the fact that Dryden worked under Cromwell's Government, till then, Dryden's enclaves never failed to criticise this sudden shift of loyalty on his part. Dr. Samuel Johnson (1709-1784), however, supports Dryden in his **Lives of Poets** (1779) Vol. 1 'Life of Waller' p-271 where he says, "if he changed, he changed with the nation."

Dryden remained loyal to the cause of the Monarchy until his death,

after this initial Shift. He was appointed the poet laureate in the year 1671.

Dryden was equally well at ease while writing drama, panegyrics, elegies, epistles, satires or even literary criticism in prose. We shall study him mainly as a satirist **and** a writer of elegies with reference to **Abasalom and Achitophel** and **To the Memory of Mr. Oldham**. The names of some of his other works are **The Conquest of Granada** (1670)—a drama, **All for Love** (1678) also a drama and **Essay of Dramatic Poetry** (1665) a work of criticism in the form of a dialogue.

John Dryden died on 1 May 1700 and was buried first in the yard of the College of Physicians and later in Westminster's Abbey.

20.1.2 Absalom and Achitophel (1681) — John Dryden's Leading Work

A. Political Satire

Absalom and Achitophel (1681) is a political satire written at the request of Charles II. The satire is thoroughly topical and thus, it is imperative to know and understand **the** political condition of England, at the time when the satire was written.

Charles II's England was a Protestant nation. However, it was rumoured, and perhaps it was that Charles II maintained very good relations with France, then the most powerful Catholic country in Europe. This infuriated a faction of Charles' men. The anger of these men increased when the heirless Charles named his brother James Scott, the Duke of York, who was a Roman Catholic, his successor. This decision of Charles, incited many of his countrymen. It finally led to the formation of the Country Party, under the Earl of Shaftesbury, in 1675. The supporters of the Earl of Shaftesbury were anti-Catholic and opposed the King and his brother James. They called themselves the Whigs. The supporters of the King and James Scott, on the other hand, called themselves the Tories.

The mutual confrontation of these two factions resulted in the well-known feud between the Whigs and the Tories. The Whigs, meanwhile, advanced the claim of the Duke of Manmouth, the illegitimate son of Charles II to the throne, as he was a Protestant.

The Occasion

The feud between the Whigs and the Tories came to a head, when in 1678, a certain Titus Oates, a former Jesuit, revealed the 'Popish Plot'. In this plot, Titus recalled that (the very Catholics whom the King supported, were

actually conspiring to usurp his throne, by killing him. Several people were executed on the basis of Titus' revelation. The King was, however, sceptical about the truth of Titus' revelation and after the rejection of Titus' claim by the House of Lords, was assured about the falseness of the plot.

Conditions began to turn in Charles' favour early in 1681. In July, the same year, the principal leader of the opposition, the Earl of Shaftesbury was arrested on grounds of high treason. It was then that the King requested his Poet Laureate to write about the Popish Plot and the offences of the Earl of Shaftesbury. A week before Shaftesbury's trial, Dryden published his **Absalom and Achitophel**.

An Allegory

In writing **Absalom and Achitophel**, Dryden was faced with the delicate situation of interpreting correctly the current political event in a manner that would preserve the honour of the King, the Duke of Manmouth, and the Duke of York. He thus sought the help of a **Biblical allegorical** framework. In this allegorical framework, Dryden equates Charles II, the restored monarch of England to David, the monarch of Israel, who was recalled from Hebron, here symbolical of Scotland. The Duke of Manmouth was disguised as Absalom, the rebellious son of David, and the Earl of Shaftesbury was 'disguised as the arch villain Achitophel, who brings about the discord between Absalom and David. In depicting these figures, Dryden takes care to illustrate how the unsuspecting Manmouth was actually incited by Shaftesbury to an act of rebellion. The satire is devoid of the scathing tone that distinguishes the personal satire **Mac Flecknoe** (1678) but, it faithfully depicts the political situation of England through a novel Biblical allegory.

Text

Here are a few lines from the satire **Absalom and Achitophel**, introducing David Absalom, Achitophel and their mutual interactions.

In pious times, ere priestcraft did begin.	a
Before polygamy was made a sin;	a
When man or many multiplied his kind,	b
Ere one to one was cursedly confjn'd;	b
When nature prompted, and no law denied	c
Promiscuous use of concubine and bride;	c
Then Israie's monarch after ¹ Heaven's ² own heart,	

His vigorous warmth did variously impart
To wives and slaves; and wide as his command,
Scatter'd his Maker's image thro' the land
Michal³, of royal blood, the crown did wear;
A soil ungrateful to the tiller's care :
Not so the rest; for several mothers⁴ bore
To godlike David several sons before.
But since like slaves his bed they did ascend,
No true succession could their seed attend.
Of all this numerous progeny was none
So beautiful, so brave, as Abasalom⁵:
Whether, inspir'd by some diviner lust,
His father got him with a greater gust⁶;
Or that his conscious destiny⁷ made way,
By manly beauty to imperial sway.
Early in foreign fields⁸ he won renown,
With kings and states allied to Israel's crown⁹:
In peace the thoughts of war he could remove,
And seem'd as he were only born for love.
Whate'er he did, was done with so much ease,
In him alone 't was natural to please :
His motions all accompanied with grace¹⁰;
And paradise was open'd in his face.
With secret joy indulgent David view'd
His youthful image in his son renew'd :
To all his wishes nothing he denied;
And made the charming Annabel¹¹ his bride.
What faults he had, (for who from faults is free?)
His father could not, or he would not see.

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Thus prais'd and lov'd the whole youth remain'd, 41
 While David, undisturb'd, in Sion¹² reign'd. 42
 This Plot¹³, which fail'd for want of common sense, 134
 Had yet a deep and dangerous consequence :
 For, as when raging fevers boil the blood,
 The standing lake soon floats into a flood,
 And ev'ry hostile humour¹⁴, which before
 Slept quiet in its channels, bubbles o'ver:
 So several factions from this first ferment
 Work up to foam, and threat the government. 141

 Of these the false Achitopfrel¹⁵ was first; 150
 A name to all succeeding ages curst:
 For close designs and crooked counsels fit;
 Sagacious, bol and turbulent of wit;
 Restless, unfixed in principles and place;
 In pow'r unpleas'd, impatient of disgrace :
 A fiery soul, which, working out its way,
 Fretted¹⁶ the pigmy body¹⁷ to decay,
 And oVr-inform'd¹⁸ the tenement of clay.
 A daring pilot in extremity :
 Pleas'd with the danger, when the waves went high.
 He sought the storms; but, for a calm unfit,
 Would steer too high the sands, to boast his wit.
 Great wits are sure to madness near allied,
 And thin partitions do their bounds¹⁹ divide;
 Else why should he, with wealth and honour blest,

 Refuse his age the needful hours of rest?
 Punish a body which he could not plese;
 Bankrupt of life, yet prodigal²⁰ of ease? 168

In friendship false, implacable in hate; 173
 Resolv'd to ruin or to rule the state. 174
 The wish'd occasion of the Plot²¹ he takes;
 Some circumstances finds, but-more he makes.
 By buzzing emissaries fills the ears
 Of list'ning crowds with jealousies and fears
 Of arbitrary counsel brought to light,
 And proves the king himself a Jebusite.
 Weak arguments! which yet he knew full well
 Were strong with people easy to rebel. 215
 Achitophel still wants a chief, and none 220
 Was found as fit as warlike Abasalom : 221
 Him he attempts with studied arts to please, 228
 And sheeds his venom²² in such words as these :
 "Auspicious prince²³, at whose nativity
 Some royal²⁴ planet rud'd the southern sky;
 Thy longing country's darling and desire;
 Their cloudy pillar²⁵ and their guardian fire :
 Their second Moses, whose extended wand
 Divides the seas, and shows the promis'd land;
 Whose dawing day in every distant age
 Has excus'd the sacred prophets' rage :
 The people's pray'r, the glad diviners' theme,
 The young men's vision, and the old men's dream!
 Thee, Saviour, thee, the nations's views confess'
 And, never satisfies with seeing, bless :
 Swift unbespoken pomps thy steps proclaim,
 And stammering babes are taught to lisp thy name.
 How long wilt then the general joy detain,

Starve and defraud the people of thy reign? 245

What cannot praise effect in mighty minds, 303

When flattery soothers, and when ambition blinds!

Desire of pow'r, on earth a vicious weed,

Yet, sprung from high, is of celestial seed :

In God't is glory; and when men aspire,

"T is but a spark too much of heavenly fire,

Th' ambitious youth, too covetous of fame,

Too full of angels' metal³⁷ in his frame,

Unwarily was led from virtue's ways,

Made drunk with honour, and debauch'd with praise.

Half loth, and half consenting to the ill,

(For loyal blood within him struggled still,)

He thus replied : "And what pretense have I

To take up arms for public liberty?

My father governs with unquestion'd right;

The faith's defender, and mankind's delight;

Good, gracious, just, observant of the laws :

And Heav'n by wonders²⁸ has espous'd his cause.

Whom has he wrong'd in all peaceful reign?

Who sues for justice to his throne in vain?

What millions has he pardon'd of his foes,

Whom just revenge did to his wrath expose?

Mild, easy, humble, studious of our good;

Inclin'd to mercy, and averse from blood;

If mildness ill with stubborn Israel suit,

His crime is God's beloved attribute.

What could he gain, his people to betray.

Or change his right for arbitrary sway?

Let haughty Pharaoh curse with such a reign
 His fruitful Nile, and youke a servile train.
 If David's rule Jerusalem displease,
 The Dog-star²⁹ heats their brains to this disease.
 Why then should I, encouraging the bad,
 Turn reble and run probably mad?
 Were he a tyrant, who, by lawless might
 Oppress'd the Jews, and rais'd the Jebusite,
 Well might I mourn; but nature's holy bands³⁰
 World curb my spirits and restrain my hands :
 The people might assert then liberty;
 But what was right in them were crime in me.
 His favour leaves me nothing to require,
 Prevents my wishes, and outruns desire.
 What more can I expect while David lives?

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Glossary

Lines 1-36

Lines 1-2—These lines refer to a remote Biblical period.

1. Israel's monarch — this refers to David and in actuality Charles II who is compared to David. In the 1st Book of Samuel, 13:14 Old Testament we see that "The lord sought him a man after his own heart."
2. Heaven's own heart—Reference to God. Refer the above reference I Samuel 13:14.
3. Michal — Michal was David's wife. The reference here is to the childless Catherine of Braganza who married Charles II in 1662. Michal too was childless like Catherine of Braganza.
4. several mothers — Charles had extramarital relations with a number of women. He had several illegitimate children through them.
5. Absalom — The reference is to Charles, illegitimate son through Lucy Walter, who was created the Duke of Manmouth. He was a brave commander of Charles forces in the Scottish campaign of 1679.

6. gust — gusto; zest
7. conscious destiny — his awareness of the fact that he was destined for greatness.
8. foreign fields — Manmouth was in command of the English troops in several campaigns and distinguished himself as a brave fighter. This particular reference is to the confrontation with the French against the Dutch (1672-73) and with the Dutch against the French (1678)
9. ailed to Israel's crown — Holland and France, the two other countries which were connected with England.
10. accompanied with grace — Manmouth was well-known for his outward graces and popularity with women.
11. Annabel—Anne, Countess of Baccleuch (1651-1732), was married to Manmouth in 1663. She was justly celebrated for her beauty and intelligence. Dryden deemed her 'my first and best patroness' and dedicated his play **The Indian Emperor** to her.
12. Sion — Here denotes London.
13. Plot. — Reference to the Popish plot.
14. hostile humour — morbid fluid in the Body. The reference is from medieval physiology. According to this physiology, the humours are body fluids produced in the liver. The extent of the presence of these fluids determines the temperament of a person.
15. Achitophel — The reference is to Anthony Ashley Cooper (1621-1683), Earl of Shaftesbury. In the Biblical story Achitophel was David's treacherous-counsellor. Dryden borrowed his spelling from the Latin Vulgate; the authorised version of the Bible spells the name as 'Ahithophel'.
16. Fretted — eroded.
17. pigmy body — a reference to Shaftesbury's puny stature. Dryden hints that Shaftesbury's 'pigmy body' is too small for his "fiery soul".
18. O'er inform'd — filled to overflowing; that is the soul, which should be the form of mind and body, is here too restless to serve that limited function.
19. bounds — bounds of genius (wit) and madness.
20. prodigal — spendthrift.
21. The wish'd occasion of the Plot — Though Shaftesbury had no hand in the invention of the Popish Plot, he appears to have utilised it for his

- own ends. He is supposed to have said : 'I will not say who started the game, but I am sure I had the full hunting of it.'
22. sheds his venom — The reference is to the serpent's (Satan's) temptation of Eve in Milton's **Paradise Lost Book IX**.
 23. Auspicious — fortunate.
 24. royal — promising kingship.
 25. cloudy pillar... fire — In the flight of the Israelites from Egypt, the "Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light" (Exodus 13:21 Old Testament).
 26. Ref U **all** 303 ff— Dryden presents Manmouth as a victim of circumstances and cleverly places all the blame on Shaftesbury.
 27. angels' metal — the metal of angels (gold coins); the ambition (mettle) that led the angels to rebel.
 28. Wonders — signs of divine favour.
 29. **The** Dog-star — Reference to Sirian, which appears in late summer and was **supposed** by the Romans to bring heat and induce madness.
 30. bands — bonds.
 31. Prevents — anticipates.

Discussion

In the first few lines (U 1-36 and 11 41-42) we are introduced to Charles II and his wife Catherine of **Braganza** as David and Michal, their Biblical counterparts. In a uniquely panegyric manner Dryden defends David's and indirectly Charles II's licentiousness as a **mark** of freedom, saying that Charles' polygamous attitude was but a means to **propagate his** own image in the many offsprings he thus produced.

We are introduced to the best offspring among them all, Absalom, whom we knew to be the Duke of Manmouth, Charles II's illegitimate son by Lucy Walter. Dryden describes Absalom's great beauty and his military conquest. Absalom Charles' prototype, being wellknown for his outward graces and for his popularity among women.

The introducing of Absalom is followed by a description of Jerusalem, which is Dryden's London. The feud between the Whigs and the Tories is hinted in the next few lines and the 'Popish Plot'¹ is also mentioned. In the next few extracted lines (11 134-141), we are told about the dangerous

consequence of the Popish Plot. Then, in the next few lines (11 150-168), we are introduced to Achitophel or the Earl of Shaftesbury. The name of Achitophel, had by Dryden's time become a byword for a wicked politician and could thus be conveniently used for the Earl of Shaftesbury, who opposed the King. In the above lines, we are told about how Shaftesbury was wise, bold, had a fiery personality and was with so much vigour and energy that it overcame his small and diminutive stature. It seems that Shaftesbury was extremely pleased with the havoc wrought in the state and would do his best to ruin the rule of the state. Accordingly, triggered by the unrest caused by the political feud, Shaftesbury searches political allies and eventually settles on Absalom, David's son. In order to accomplish the end of ruining the state. Achitophel also relies on the gullibility of the common people who could easily be influenced by strong rumours and exaggerated untruths. (Ref 11 208-215).

Achitophel then approaches Absalom with many praises of the young prince. Achitophel lauds the hour of Absalom's birth saying that he alone could become the pillar of strength in this hour of national crisis. Achitophel further hail Absalom saying that he is like Moses who went to the extent of dividing the Red Sea to bring the Israelites to the 'promised land' of hope and glory. Absalom alone is the saviour of his country which is now among the strictest political insurgency. He further adds that the nation's hope in him is so deep rooted, and conviction in him so universal that even infants are thought to chant his name, in the hope of imminent glory.

Achitophel's address to Absalom is on the lines of the formal panegyric, whereby lines of praise are addressed to a hero. The role of Achitophel inciting Absalom has often been compared with that of Satan tempting Eve, who in turn tempts Adam to an act of gross disobedience, that is. to eat the fruit of the forbidden tree, in the Garden of Eden. (Cf. John Milton's **Paradise Lost**). Satan, too, tempts Eve by flattering and wins her over, in spite of her resistance, albeit feeble.

Absalom, too resists Achitophel's flattery in the beginning. In the lines extracted above (11 303-345) Dryden defends the Duke of Manmouth. He says that it is very natural that a young man like Absalom (that is, the Duke of Manmouth) should be tempted by such unstinted flattery by Achitophel. However, he says that in spite of being "drunk with honour" and "debauch'd with praise" Absalom was "half loth, and half consenting to the ill" of rebelling against his own father. Thereafter, Absalom launches on a panegyric of his father David, that is Charles II. In this panegyric he lays utmost confidence

on the supreme authority of David (Charles II) to rule as he pleases during his lifetime, without the interaction of anybody even his own son.

In this way, Dryden makes it very clear that more than being a self-instigated rebellion against his father, Absalom was actually motivated by the shrewd Achitophel, to rise against his own father. In this way the evil nature of the Earl of Shaftesbury is established and his epithet of being an arch villain is justified.

The satire is written in the dignified measure of the heroic couplet, that is, lines written in iambic pentameter and rhyming aa, bb, cc and so on. It is interesting to see how all the complications of a political plot, and the elaborate Biblical Symbolism is deftly fitted in the narrow boundaries of nearly sculpted couplets. The order, harmony and poise of these couplets are illustrative of the classical nature of the satire.

20.1.3 To the Memory of Mr. Oldham (1684) — John Dryden

This elegy has already been introduced in the section on **The Language of Poetry**, under 'Different kinds of Poetry'. The poem is as follows :

Text: To the Memory of Mr. Oldham

Farewell, too little, and too lately known,
Whom I began to think and call my own :
For sure our souls were near allied, and thine
Cast in the same poetic mould with mine
One common note on either Jyre did strike,
And knaves and fools we both abhorred alike.
To the same goal did both our studies drive;
The last set out the soonest did arrive.
Thus Nissus fell upon the slippery place,
While his young friend performed and won the race.
O early ripe! to thy abundant store
What could advancing age have added more?
It might (what nature never gives the young)
Have taught the numbers of thy native tongue.
But satire needs not those, and wit will shine

Through the harsh cadence of a rugged line :
A noble error, but seldom made,
When poets are by too much force betrayed.
Thy generous fruits, though gathered ere their prime,
Still showed a quickness; and maturing time
But mellows what we write to the dull sweets of rhyme.
Once more, hail and farewell; farewell them young,
But ah too short, Marcellus of one tongue;
Thy brows with ivy, and with laurels bound;
But fate and gloomy night encompass thee around.

Note:

[A Glossary and a brief Paraphrase of the above elegy is already provided in the fious section of **The Laneuaae of Poetry.**]

Discussion

The Elegy was one of the major poetry forms of the Augustan period. The general pattern of the elegy as prevalent in the Augustan period, was a lamentation for the dead followed by consolation and at times even apotheosis or deification of the dead. Dryden's moving elegy **To the Memory of Mr. Oldham** (1684) written at the unexpected and premature death of the promising young satirist John Oldham (1653-1683) is an exception.

The poem begins on a note of loss and lamentation and the untimely death of the promising satirist. Dryden earnestly misses his young contemporary with whom he had struck a common chord of friendship. He lingers on Oldham's poetic glories for some time and pays a genuine tribute to his brief lasting literary genius. No sooner he pays his tribute than does Dryden realise, perhaps resignedly, the inevitability of death.

In the last four lines of the elegy, Dryden compares Oldham with Marcellus, the young nephew of Augustan, who died prematurely. The next two lines are almost a literal translation from the sixth book of Virgil's **Alenied**, where Dryden says with fatalistic surity that the gloomy darkness of death surrounds Oldham in an inevitable manner.

The allusions and the literal translation of Virgil give the poem an epical quality. An expic never consoles, but boldly portrays the death of the hero which is inevitable and expected. Dryden too, does not end on a note of consolation, but boldly accepts the inevitability of Oldhan's death. There is no escaping of truth by false consolation and unrealistic deification. Here

is poem which boldly and nobly confronts death. The heroic measure of the heroic couplet once again adds dignity and poise to the solemn elegy.

Exercises on *Absalom and Achitophel* and *To the Memory of Mr. Oldham*

1. Write in your own words what you think of
 - (a) David
 - (b) Absalom, and
 - (c) Achitophel.
2. ***Absalom and Achitophel*** is a political as well as a topical satire. Do you agree? If so, why?
3. Critically analyse Dryden's *To the Memory of Mr. Oldham*.

20.2 ALEXANDER POPE (1688-1744)

20.2.1 Biographical Note

Alexander Pope (1688-1744) was born on May 21, 1688 to the family of a Catholic linen-draper. In the contemporary Protestant England, Catholics were forbidden by law to own land or to live within ten miles of London. Pope's father retired soon after his birth and moved to Windsor Forest where they lived. Much later in life, Pope himself rented a villa at Twickenham, near London, but well outside the ten-mile limit.

Pope had never had any kind of formal education. He was initially taught by the family priest and later at two schools, but returned to stay at home, at the age of twelve. As a Catholic, he was denied admission to a university, the right to hold public office and was also subject to double taxation. Pope was further plagued by his enemies who, apart from taunting him for his Catholic identity, also rebuked his dwarf-like stature and his crooked, deformed body which was the result of an adolescent tubercular ailment.

Pope's health and religious identity debased him from becoming a part of the larger society. He could never become an active member of the society, which was a requisite of the contemporary literary tradition. Pope was thus different from his predecessor John Dryden, who occupied a pivotal position in public life.

Regardless of his confined lifestyle, Pope was fortunate enough to be early acquainted with the great and aged Restoration dramatist William Wycherley (1640-1715), through his neighbour Sir William Trembull, in 1705. Pope's unequal friendship with the great Wycherley helped him immensely, especially since he introduced Pope to William Walsh (1663-1708), the

distinguished critic. It was to Walsh that Dryden bequeathed the sceptre of his critical prose. Pope had a tremendous respect for Walsh, who had a potent influence on the young poet's verification. Walsh was the first person to imbibe in Pope the urge to produce "correct" poetry, typical of the classicists. It was from him that Pope learnt the importance of "correctness" and judgement.

By 1705, Pope published his **Pastorals** or seasonal eclogues, in the manner of Virgil, in 1711 he published his great **Essay of Criticism**, in 1714 he published his mock-heroic satire **The Rape of the Lock** where contemporary fashions of London are ridiculed. **The Dunciad** which is deeply influenced by Dryden's **Mac Flecknow** (1678) was published in 1729. His **Essay on Man** was published in 1731-33 and his **imitations of Horace** of which the **Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot** (1734-35) is a part, was published in 1740.

Alexander Pope had a great talent for friendship. In the year 1712, he met Jonathan Swift (1665-1745). Along with Dr. John Arbuthnot (1667-1735) physician to Queen Anne and a poet, and other friends. Pope established the **Scriblerus Club**, to ridicule false and pedantic learning. The club published many papers, presumably written by a fictitious Martinus Scriblerus a leaden-witted, pedantic and indefatigable searcher after curiosities and verable subtleties. The Scriblerus Clubn afforded a satirist's glimpse of the contemporary society.

20.2.2 Imitations of Horace

The fundamental nature of Pope's **Imitations of Horace** has been discussed in an earlier section. The term "imitation" was first given currency by Dryden, when he distinguished among three kinds of translation : metaphrase, or word-by-word literal translation; paraphrase, or a translation that retains the meaning of the original but does so by departing from strict literalness; and finally imitation which departs freely from the original text to create a new poem in its spirit, using the experience of a new age to take the place of earlier material. Pope's **Imitations of Horace** are of this order.

The essence of an 'imitation' lies in the fact that its reader is made aware of the original text from which the poet departs and recognises the variation from the original, in the same manner as one does in parody. Some of Pope's satires are direct imitations of Horace and were often published side by side. The readers were thus made conscious of the difference between the two texts. While they were assured of the contemporary appeal of Pope's

poems they could discuss the basic similarity of form and manner they had with Horace.

Apart from being direct imitations of Horatian models, some of Pope's poems were written in the Horatian manner but without any precise model. **The Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot** (1735) is such an example. [The word 'epistle' means a letter, and a literary epistle is a poem in the form of a letter. It has been derived from the Horatian epistle to a friend, and is mainly used to accommodate the more intimate, colloquial and conversational tone of a poem.]

20.2.3 The Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot (1735)

Introduction

Alexander Pope regarded his **Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot** as the **Prologue** or introduction to his Horatian Satires. This one of Pope's original satires written on Horatian lines, but without any specific model. It is addressed to Dr. John Arbuthnot (1667-1735), Pope's longtime friend and a member of the **Scriblerus Club**. Dr Arbuthnot was a physician in ordinary to Queen Anne, and was a man of high reputation, amongst all who knew him, as doctor and a man of culture. Even Jonathan Swift, who is often charged with misanthropy, said about Dr. Arbuthnot (in a letter to Alexander Pope, dated 29th September, 1725) : "O. if the World had not a dozen Arbuthnots in it. I would burn my Travells". including his own works.

Occasion

The **Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot** was most probably written at speed in 1734, although it was published on 2 January, 1735 at a time when Arbuthnot was in his last illness. In the **Advertisement** to the Epistle where he speaks in defence of his Epistle, he says that its writing was motivated by the request of his 'learned and candid Friend to whom it is inscribed' (meaning Dr. Arbuthnot). The Epistle is a satire of all those hacks and poetasters who criticised and attacked not only Pope's poetry but also his "Person, Morals and Family". It is to be recalled that Pope was constantly being rebuked on account of his physical deformity and his Catholic identity. Among the persons satirised here are Lord Henry and the notorious Lady Mary Wortley Montagu who had collaborated in producing the **Verses Address'd to the Imitator of Horace**, against Pope. They are satirised respectively as Sporus, alluding to the homosexual favourite of the notorious Roman Emperor Nero, and as Sappho the Greek poetess of easy and free morals.

Pope's Objective

This Epistle. Pope declares, is a reply to their indiscriminate attacks. In his **Advertisement** Pope writes "Being divided between the necessity to say something of **myself**, and my own laziness to undertake so awkward a task, I thought it the shortest way to put the last hand to this Epistle. If it have anything pleasing, it will be that by which I am most desirous to please, the **truth** and the **sentiment**"

It is interesting to see as to what Pope meant by "Truth". By "Truth" Pope meant fact and the actualities of the life around him. At times, satire meant to him, merely a record of these actualities. This is, in turn, directly in keeping with Pope's own concept of classicism. In a letter to Swift, Pope defines his range of representation and in effect underlines his classicism. He writes, "My system is a short one and my circle narrow. Imagination has no limits, and that is a sphere in which you may move on to eternity; but where one is confined to truth, or, to speak more like human creature, to the appearances of truth, we soon find the shortness of our tether"

Some Extracts

The first few lines of the Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot (1735) are extracted here :

Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot

Being the prologue to satires

1. P.¹ shut, shut the door, good John²! fatigued, I said,
2. Tie up the knocker, say I'm sick, I'm dead.
3. The Dog-star³ rages! may tis past a doubt,
4. All Bedlam, or Parnasus⁴, is let out:
5. Fire in each eye, and papers in each hand,
6. They rave, recite⁵, and madden round the land.
7. What walls can guard me, or what shades can hide?
8. They pierce my thickets, through my grot⁶ they glide;
9. By land, by water⁷, they renew the charge;
10. They stop the chariot, and they board the barge⁸.
11. No place is sacred, not the church is free;
12. Even Sunday shines no sabbath-day⁹ to me :

13. Then from the Mint¹⁰ walks forth the man of rhyme,
14. Happy! to catch me at dinner-time.
15. Is there a parson, much bemused in beer,¹¹
16. A maudlin poetess, a rhyming peer.
17. A clerk, foredoomed his father's soul to cross.
18. Who pens a stanza, when he should engross¹².
19. Is there, who, locked from ink and paper, scrawls
20. With desperate charcoal round his darkened walls?¹³
21. ALL fly to TWIT NAM,¹⁴ and in humble strain
22. Apply to me, to keep them mad or vain
23. Arthur,¹⁵ whose giddy son neglects the Laws,
24. Imputes to me and my damned works the cause :
25. Poor Cornus¹⁶ sees his frantic wife elope,
26. And curses wit, and poetry, and Pope.
27. Friend to my life⁷! (which did not you prolong,
28. The world had wanted many an idle song)
29. What drop or nostrum¹⁸ can this plague remove?
30. Or which must end me, a fool's wrath or love?
31. A dire dilemma! either way I'm sped¹⁹
32. If foes, they write, if friends, they read me dead.
33. seized and tied down²⁰ to judge, how wretched I!
34. Who can't be silent, and who will not lie;
35. To laugh were want of goodness and of grace,
36. And to be grave exceeds all power of face.
37. I sit with sad civility, I read
38. With honest anguish, and an aching head;
39. And drop at last, but in unwilling ears,
40. This saving counsel, 'Keep your pieee nine years.^{21*}
41. 'Nine years!' cries he, who high in Drury Lane²²,
42. Kulled by soft zephyrs through the broken pane,

43. Rhymes ere he wakes, and prints before Term²³ ends,
 44. Obliged by hunger, and request of friends²⁴.
 45. 'The piece, you think, is incorrect? Why, take it,
 46. I'm all submission; what you'd have it make if.
 47. Three things another's modest wishes bound :
 48. My friendship, and a prologue²⁵, and ten pound
 49. Pitholeon²⁶ sends to me : you knew his Grace;
 50. I want a patron; ask him for a place²⁷.
 51. Pitholeon libelled me — 'but here's a letter
 52. Informs you, sir, 'twas when he knew no better.
 53. Dare you refuse him? Curll²⁸ invites to dine;
 54. He'll write a Journal, or he'll turn divine²⁹'.

Glossary

1. P.— all comments by Pope himself are denoted by the letter P.
2. good John— John Serle, Pope's servant and gardener.
3. Dor-star— Sirius, the star, which appears at the time of late summer heat, the reference is from Horace's *Odes II xiii. 9.* The glossary to *Absalon and Achitopiel* too may be referred for similar reference,
4. Bedlam or Parnassus— this is reference to the inhabitants of the madhouse Bedlam which as the madmen imagine, is their Parnassus, which in reality is the mountation of Muses.
5. recite— the **recitafor acerbus**, who insists on making others listen to his own poetry, is a common figure of a bore in the literature of Augustan Rome. Reference to such a bore is made in 11 474-6 of Horace's *De Arte Poetica* (The Art of Poerty). It is interesting to see how Pope incorporates the Horatian example into a contemporary context.

6. grot— Pope's grotto in the garden of Twickenham. This was an underground retreat and Pope spent much time in beautifying this cave. He encrusted it with shells and minerals.
7. water— Pope's house was on the Thames.
8. barge— Pope often travelled between London and Twickenham in a barge.
9. Sabbath-day— The seventh day of the week. The Christian day of rest.
10. Mint— A section of Southwark, where debtors could stay without fear of arrest. On Sunday, however, there were no arrests anywhere, which is why this rhymester gets out of his sanctuary. There was once a Mint at this place.
11. bemused in beer — Pope here, is most probably alluding to the late poet laureate Lawrence Eusden (1688-1730), who was also a person and notoriously fond of drink.
12. engross— copying of legal document
13. darkened walls— in confinement, probably in Bedlam
14. Twit'nam— meaning Twickenham, Pope's house.
15. Arthur— the reference is probably to Arthur Moore (1666-1730) and his son James Moore Smythe (1720-1734). The father was self-made and serious man in the world of business and politics; his son on the other hand, was a man of property and leisure, a minor writer, who has attracted and perhaps even plagiarized from Pope.
16. Cornus— The word denotes a cuckold or the husband of an unfaithful wife. A cuckold wears a pair of horns on his head. The word Cornus is derived from the Latin word Cornu. or a horn. The man here is called Cornus to denote that he is a cuckold.

17. Friend to my Life!— Pope addresses Arbuthnot.
18. drop or nostrum — cures
19. sped— sped to his grave
20. tied down— the reference is from William Wyuncherley's play **The Plain Darler** Act V Scene 3, where the widow is tied down and gagged by old fox so she may listen to his "well-penned acrostics" Pope says that he, too is similarly "tied down" forcefully to listen to these poetasters.
21. "Keep your piece nine years— In Horace's **Art of Poetry**, he advises the would-be poet to store his writing for eight years, to avoid ignominy, after the lapse of which time, he could erase his writing. Words uttered once, he says can never be reclaimed. Horace's advice to the young ambitious poets was, in effect, not to publish their writing immediately. Pope draws on this advice and here tells the poetasters around him to "keep the piece" for nine years so that "peace" could be maintained.
22. Drury Lane— The disreputable quarters of London. Drury Lane, was the street of theatres, prostitutes, and here - of writers in garrets.
23. Term— denoting law court Term, but here, specially, the publishing sea-son.
24. Obliged by hunger, and request of friends— Most of the poems written at speed were prefaced saying that they were motivated by requests from friends, when actually it was the poet's hunger which prompted him to quickly produce another piece, for money.
25. Prologue— The prologue was often sought from well-known writer to help a play succeed. For a poet of Pope's reputation ot have written a prologue to any new

play would have been an invaluable asset to the play's author. The writing of prologue, at this time, was a service often rendered by popular authors to less successful ones.

26. Pitholeon— A foolish and pretentious poet mentioned by Horace, here a modern counterpart seeking influence with a nobleman.
27. place— position.
28. Curll— Edmund Curll (1675-1747) a notorious publisher of hacks with whom Pope had had many a tussle and battle of wits. The point of the present line is that pitholeon, once rejected by Pope, would get help from Curll in doing pope some mischief such as writing libels or forging his works.
29. Journal-divine— that is, he will sell his talents in party politics or in religious controversies.

Paraphrase

Pope seems to be pestered by all the hacks and poetasters, whom he calls madmen let free from Bedlam. There is no respite from these madmen. Neither the walls of his house at Twickenham, his favourite grotto in the garden nor the Church-is free from their attacks. The inebriated person, or the stray poetaster or even the clerk who must write the legal documents and now writes poems — all follow him to Twickenham to disturb his peace, Arthur Moore accuses him for his son's failure and the cuckold Cornus lays the blame of his wife's elopement on Pope's poetry.

He appeals to Dr. Arbuthnot, the physician for a cure from this ceaseless onslaught of fools and poetasters at his door. He likens his plight to the widow in William Wycherley's **The Plain Deale** (1677), who was tied down forcefully so that she could listen to the rhymes. It is ridiculous to listen to their nonsense, yet, one cannot laugh for want of grace. When disgusted, Pope offers them the Horatian advice of keeping their poems unpublished to themselves for nine years, he is met with inexpressible surprise from the garret writers of Dury Lane. These hack writers write vigorously to come out of their poverty and get their works published in no time.

He mentions one such writer Pitholeon, who comes to him to get the prologue of his play written by Pope. The risk often runs into, by refusing

these hacks is that they next seek the assistance of the notorious Edmund Curll, who encourages forging texts or reputed authors.

Discussion

In the **Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot**, Pope presents himself as a man of peace literally pushed and goaded into satire and criticism, by the intolerable behaviour of fools and knaves around him. This picture is not altogether false; Pope was disturbed by many such poetasters. Nevertheless, his pose here, as a contented, peace-loving poet, surrounded on all sides by flatterers and poetasters is deliberately heightened, as it were, in its presentation of the author as above the literary battle of his day, and only drawn in, by force. From the very opening line, the tune of contempt towards the mob of ordinary writers is strong, and it is maintained through out the poem.

However, to say that there is only scorn for the poetasters, in this poem or that the ruling emotion is that of scorn, would be to ignore the pleasantness of the satire. There is plenty of humour in the description of Pope's plight, in the running of Arther Moore and Cornus the cucked and even in the presentation of Pitholeon. The humour and the pleasantness associated with satire is a Horatian feature which Pope inherited from his august predecessor.

It is also interesting to see how Pope uses the Horatian references for his own contemporary events of the day. The poem is full of Horatian allusions, yet the tone of the poem is colloquial, in the sense that it has the realistic effect of conversation. It is the colloquial idiom of the poem, which accounts for its pleasantness. It is also interesting to realize that Pope uses the Horatian allusions freely, in the sense that he pre-supposes the literary sensibility in his audience. One might argue that this **Epistle** was specially addressed to Dr. Arbuthnot, but it is also true that it was published as the 'prologue to the satires', for the greater public, who like Dr. Arbuthnot were well-schooled in the Classics, especially those of Horace and Juvenal. Thus, we see the deft intermingling of the Horatian reference to the 'dog-star' with the colloquial imperatives of "shut! shut the door" in the opening lines of the poem. It is interesting that the same reference to the 'Dog-star' would probably call for a contemporary study of astrology if Spenser were to use it in his works. But, Pope's audience were well versed in Horace to quickly recognise the Horatian reference in Pope, and equally skilled in appreciating Pope's use of the allusion in a familiar surrounding.

Pope's use of the heroic couplet is both interesting as well as novel. No

other poet has confined himself so strictly as Pope has done to a single meter, and yet used it is so much variety. Pope's greatest triumph in the couplet lies in his making it dramatic. He conveys the effect of actual, passionate speech in the harrow and confined space of the couplet. This is extremely interesting especially when we think that the Elizabethans chose the blank verse, instead of the couplets, in order to portray the realistic effects of speech. Pope's rendering of the heroic couplet is unique in the sense that far from being a mechanical meter, he has now imbibed into it great life and vitality,, that sparkless with drama.

20.3 COMPREHENSION EXERCISES

1. Try and paraphrase 11 1-26 explaining ailthe allusions.
 2. Write a note on how Pope uses the Horatian references to suit his contemporary period.
 3. What satirical elements have you found in the extracted lines of the text?
 4. Paraphrase the remaining lines 27 to 54 and explain all the allusions.
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20.4 JONATHAN SWIFT (1667-1745)

Biographical Note

Jonathan Swift was born in Ireland (Dublin) of English parents on 30th November 1667. His father, the elder Jonathan Swift was a Herefordshire man while his mother hailed from Leicestershire, Jonathan Swift was born posthumously, amidst great poverty and had to be supported by the charity of his relatives. He studied at Trinity College, Dublin from where he got his B.A. in 1686.

Swift was reckless and of an uncouth temperament which made him very unpopular in college. It was then that his mother remembered Sir William Temple, a retired diplomat, as one of her relatives. She sought his patronage for her son and was not refused Temple accepted Swift as his secretary. Unfortunately, however, Temple has a difficult time adjusting with Swift's uncouth manners. His service at Temple's residence was interrupted by his visits to Ireland. In 1692, he took his MA. degree from Oxford and it was at this time that after gaining some reputation due to Temple's patronage, he started writing poetry, at the age of twenty-five.

Swift's first poetic works were four **Pindaric Odes** written in the manner of Abraham Oowley, Reading Swift's poetry, Dryden, who was his relative,

is believed to have said, "Cousin Swift, you will never be a poet"! Swift, at that time, however, never wrote much and was less eager to have them printed. He was then solely under the shadow of Sir William Temple, who was himself a very great writer. In 1694, Swift once again left Temple's household, to return to Ireland, where he took a priest's orders in Dublin. The solitude of a priest's life, however, disgusted him and soon after he once again returned to Temple's household. This was the third and the final time that Swift came to Temple. By then, it may be assumed that both Temple and Swift developed respect and admiration for each other.

Sir William Temple died in 1699. It was probably in 1696-97 that Swift wrote his first major original works. These were written in prose and were satires on contemporary issues. *A Tale of Tub* and *The Battle of the Books* though written in the late 1690's were, however, published in 1704. Here, it is important to mention that Swift is remembered more for his excellent prose which later influenced the great essayists of the eighteenth century, rather than his poetry. In poetry, it was certainly the genius of Alexander Pope which triumphed.

Jonathan Swift is often criticised as a misanthrope for treating his characters with great malevolence and irony. None of Swift's characters are allowed much comfort or dignity. Swift's method is usually to reduce the grand pretensions of his characters into follies in his satires. He always tries to find a rational basis for the follies of human beings which lead them to catastrophes. In this way, he tries to find a reason for every folly, in an attempt to explain the unspeakable cause of a wrong. Swift also tries to show the difference between a usually noble intention and its usually shabbier achievement. Thus, in *Gulliver's Travels* (1726), we see that in the island of the Laputians, in an attempt to lead a logical and systematic life, the islanders have actually reduced themselves to comical and ridiculous mechanical entities. Thus, more than being a misanthrope, Swift may be said to be a very harsh commentator of human nature.

Swift was a principal spokesman and propagandist of the Tories and expressed his views freely in *The Examiner*, a contemporary periodical and also in political pamphlets such as *The Conduct of the Allies* (J 713). As mentioned earlier, Swift was a founder member of the Scriblerus Club, along with Alexander Pope and Dr. John Arbuthnot. From the year 1713, after the Fall of the Tories, Swift went into a long Irish exile and his visits to England became infrequent. He became an Irish patriot, trying to stir the Irish self-respect and teaching them resistance to British exploitation. At this time he

wrote his great **Dryden's Letters** (1724-25) through which he won a considerable battle against Sir Robert Walpole.

Swift enjoyed the companionship of two women, Esther Johnson (1681-1728) or Stella, whom he met at the house of Temple and Hester Vanhomerigh (1691-1723) also known as Vanessa. Swift enjoyed private correspondence with both of them, till they both died. His service of birthday poems to Stella, written to Stella, every year show how honest feelings may be conveyed without any complications of style. His famous **Journal to Stella**, is a collection of letters in which Swift writes about his minutest doing and sayings. These letters reveal, to a great extent the identity of Swift as a man, tender and understanding.

Stella's death in January 1728 gave a serious blow to Swift, after which he wrote more in verse. Among some of the poems written then were **Strephen and Cloe** (1731) and **on the Death of Dr. Swift** (1731).

Swift suffered chronically from labyrinthine vertigo, which is a disease of the middle ear that disturbed his sense of balance. It was this disease which finally led to his death in 1745, a year after that of Pope.

20.4.1 Janathan Swift's Poetry: A Note

Swift's poetic career began with the few Pindanic odes that he wrote in the manner of Abraham Cowley. In the very few poems that he wrote after this initial attempt, we deduce in his style, a dry and colloquial tone which undercuts all pretension. So we see in his **Baucis and Phileman** (1708). There is a grim picture of the Judgement Day in **The Day of Judgement** (1731) which is written in a caustic style. Swift also wrote "City" poems in which he echoes the indifference, the impersonality and the squalor that characterised the London of his times, in a matter-of-fact manner which emphasises the realism contained in the poems. **A Description of the Morning** (1709) is such a poem. In the birthday poems written to Stella, however, we find a Swift who is tender, loving and caring. These poems are written with honest feelings of love and affection for his dearest friend and have a distinct conversational tone.

The poem that we shall study, **Stella's Birthday** written for March 13, 1727, is the very last of the series of Swift's birthday poems to Stella. In the very next year, 1728, on January 28, Stella died.

Introduction

The poem **Stella's Birthday** was composed for Stella's birthday, 13, March,

1727. When this poem was written, Stella was already suffering from her last illness and it seems that Swift was aware of the fact that his best companion would leave him soon. It is believed that as early as 1726, Stella's illness made him weary of life and it is also believed that Swift fled from Ireland to England, in horror lest he should witness her death, It is also believed that a few months before Stella's death, there was a marked change in Swift's character and temper. His disease, the labyrinthine vertigo, became worse. In this poem, we see that Swift is trying to recapture their former happy memories in an effort to re-live them. The poem is long and persuasive and is an attempt to convince the sick friend of her worth and importance, which would, in turn, inspire her to live better.

Text

Stella's Birthday¹

March 13, 1727

This day, whatever the fates decree,
Shall still² be kept with joy be me :

This day then let us not be told,
That you are sick, and I grown old;
Nor think on our approaching ills,
And talk of spectacles and pills;
Tomorrow³ will be time enough
To hear such mortifying⁴ stuff.

Yet, since from reason⁵ may be brought
A letter and more pleasing thought,
Which can, in spite of all decays,
Support a few remaining days;
From not the gravest of divines
Accept for once some serious lines.

Although we now can form no more
Long schemes of life, as here to fore;
Yet you, while time is running fast⁶,
Can look with joy on what is past.

Were future happiness and pain
A mere contrivance of the brain;

As atheists aruge, to entice
And fit their proselytes⁷ for vice;
(The only comfort they propose,
To have companions in their woes)
Grant this the case; yet sure 'tis hard
That virtue, styled its own reward,
And by all sages understood
To be the chief of human good.
Should acting die, nor leave behind
Some lasting pleasure in the mind,
Which, by remembrance⁸, will assuage
Grief, sickness, poverty, and age;
And strongly short a radiant dart
To shine through life's declining part.

Say, Stella, feel you no content,
Reflecting on a life well spent?
Your skilful hand employed to save
Despairing wretches from the grave;
And then supporting with your stone⁹
Those whom you dragged from death before :¹⁰
So Providence on mortals waits,
Preserving what, it first creates.
Your generous boldness to defend
An innocent and absent friend;
That courage which can make you just
To merit humbled in the dust;
The detestation you express
For vice in all its glittering dress;
That patience under torturing pain;
Where stubborn Stoics would complain,
Must these" like empty shadows pass,
Or forms reflected from a glass?
Or mere chimeras¹² in the mind,

That fly and leave no marks behind?
Does not the body thrive and grow
By food of twenty years ago?
And, had it not been still supplied,
It must a thousand times have died.
Then who with reason can maintain
That no effects of food remain?
And is not virtue¹³ in mankind
The nutriment that feeds the mind;
Upheld by each good action past,
And still continued by the last?
Then, who with reason can pretend
That all effects of virtue end?

Believe me, Stella, when you show
That true contempt for Rings below,
Nor prize your life for other ends
Than merely to oblige your friends;
Your former actions claim their part;
And join to fortify your heart.
For Virtue in her daily race,
Like Janus, bears a double face;
Looks back with joy where she has gone,
And therefore goes with courage on.
She at your sickly couch will wait,
And guide you to a better stare.

O then, whatever Heaven intends,
Take pity on your pitying friends;
Nor let your ills affect your mind,
To fancy they can be unkind.
Me, surely me, you ought to spare;
Who gladly would your suffering share;
Or give my scrap of life to you,
And think it far beneath your due;

You, to whose care so oft I owe
That I'm alive to tell you so.

Glossary

1. Stella's Birthday—This is the last of the series; Stella died on January 28, 1728.
2. Still—always.
3. Tomorrow—that is, the next day, which is different from the birthday. One can talk about illness, old age and all other troublesome things on the next day, which, not being the birthday, is not special.
4. mortifying stuff—things which would possibly spoil their happy mood.
5. reason—it is interesting to note the use of the word **reason** here. Here it denotes a rational mind which naturally recalls previous memories remembering the past being a prerogative of the reasonable. It is also interesting to note Swift's use of the phrase "Support a few remaining days" in a spirit which anticipates the imminent death of Stella. However, regardless of the pathos that is implicit in these lines, we also notice Swift's innate strength to forger the grim present in the contemplation of the happier past.
6. time is running fast—Another remainder of the imminent death of Stella emphasizing the shortness of life.
7. proselyte—a person who has converted from one religion to another.
8. remembrance—notice the obvious stresses on remembrance which would, according to Swift, help in allaying all grief, sickness, poverty and old age.
9. store—meagre income.
10. dragged from death before — Swift eloquently pays his tributes to Stella's charity, both in nursing the sick and in supporting them from her limited income.
11. these — that is, the old memories.
12. chimeras — here, meaning imaginative visions.
13. virtue — here, meaning good deeds.
14. Janus — the Roman God of beginnings, his symbol a double-faced

head, looking both forward and backward. The comparison here, is between Janus and Virtue. Virtue, Swift says, bears a double face — with one of them she looks back at her past, while with another, she advances forward with considerable courage. Swift hopes that Stella's past deeds would help her recover from her sickness.

15. The poem is written in iambic tetrameter couplets.

Paraphrase and a Short Critical Note

This poem was written when Stella was sick, but it hopes to convey happiness on Stella's birthday. In the very first lines of the poem Swift mentions that regardless of the sad decrees of fate, it is a happy day, on which thoughts of illness and old age should not be entertained. In an extremely tender note, Swift mentions that such important thoughts might have room for utterance the next day, which is not Stella's birthday. On this birthday of hers, she should be spared the pain of all ill thoughts. Instead, Swift says, being old and incapable of fresh schemes as they were, they should, indulge in their former happy memories. As if anticipating Stella's refusal to indulge in memories and even in an attempt to justify himself. Swift argues, in the next stanzas, that memories are definitely an intrinsic part of one's life.

Memories, says Swift, allay at once all grief, sickness, poverty and the troubles of old age. They are only atheists and vain proselytes, who do not believe in the soothing balm of memory. Thus inspired. Swift questions if Stella really felt no satisfaction when she remembered her past deeds of charity when through her very limited means. Stella nursed and supported so many. That was a life well-spent and now be well-preserved.

In an interesting analogy between memory, food and human growth, Swift tenderly explains the need to remember the good deeds of Stella. He says that just as food helps to nurture the body, good deeds help to nurture the mind. Physical growth result from the regular and healthy intake of food. Similarly, good deeds help us to live better and tide through our misfortunes. Virtue and good deeds, he says, are the nutrition of the mind. Hence, it is absolutely facile to say that good deeds must be forgotten or ignored, because they surely better our future lives.

From the general instance, Swift now comes to the particular instance of Stella and says it is really wrong on her part to show contempt for her past deeds. For, it is these deeds which would genuinely strengthen her heart. Virtue, he says, is like the two faced Roman God Janus, who looks back with glory at her past in order to face a better future. He further assures her that

it is Virtue alone who would wait beside her sick bed and infuse new courage into her.

In the final stanza, Swift literally implores Stella to think about her friends who all wish her well, instead of gloomily brooding over her illness. Lastly of course, she must think of Swift himself, who would do all to allay some of her sufferings. He would even gladly forsake his life for Stella, to whom he owes a lot of care and affection.

In the above poem, Swift tries to gradually and patiently convince Stella of her own good deeds that would further help her to continue her life. He is extremely tender and tries to drive home his arguments through the logical yet homely compassion between the food and physical growth. The comparison knits the poem into a well-argued defense of Virtue itself. It is also interesting to note that Swift patiently withholds the revelation of personal anxiety and worry till the very last stanza. The personal anxiety of Swift is more than evident in the carefully structured arguments and the novel comparisons that form a striking feature of the poem from the very beginning. However, it is not until we reach the end of the poem that we realize that it is not so much on account of interest of the general, but of Swift himself that Stella should try to prolong her life through the contemplation of her happier memories. Swift is that privileged friend of Stella who would at once forsake his own life, for the betterment of Stella's.

The tender sentiments of a lover's anxiety are deftly portrayed through utmost rationality, and one might say in a manner strikingly impersonal until the very last stanza. It is interesting to say that the master of caustic wit, and harsh criticism could be so tender with his dearest companion. The tenderness, however, is without sentimentality, and though underlined by a pathetic tone, one never feels bogged down by negative feelings while reading the poem. It is positively marked with a note of happiness, befitting the felicitous spirit of a birthday.

20.5 COMPREHENSION EXERCISES

1. Paraphrase the poem **Stella's Birthday** and add a short critical note to it.
2. Find out the features of the 18th century poetry in **Stella's Birthday**.

UNIT 21 The Poetry of the Mid-Eighteenth Century (1740-1770)

Structure

- 21.1 Objectives**
- 21.2 Cult of Sentiment**
- 21.3 Rise of the Middle-class**
- 21.4 Some Leading Figures**
 - 21.4.1 Samuel Johnson**
 - 21.4.2 The Vanity of Human Wishes**
- 21.5 Comprehension Exercises**
- 21.6 Oliver Goldsmith**
 - 21.6.1 The Deserted Village**
- 21.7 Thomas Gray**
 - 21.7.1 His Concept of Poetic Diction**
- 21.8 Gray's Major Poetical Work**
 - 21.8.1 Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard**
- 21.9 Comprehension Exercises**
- 21.10 George Crabbe**
 - 21.10.1 The Village**
- 21.11 Comprehension Exercises**
- 21.12 Robert Burns**
 - 21.12.1 A Red, Red Rose**
- 21.13 Comprehension Exercises**

21.1 OBJECTIVES

It has already been mentioned that the poetry of the eighteenth century evolved through different phases. The period from around 1740 to roughly around 1770 marks a distinct phase of poetry. The most representative literary figure of this period is Dr. Samuel Johnson (1709-1784).

21.2 CULT OF SENTIMENT

The earlier half of the eighteenth century, dominated by the poetry of Alexander Pope, now undergoes a gradual and slow transformation. Although primarily classical, certain forces of sentiment and emotions now make their presence felt. The emotional tendencies which were perceptible as early as 1700, are now confined and become accentuated. The new call for sentiment also emphasises the need for imagination, a quality which was so long denied to the poetry of this century.

21.3 RISE OF THE MIDDLE-CLASS

In the social front, there is a dilution of the power so long enjoyed by the aristocracy and a simultaneous emphasis on the powers of the middle-class in almost every walk of the British life. Notwithstanding this change in the society, however, the literature of this period is still rational (in spite of the currents of sentiments) and Dr. Johnson is the champion of the classical and traditional literature which still dominated the period.

21.4 SOME LEADING FIGURES

21.4.1 Samuel Johnson (1709-1784)

Biographical Note

Samuel Johnson was born on 18 September, 1709 at Lichfield to Michael Johnson, a local bookseller, and his wife Sara Johnson. Being always surrounded by books, Samuel naturally became a voracious reader. His early favourites were the writers of antiquity thus showing that his classicism was founded upon habit and impressions of his youth.

Samuel Johnson was educated at Oxford and first became a schoolmaster. The famous Shakespearean actor David Garrick was one of Johnson's former pupils. Together with him, Johnson arrived in London in the year 1737. After some preliminary hardships, Johnson became one of the regular writers in Edward Cave's (1691-1754) **The Gentleman's Magazine** in 1738. This early literary career comprised translation, scholarship and journalism. Among his remarkable feats was the reconstruction from notice of parliamentary debates for **The Gentleman's Magazine** (1741-44). His first major literary works were two Satires-in Imitation of the Roman poet Juvenal. They were **London** (1738) written in imitation of the Third Satire of Juvenal and **The Vanity of Human Wishes** (1749), written in imitation of the Tenth

Satire of Juvenal.

Johnson's career was marked by three great projects. The first was the publication of the **Dictionary of the English Language** in 1755. Johnson's **Dictionary** had a huge vocabulary with a wide range of words, it was the first of its kind and had, among other things, standardized the spelling of words in the English language. The confusion wrought by using individual spellings in the language, was minimised to a great extent by the **Dictionary**.

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Johnson also produced an edition of Shakespeare with a Preface and notes in 1765. The third great work by Johnson was also his last great literary work *The Lives of the Poets*. Apart from these, there were several remarkable poems, his contributions to the **Rambler** in 1750-52, to *The Adventurer* in 1753 and to the **Idler** in 1758-60. Johnson had also written a tragedy, *Ircana* (1749) and a moral novel *Rasselas* (1759),

From the year 1762, after he was awarded a government pension. Johnson was regarded as a general guide and advisor to literature. In the year 1763, he met James Boswell, and years later toured Scotland and the Hebrides with him, and wrote the **Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland** in 1775. James Boswell is the famous biographer of Johnson and it is for his extremely detailed biography that we are familiar with Johnson's conversation, his wit and his general mannerisms.

Johnson became the man of central importance in a group which included David Garrick, Edmund Burke, the painter Sir Joshua Reynolds, the poet Oliver Goldsmith and many others. He often contributed his advice and at times even revised the works of his contemporaries especially those of Goldsmith, Reynolds and George Crabbe.

Samuel Johnson died in 1784 and was buried in Westminster Abbey.

21.4.2 The Vanity of Human Wishes — Samuel Johnson

Introduction

The Vanity of Human Wishes (1749) is an imitation of the Tenth Satire of Juvenal, the Roman satirist. We have already been introduced to Pope's **Imitations of Horace**, where Pope uses references from Horace to suit the

needs of his won contemporary society. Johnson does the same in as much as he adapts Juvenal's satire to suit his own period and frame of thought.

Horatian satires of which Pope's satires were imitations, is primarily witty, where the speaker is mostly a tolerant man who is moved to amusement at the follies of the world. As Horace had himself once said, his aim was to "to laugh people out of their vices and follies", that is, he hoped to cure men out of (their follies through the harmless means of evoking laughter at their own follies.

Juvenalian satire, on the other hand, is of a sterner nature, as the speaker here is a stern and serious moralist who speaks in a dignified and judgemental voice, exposing the follies of the society. There is no laughter that is evoked. Instead, there is contempt, anger and sometimes even sadness that is evoked. Samuel Johnson's **London** (1738) and **The Vanity of Human Wishes** (1749) are examples of Juvenalian satires, the latter being a better example of the genre.

Text

Here are a few lines from Johnson's **The Vanity of Human Wishes**

The Vanity of Human Wishes¹

Let observation with extensive view,
Survey mankind, from China to Peru²,
Remark each anxious toil, each eager strife,
And watch the busy scenes of crowded life;
Then say how hope and fear, desire and hate,
O'erspread with snares the clouded maze of fate³,
Where waving man, betrayed by venturous pride,
To tread the dreary paths without a guide,
As treacherous phantoms in the mist delude
Shuns fancied ills, or chases airy good;
How rarely reason guides the stubborn choice,
Rules the bold hand⁴, or prompts the suppliant voice⁴;
How nations sink, by darling⁵ schemes oppressed,
When vengeance⁶ listens to the fools's request.

- Fate wings with every wish the afflictive dart⁷,
 Each gift of nature, and each grace of art⁷,
 With fatal heat impetuous courage glows,
 With fatal sweetness elocution flows,
 Impeachment⁸ stops the speaker's powerful breath,
 And restless fire precipitates on death. 20
- The needy traveller, serene and gay 37
 Walks the wild heath, and sings his toil away.
 Does envy seize thee? crush the upbraiding joy.
 Increase his riches and his peace destroy;
 Now fears in dire vicissitudes¹⁰ invade,
 The rustling brake¹¹ alarms, and quiversing shade,
 Nor light nor darkness bring his pain relief,
 One shows the plunder, and one hides' the thief. 44
135. When first the college rolls receive his name, 135
 136. The young enthusiast¹² quits his ease for fame;
 137. Through all his veins the fever of renown¹³
 138. Burns from the strong contagion of the gown¹⁴;
 139. O'er Bodley's dome¹⁵ his future labours spread,
 140. And Bacon's¹⁶ mansion trembles o'er his head.
 141. Are these thy views? proceed, illustrious youth,
 142. And virtue guard thee to the throne of Truth!
 143. Yet should thy soul indulge the generous heat,
 144. Till captive Science¹⁷ yields her last retreat;
 145. Should Reason guide thee with her brightest ray,
 146. And pour on misty Doubt resistless day;
 147. Should no false Kindness lure to loose delight,
 148. Nor Praise relax, nor Difficulty fright;
 149. Should tempting Novelty thy cell refrain,

150. And Sloth refuse her opiate fumes in vain;
 151. Should Beauty blunt on fops her fatal dart,
 152. Nor claim the triumph of a lettered heart;
 153. Should no Disease thy torpid veins invade,
 154. Nor Melancholy's phantoms haunt thy shade,
 155. Yet hope not life from grief or danger free,
 156. Nor think the doom of man reversed for thee :
 157. Deign or the passing world to turn their eyes,
 158. And pause a while from letters to be wise;
 159. There mark what ills the scholar's life assai,
 160. Toil, envy, want, the patron¹⁸, and the jail.
 161. See nations slowly wise, and meanly just,
 162. To buried merit raise the tardy bust¹⁹
 163. If dreams yet flatter, once again attend,
 164. Hear Lydiat's²⁰ life, and Galileo's²¹ end.

Glossary

1. **The Vanity of Human Wishes** — The title of the satire points at the vainness and emptiness that usually accompanies aW human wishes.
2. China to Peru — The names of these countries are mentioned to mark the huge panoramic extent of the area under consideration. China and Peru are taken to be the outermost boundaries of the Eastern and Western World.
3. fate — here signifying luck,
 Johnson makes copious use of alliteration and assonance, assonance being the repetition of the same vowel sounds in the lines. An instance of alliteration may be seen in the following couplet:

“How rarely reasen guide? the stubborn choice
 Rules the bold hand, or prompts the suppliant voice;”

 The alliteration is present in the repetition of the letter ‘r’ as shown,
4. bold hand.....voice — Examples of synecdoche ‘part for the whole. Both ‘hand’ and ‘voice’ actually mean the man.

5. darling — favourite.
6. vengeance — revenge. The harshest way to take revenge is to grant what a fool wishes for, the fool being not able to discern between good or bad.
7. Fate wings.....dart — the dart is given flight by every wish, gift or “grace of art”
8. Impeachment — public accusation.
9. An example of **Anaphora** with the repetition of **With** at the beginning of two consecutive lines, given for emphasis.
10. vicissitude—change in his fortune (brought about by the sudden receipt of wealth.)
11. brake — thicket.
12. young enthusiast — referring to the young student.
13. fever of renown — a metaphor suggesting an implied comparison between the intensity of fever and excitement of being renewed which is feverish in its intensity.
14. strong contagion of the gown — with the suggestion of Nessus’ shirt, the poisoned robe that caused Hercules so much tortured that he tore away his flesh in trying to remove it. The excitement of the young scholar is so intense that he could almost tear apart his own gown.
15. Bodley's dome — Referring to the famous Bodleian Library at Oxford. The word ‘dome’ is here used in the sense of a building, although the library has a dome.
16. Bacon’s mansion — referring to a tradition, which said that the study of Roger Bacon, the medieval Oxford Philosopher and scientist, which was built on an arch over a bridge, would fall when a greater man than Bacon passed under it.
The reference is used to denote the greater intellectual power of the young scholar here, who dreams of surpassing the genius of Roger Bacon.
17. Science, Reason, Doubt and other abstract nouns in capitals are all **Personifications**.

18. patron — the patron is held in a negative light by Johnson. His **Dictionary** defines a patron as “Commonly a wretch who supports with insolence and is paid with flattery”, pointing at the grudging nature of the patron and the ready — to — please attitude of the scribe who is patronised.
19. tardy bust — literally meaning — late bust. The reference here is to John Milton, who was not placed in Westminster Abbey until 1737. thus showing the late realisation of the literary merit of the genius. Late monuments were also erected for Dryden in 1720, to Samuel Butler in 1721 and even to Shakespeare in 1741. Johnson here criticises the vain spirit of the state which in recognising even the contributions of these literary greats.
20. Lydiat — the reference is to Thomas Lydiat (1572-1646), a brilliant scholar ranked with Francis Bacon in his day but poor and forgotten at the time of his death.
21. Galileo — Galileo (1564-1642), the great Italian astronomer and physicist, was declared a heretic and imprisoned by the Inquisition, the then governing body of the Church, in 1633, which compelled him to deny his scientific discoveries. Galileo became blind at the end of his life.

Johnson is believed to have burst into tears one. as he read this passage on the scholar’s life. The young scholar is advised to remember the sad stories of his former greats, before being too idealistic in his quest for knowledge and glory therein.

Paraphrase

The speaker, in this case Johnson himself, in the voice of a strict moralist, asks the reader to observe intently the wide panorama, here specified from China to Peru, the eastern and western endpoints of the world. The reader is asked to mark every work of toil and struggle, to observe the busy and crowded streets, and also to mark how hope and fear, desire and hate co-exist, in the mazes of fate, Admist all this, it is the undecided and unsure man who, led by his vain pride, treads cautiously without a helping hand, being treacherously led by temptation. He chases his empty pride and in doing so. he scarcely follows reason or rationality. It is his adamant and foolish will which rules his hand and voice. Through this pride, even nations

sink. Then Johnson explains with examples the effects of vain courage which ultimately lead to one's death.

In the next section (11 37-44) Johnson portrays the plight of a needy man. This man regardless of his poverty, is peaceful and happy. He, sings his troubles away by walking through the wild heaths. Even such a man is an object of envy to the rich, who are devoid of peace. To crush the joy of the needy man, one must increase his riches, and in effect destroy his peace. Financial security would, very ironically, make him apprehensive of his future, as he would now want to preserve all his wealth. Worry and anxiety would now scare him away from the very thickets and shades where he sought repose and shelter earlier. Being always apprehensive of thieves, nature would no longer offer him peace.

In the last section extracted above (11 135-164) Johnson explains the plight of a scholar. The young student is full of enthusiasm at the time of his enrolment in college. From that time onwards, his sole aim is to establish himself as a young scholar. He dreams of a future when his studies would grace the Bodleian Library and his scholarship would be greater than the great Roger Bacon's. However, such dreams are merely dreams. To the young scholar, Johnson's advice is to proceed through the path of truth and honesty.

In his arduous quest for knowledge he most possibly would have to endure all kinds of adversities. Yet, even if he mastered the principles of Science and punished Reason and Logic to an extent which would put Doubt to shame, even if no kindness tempted him or praise relaxed him, or no difficulty frightened him, not no sloth try to slacken his pace, nor no love try to distract him or even if disease or melancholy weakened him, yet he should not hope for a life free from danger or grief. Not should he expect favour from this mean and unjust world. A scholar's life is necessarily filled with "toil, envy" and "want". Yet, if dreams lure him, he must once again remember the sad tales of Lydiat and Galileo.

It is interesting to see how Johnson builds up a climax beginning from L 148 and ending at L 158 and then beautifully ending it on the couplet :

"There mark what ill the scholar's life assails,
Toil, envy, want, the patron, and the jail."

Johnson is highly critical in the above passage, and his tone is that of an honest sufferer who tries to depict faithfully the sad plight of a contemporary scholar. The vanity of the few wishes that the needy traveller and the honest student have is evident in the immense resistance that they must meet from a hostile world.

The above extracts are respectively, a general survey of the world of petty humans, study in irony of how an innocent and peaceful man may be robbed of his peace, and a sad tale of an ardent student who earnestly wanted to establish himself in the realm of scholarship.

21.5 COMPREHENSION EXERCISES

1. Write a note on Johnson's **The Vanity of Human Wishes** laying special emphasis on the form of the poem.
2. Paraphrase 11 135-164 and add a critical note.

21.6 OLIVER GOLDSMITH (1728-1774)

Biographical Note

Oliver Goldsmith was born 1728, in Ireland and was the son of a vicar. He spent his youth in great poverty and amidst difficulties. He embraced the vocation of a clergyman early in life in favour of law. He was sent to the Trinity College of Dublin to study law, but Goldsmith left it in favour of medicine. Even medicine did not prove to his liking and after a brief spell at Edinburgh and Leyden he left medicine. After being unsuccessful in so many professions, Goldsmith set out on a tour of Europe. He finally settled down to writing, after a few years of wandering life. Among his first works is **An Enquiry into the Present State of Polite Learning (1789)** where he writes against the sentimental dramatists of his day. Goldsmith edited a periodical called **The Bee (1759)** for some time, published an anthology of 'Chinese Letters' under the title of **The Citizen of the World (1762)**. The first work to be published in his own name was the poem titled **The Traveller (1764)**, which earned enough success as to enable him to write the novel **The Vicar of Wakefield** in 1766. The novel was rather poorly received at first, but later became one of the most popular in the whole of English literature. Goldsmith wrote two plays, both comedies — **The Good Natured Man** in 1768 and **She Stoops to Conquer (1773)**, the latter being the more successful. Goldsmith also wrote another long poem called **The Deserted Village (1770)** of which we shall study a few excerpts.

Oliver Goldsmith's works are characterised by a genial humour and freshness of spirit which make them immensely enjoyable. Goldsmith was a man of few good virtues. He was known to be impractical and quite frequently got involved in problems about money. He was known to be dissipated and

was quite unpopular amongst his contemporaries. However, regardless of his drawbacks, Goldsmith is fondly remembered for the excellence of his works.

21.6.1 The Deserted Village — Oliver Goldsmith

Introduction

The Deserted Village (1770) is the maturer of the two long poems that Goldsmith has written. It is a poem full of elegant charm and is marked by a freshness of tone. The title of the poem suggested the emptiness that set in, the contemporary villages of England when the villagers migrated to towns and cities in search of work. These villagers were deprived of their lands of cultivation by the wealthier landlords who enclosed the vast areas of land of cultivation for their own pleasure and luxury. Goldsmith gives a comparative picture of the village when it was teeming with life and of a time when it was deserted. He laments the change that characterises the village after its desertion by the people.

We shall study a few excerpts of the poem and more comments about the nature of this poem and of its difference from the earlier poetry that we have discussed, will follow.

Text

The Deserted Village

1. Sweet Auburn¹, loveliest village of the plain,
2. Where health and plenty cheered the labouring swain²,
3. Where smiling spring its earliest visit paid,
4. And parting summers lingering blooms delayed;
5. Dear lovely bowers³ of innocence and ease,
6. Seats of my youth, when every sport could please,
7. How often have I loitered o'er thy green⁴,
8. Where humble happiness endeared each scene;
9. How often have I paused on every charm,
10. The sheltered cot⁵, the cultivation farm,
11. The never-failing brook⁶, the busy mill,
12. The decent⁷ church that topped the neighbouring hill,

13. The hawthorn⁸ bush, with seats beneath the shade,
14. For talking age⁹ and whispering lovers made.
15. How often have I blessed the coming day,
16. When toil remitting¹⁰ lent its turn to play,
17. And all the village train, from labour free,
18. Led up their sports beneath the spreading tree,
19. While many a pastime circled in the shade,
20. The young contendeing.as the old surveyed;
21. And many a gambol¹¹ frolicked o'er the ground,
22. And sleights of art and seats of strength went round;
23. And still, as each repeated pleasure tired,
24. Succeeding sports the mirthful band inspired;
25. The dancing pair that simply sought renown,
26. By holding out to tire each other down:
27. The swain mistrustless of his smutted face,
28. While secret laughter tittered round the place;
29. The bashful virgin's sidelong looks of love,
30. The matron's glance that would those looks reprove :
31. These were thy charms, sweet village; sports like these,
32. With sweet succession, though even toil to please;
33. These round thy lowers their cheerful influence shed;
34. These were thy charms — but all these charms are fled.

63. But times are altered; trade's unfeeling train
64. Usurp¹² the land, and dispossess the swain;
65. Along the lawn, where scattered hamlets¹³ rose,
66. Unswidely wealth and cumbrous¹⁴ pomp repose;
67. And every want to luxry¹⁵ allied,
68. And every pang that folly pays to pride.
69. Those gentle homes that plenty bade to bloom,
70. Those calm desires that asked but little room,
71. Those healthful sports that graced the peaceful scene,
72. Lived in each look, and brightened all the green;

73. These, far departing, seek a hinder shore,
74. And rural mirth and manners¹⁶ are no more.
115. Sweet was the sound, when oft at evening's close
116. Up yonder hill the village murmur rose;
117. There, as I passed with careless steps and slow,
118. The mingling notes came softened from below;
119. The swain responsive as the milkmaid sung,
120. The sober herd¹⁷ that lowed to meet their young,
121. The noisy geese that gabbled o'er the pool,
122. The playful children just let loose from school,
123. The watchdog's voice that bayed the whispering wind,
124. And the loud laugh that spoke the vacant mind,
125. These all in soft confusion sought the shade,
126. And filled each pause the nightingale has made.
127. But now the sounds of population fail,
128. No cheerful murmurs fluctuate in the gale,
129. No busy steps the grass-grown footway tread,
130. For all the bloomy flush of life is fled;

Glossary

1. Auburn — name of the village.
2. sqin — a rustic lover.
3. bowers — a shady place.
4. green — example of synecdoche — part for the whole. The 'green' denotes the world of Nature in general.
5. cot — meaning cottage.
6. brook — a small stream.
7. decent — here meaning 'becoming', 'suitable'
8. hawthorn — a type of summer flower, white in colour.
9. talking age — old people are talkative.
10. toil remitting — when work is over and it's time to relax
11. gambol — a jumping creature

The poem is full-of alliterations, which give it a musical and lilting tone. Examples of alliterations are in L13 — ‘smiling spring’, in L8 ‘humble happiness’, L32 ‘sweet successive’ and others.

The other figures of speech in the first section of the poem (11 1-34) are **Anaphora** in 11 2-3, 11 10-12, 11 21-23, 11 29-30, 11 33-34, where the first word of all the lines mentioned, begin with the same word for rhythm as well as emphasis. **Alliteration** and **Anaphora** are present throughout the poem.

The various country charms which were celebrated in such great lengths in the first few lines of the poem seem to be fast disappearing. In the next few lines Goldsmith mentions the reason of their disappearance :

35. “Sweet smiling villge lovesliest of the lawn;
36. Thy sports are fled and all thy charms withdrawn;
37. Amidst thy lowers the tyrant’s hand is seen;
38. And desolation saddens all thy green;
39. One only master graps the whole domain;
40. And half a tillage stints thy smiling plain.”

Goldsmith here refers to the Enclosure Acts passed in the eighteenth century. These acts enabled the landlords to enclose the common land of cultivation for their own pleasure and entertainment. The village farmers were thus forced to migrate to the cities and towns in search of work. The empty village without its gay inhabitants is also without its familiar charms. Goldsmith, in his poem, alternately paints the picture of the gay village turning with life, alongside the empty and deserted village where he now roams all alone. The emptiness is emphasised by this study in contrast.

12. Usurp — to take away unlawfully. The word **usurp** is commonly used to denote the unlawful seizure of the royal throne by an illegal person. The word is used here as a metaphor to emphasise the illegal nature of the Enclosure Acts and it also portrays how trade and industry overpowered the former agricultural economy.
13. hamlets — small settlements.
14. cumbrous — cumbersome, pompous.
15. luxury — referring to the consequence of the Enclosure Acts. The landlords enclosed the land for their own pleasure and amusement, thus encouraging concept of luxury.
16. mirth and manners — an example of a alliteration,

mirth — happiness

manners — customs

This section (11 63-74) contrasts the present desolation with the former happiness. The tone of this passage is critical. Goldsmith is not harsh, but expresses his displeasure in a sympathetic manner, by trying to find possible causes for the present state of the village.

17. sober herd — referring to the calm herd of cattle.

A note on the Form and Theme

The Deserted Village makes a definite break from the earlier classical poetry of the Augustan age. Unlike the majority of the Augustan poetry, this poem is neither an imitation of a Roman Satire nor is it a contemporary satire; it is merely a poem with the typical relevance of the Enclosure Acts. The topicality of this poem, however, ends there, for the village of Auburn is at once both topical as well as universal. It is a village largely representative of country life in general, in all ages of history, in its rustic simplicity.

The more common issues of Augustan poetry such as fashion, pedantry or human nature are not discussed in this poem. It is merely a poignant narration of a homely truth — that of the forceful emigration of villagers, from the village to the city, told in a sympathetic and humble manner, free from the judgemental tone of the Augustans.

The meter of the poem is still the heroic couplet, here revitalised with a lot of rhythmic and melodious charm. The measured rigidity of the Augustan heroic couplet has here mellowed in the imaginative splendours of Nature description, and for the first time it seems that content is no longer subservient to form. Nevertheless, Goldsmith restrains his teaching and the natural poise of the heroic couplet gives the poem a fine balance between reason and feeling.

Paraphrase and Critical Analysis

Section 1—(11 1-34)

In the first lines of the poem, Goldsmith paints a charming picture of the village of Auburn. The description is rich and picturesque with scenes of nature and countryside described with great ease and spontaneity. Auburn is a place where the season of spring sets in early and the charming summer lingers. Within its sheltered corners the young and the old find happiness. The poet himself recalls pleasant moments when he ramed around the countryside of Auburn. He recalls the pleasant brook, the church, the bushes

of white hawthorns and the shady trees beneath which the garrulous old talked and the young lovers whispered. He also recalls how all the village folk longed for a holiday, when being free of work, they would indulge themselves in happy sports and pastimes. He recalls the familiar games that the happy lovers played and how the little jumped about in gaiety. All these and more, alas! are now lost as most of the villagers have migrated to the neighbouring cities. (Refer Glossary, for a discussion of the Enclosure Acts).

The description of nature in this section is remarkable for its freshness and picturesque quality. In its freshness, it may be said that Goldsmith anticipates the Romantic poetry of William Wordsworth, P.B. Shelley and John Keats. When Goldsmith says "How often have I loitered o'er thy green" He is most certainly reminded of Wordsworth's **Tintern Abbey** (1798) where he says.

"when like a roe
I bounded o'er the mountains, by the sides
Of the deep rivers, and the lonely streams,
Wherever nature led"

Goldsmith's poem is undoubtedly different from the Augustan poets and the undercurrent of emotion that we mentioned while introducing Samuel Johnson, may be seen to be surfacing in this poem. There is definitely a shift from the rigid correctitude of Augustan poetry to genuine feeling and imagination, but it is devoid of any sentimentality.

Section 2 (11 63-74)

In this section, Goldsmith portrays how the rich so mercilessly deprived the villagers of their livelihood. They had taken the land where there were settlements, and every other place where there was peace and harmony, here is pomp and pride now. The gaiety, the brightness, the peace have all disappeared now.

Section 3 (11 115-130)

In this section there is an amazing display of the various sounds of the countryside. The sound of the village murmur, the whispers of the rustic lover and the milkmaid, the sound of the gabbling geese by the pool, the childish prattle of children, the vigilant bark of the watchdog, the whisper of the wind, the sound of the nightingale are all missing now. The silence of the village accentuates the description of the villages; it brings back with double

force the memory of a life full of gaiety in Auburn. The silence reminds the poet, more powerfully about the absence of healthy life in Auburn.

The study of the various village sounds grants a unique melody to the staid meter of the heroic couplet. The rhythm, melody and picturesque quality of the poem adds a new life to the rigid form of the poem.

21.7 THOMAS GRAY (1716-1771)

Biographical Note

Thomas Gray was born in 1716 and was educated at Eton. Then he came to Cambridge, where he spent most of his life as a scholar and where he finally became Regius Professor of Modern History, three years before his death. At Eton Gray became a close friend of Horace Walpole and Richard West, and this friendship continued at Cambridge. Walpole was an enthusiastic patron and supporter of Gray's poetry.

Gray was a formidable scholar and was called by one of his friends, "the most learned man in Europe" Gray's first poem dates from 1742. **An Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard** was published in 1750, and brought him fame. The anthology of **Six Poems** was published in 1753 and his **Odes** in 1757 (which include **The Progress of Poesy** and **The Bard**). Gray died in 1771.

21.7.1 His Concept of Poetic Diction

In a letter to Richard West, Gray had written that "the language of the age is never the language of poetry". In saying so, he meant that the colloquial language of the people could never be used in writing poetry. Poetry must be written in a unique language or in a particular "poetic diction." The 'poetic diction' of Gray meant being particularly allusive and sometimes remembering the styles of Spenser, Shakespeare and Milton and even Dryden and Pope. At the time when Gray wrote his poetry there was a common tendency of using Spenser's vocabulary in order to enrich contemporary poetry.

21.8 GRAY'S MAJOR POETICAL WORK

21.8.1 Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard (1750)

Introduction

This poem was formerly titled **Stanza's Wrote in a Country**

Churchyard in its manuscript form. The poem had great and immediate success which Gray attributed to its subject-matter. Gray's poem had already been preceded by such "graveyard" Poems as Edward Young's **Night Thoughts** (1742-45) and Robert Bleir's *The Grave* (1743) Gray's poem in comparison is much more restrained and classical in spirit.

The poem is written in the rhyme scheme *abab cdcd* such that every alternate line rhymes. It is full of rhetorical figures and allusions. Gray's **Elegy** describes in a classical and dignified tone, the epitaph of a poor and unknown man. It was customary to erect costly monuments and memorials at the gravestone of the departed, in Gray's contemporary society. The poor countrymen, however, could not afford such extravagances. Gray, in his **Elegy**, pays tribute to all such departed, and imagines the Epitaph of one such departed, through the voice of a countryman. Gray illustrates the simplicity of rustic life in this poem.

Here is its text:

The Text:

Elegy written in a Country Churchyard

The curfew tolls the knell¹ of parting day,
The lowing herd wind slowly o'er the lea,
The ploughman homeward plods his weary way²,
And leaves the world to darkness and to me.

Now fades the glimmering landscape³ on the sight,
And all the air a solemn stillness⁴ holds,
Save where the beetle wheels his droning flight⁵,
And drowsy tinklings⁵ hallow the distant folds;

Save that from yonder living—mantled, tower
The moping owl does to the moon complain
of such, as wandering near her secret tower,
Molest her ancient solitary reign.

Beneath those rugged elms, that yew-tree's shade,
Where leaves the turf in many a mouldering heap,
Eas'd in his narrow cell⁶ forever laid,
The rude forefathers⁷ of the hamlet sleep.

The breezy call of incense-breathing morn,
The swallow twittering⁹ from the straw-built sh
The cock's shrill clarion or the echoing horn¹⁰,
No more shall rouse from their lowly bed¹¹.

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For them no more the blazing hearth shall burn,
Or busy housewife ply her evening care,
No children run to lisp their sire's return¹²,
Or climb his trees the envied kiss to share.

Oft did the harvest to their sickle yield;
The' r furrow oft the stubborn glebe¹³ has broke;
How jocund did they drive their team afield!
How bowed the woods beneath their sturdy stroke!

Let not Ambition¹⁴ mock their useful toil,
Their homely joys¹⁵ and destiny obscure!
Nor Grandeur¹⁴ hear with a disdainful smile
The short and simple annals¹⁶ of the poor.

The boast of heraldry¹⁷, the pomp of power¹⁷
And all that beauty¹⁷, all that wealth¹⁷ e'er gave,
Awaits alike the inevitable hour¹⁸.
The paths of glory lead but to the grave¹⁹

Nor you, ye proud, impute to these the fault,
If Memory²⁰ o'er their tomb no trophies²¹ raise,
Where through the long-drawn aisle and fretted vault²²
The pealing anthem²³ swells the note of praise.

Can storied urn²⁵ or animated²⁶ bust
Back to its mansion call the fleeting breath?
Can Honour's²⁴ voice provoke²⁷ the silent dust,
Or Flattery²⁴ soothe the dull cold ear of Death²⁴?

Perhaps in this neglected spot is laid
Some heart once pregnant²⁸ with celestial fire;

Hands that the rod of empire might have swayed,
Or waked to ecstasy the living lyre²⁹.

But knowledge to their eyes her ample page,
Rich with the spoils of time, did n'er unroll;
Chill Penury repressed their noble rage³⁰,
And froze the genial current³¹ of the soul.

Full many a gem of purest ray serence³²,
The dark unfathomed canes of ocean bear;
Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,
And waste its sweetness on the desert air.

Some village Hampden, that with dauntless breast
The little tyrant of his fields withstood;
Some rustic inglorious Milton here may rest,
Some Cromwell³³, guiltless of his country's flood.

The applause of listening senates to command,
The threats of pain and ruin to despise,
To scatter plenty o'er a smiling land,
And read their history in a nation's eyes,

Their lot forbade; nor circumscribed alone
Their growing virtues, but their crimes confined.
Forbade to wade through slaughter to a throne,
And shut the gates of mercy on mankind;

The struggling pangs of conscious truth to hide,
To quench the flushes of ingenerous shame³⁴,
Or heap the shrine of Luxury and Pride
With incense kindled at the Muse's flame.

Far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife,
Their sober wishes never learned to stray;
Along the cool sequestered vale of life
They kept the noiseless tenor of their way.

Yet even these bones from insult to protect,
Some frail memorial⁵⁵ still erected night,
With uncouth rhymes and shapeless sculpture decked,
Implores the passing tribute of a sigh.
Their name, their years, spelt by the unlettered Muse,
the place of fame and elegy supply;
And many a holy text around she strews.
That teach the rustic moralist to die.

For who, to dumb forgetfulness a prey,
This pleasing anxious being e'er resigned,
Left the warm precincts of the cheerful day,
Nor cast me long lingering look behind?

On some fond breast the parting soul relies,
Some pious drops³⁶ the closing eye requires;
Even from the tomb the voice of Nature cries,
Even in our ashes live their wanted fires.

For thee³⁷, who mindful of the unhonoured dread
Dost in these lines their artless tale relate;
If Chance³⁸, by lonely contemplation led,
Some kindred spirit shall inquire thy fate,

Haply some hoary — headed swain may say,
'Oft have we seen him at the peep of dawn
Brushing with hasty steps the dews away
To meet the sun upon the upland lawn.

'There at the foot of yonder nodding beech
That wreathes its old fantastic roots so high,
His listless length at noontide would he stretch,
And pore upon the brook that babbles by.

'Hard by you wood, now smiling as in scorn,
Muttering his wayward fancies he would rove;
Now drooping, woeful—was, like one forlorn,
Or crazed with care, or crossed in hopeless love.

'One morn I missed him on the customed hill,
 Along the heath and near his favourite tree;
Another came; nor yet beside the rill,
 Nor up the lawn, nor at the wood was he;

'The next, with dirges due, in sad array,
 Slow through the church—way path we saw him borne.
Approach and read canst read) the lay,
 Graved on the stone beneath you aged thorn'.

THE EPITAPH

Here rests his head upon the lap of earth,
 A youth to fortune and to fame unknown;
Fari Science³⁹ frowned not on his humble birth,
 And Melancholy⁴⁰ marked him for her own.

Large was his bounty and his soul sincere;
 Heaven did a recompense as largely send :
He gave to Misery all he had, a tear;
 He gained from Heaven ('twas all he wished) a friend.

No farther seek his merits to disclose,
 Or draw his frailties from their dread abode,
(There they alike in trembling hop repose)
 The bosom of his Father and His God.

Glossary

1. knell — the call.
2. weary way — this is an example of transferred epithet. The word 'weary' properly belongs to the ploughman who is returning home, tired and fatigued, but it has been transferred to 'way' such that it seems that along with the ploughman, the way is also weary.
3. glimmering landscape — The glimmer is produced by the illuminated houses of the landscape.
4. solemn stillness — example of alliteration.
5. 'droning flight' and 'drowsy tinklings' — two other examples of

transferred epithets. In the former, the 'droning' belongs properly to the beetles while in the latter, the 'drowsy' properly belongs to the silence of the atmosphere, where there is an occasional tinkling sound.

6. narrow cell — as euphemism or a pleasant way of expressing an unpleasant one. Here 'narrow cell' actually means 'grave'.
7. rude forefathers — referring to humble, uneducated ancestors.
8. There is Anaphora in the lines bracketed, with the repetition of the same word at the beginning of each sentence.
9. twittering — this is an example of 'onomatopoeia' where a particular word resembles an exact sound. Thus the word 'twittering' resembles the call of the swallows.
10. horn — hornpipe of the hunter.
11. lowly bed — indicating the low grave in the graveyard where the dead is layed to sleep forever.
12. sire's return — father's return.
13. glebe — field.
14. Ambition & Grandeur — here personified.
15. homely — simple, domestic
16. annals — year-by-year life records, as opposed to the more expensive "histories" of nations or "lives" of great men.
17. heraldry, power, beauty, wealth — All are examples of synecdoche, abstract for the concrete. These words respectively stand for men of high birth, powerful men, beautiful ladies and wealthy men.
18. inevitable hour — a euphemism for death.
19. The paths of glory lead but to the grave — This is an example of an Epigram. The names of the glorious are generally remembered for ever, but Gray says that regardless of the power and fame, all mortals must inevitably die. Hence even the paths of the glorious must lead to the grave.
20. Memory — personification.
21. trophies — monuments, epitaphs or other common forms of commemorations.
22. fretted — decorated with patterns of curving.
23. pealing anthem — This is reminiscent of a line from Milton's **II Penseroso** "There let the pealing organ blow /.....
In service high and anthems clear."
Here the 'pealing anthem' denotes the song of commemoration for the dead.

24. Honour, Flatterey, Death — Personifications.
25. Storied urn — having stories represented upon it.
26. animated — as if breathing.
27. provoke — rouse up.
28. pregnant — full of.
29. Living lyre — alliteration
30. rage — rapture, arder.
31. genial current — creative energies.
32. serene — clear, bright; with overtones of calm and quiet as well.
33. Hampden and Cromwell — John Hampden (1594-1643), who refused to submit to a special tax levied by Charles I in 1636 and as a member of parliament defended the rights of the people. Oliver Cromwell was the Puritan ruler of England till 1658.
34. ingenuous shame — natural (or inertly noble) honour.
35. frail memorial — presumably the simple tombstones in the churchyard as opposed to the monumental tombs within the church.
36. drops — mourner's tears
37. thee — the poet's ownself.
38. chance — by chance.
39. Science — knowledge or learning.
40. Melancholy — implying a pensiveness and heightened sensibility, with a great capacity for feeling, for others as well as for himself.

Paraphase

The poem begins in the idyllic setting of evening when the cattle and the weary ploughman are on their way home. The poet is left to wonder alone at the churchyard, amidst darkness. Evening has set in and the houses are illuminated. All is still and one can hear only the occasional droning of the beetles and the tinklings of the homeward cattle, and there is also the occasional hoot of an owl.

Beneath the elms trees and the yew trees, the poet says, there are laid in peace the humble forefathers of the nearby village. Nothing can disturb them now. nor even the light of a new day, not the twittering of the swallows, nor even the cock's call or the hornpipe of the hunter. For them, the picture of contented domestic life, with the housewife busy about her work, and the children playing, shall never become alive. The poet muses further about how in former times, they were good farmers and how well they managed their cattle.

In a reflective mood, Gray argues that such humble man as they were, their little but useful labours may not be mocked by cruel Ambition nor their domestic life be scorned by Grandeur. Their short and simple tales should never be looked down upon. For even the mightiest and the most powerful men, the most beautiful ladies must all surrender themselves to the inevitable end, which is death. In a stunning epigram Gray reveals that "That paths of glory lead but to the grave."

There is also no cause to protest if there is no mark of commemoration over their silent graves. For there are hardly any movements or memorials erected in memory of these nameless deads. Gray comments on the efficiency of these monuments when he says that an urn with stories inscribed, or a life-like bust would never be successful in bringing back the breath of the dead. It is interesting to note that to keep urns beside the dead is a Grecian custom. Hence, we see how Gray takes recourse to classical traditions. Neither is there any point in singing eulogies of the dead, as flatter)' too, would not bring back the dead.

In the next few verses Gray muses about the nature of men who are buried in the Churchyard. He wonders if there was amongst them some truly great, and who lies there forgotten, like the many ignored gems of the ocean bed or like the unseen blossom of the flower unseen. He wonders, if there was amongst them a Hampden or a Puritan Cromwell, or if there was a literary genius like Milton. If so, their memories have been lost to their posterity, Laid as they were in the seclusion of the far-away village, they were never known to the greater world abroad.

Yet, even to protect their existence against total nullification some movement was still erected. These were must probably celebrated in unpolished elegies, or in shapeless sculptures. Their names on the gravestone were written by the illiterate hand, spelt wrongly, alongwith few lines from the scriptures about morality. Such attempts are inevitable, for who is there, who would wish to die in utter negligence and forgetfulness and leave this cheerful earth? There are marks of commemoration for everyone even if they are not of the magnitude of the far greater souls. The dead is commemorated and paid all the due respects in the fond breast over which he lays his head: there are the sacred drops of tears which bid the dead adieu. These are memorials which no erected monumentals can surpass.

Yet, if some among them ask for more, perhaps some young countrymen would some day muse over his gravestone. The young man would recall how he had seen him at dawn, going to work. The young man would further

wonder, how perhaps this man, now dead, would carry on his daily duties beside the broke, where he would mutter his wayward fancies. Sometimes may be, he would sit silently perplexed and sad, having been troubled by his lady-love. One such day, the youngman would perhaps say, he missed this man, and found him nowhere, On the next, he found him amidst the coretege being led by sad folks singing mournful songs. He was led to the churchyard and there laid in peace. And written on his gravestone would perhaps be an epitaph.

The epitaph would say how there lay a man of humble origins, who was never the favourite of the Goddess Fortune, His birth was never marked by scientific thought, and only Misery and Gloom made his his own. He was a sincere man, with a broad and generous heart. All that he had of preciousness with him, was a solitary tear and that he gave to misery itself, and in recompense gained all that he desired, a friend, There is no need to indulge in the further details of his life, he lies now amongst his forefathers in the happy contemplation of Heaven. Let him rest in peace.

Gray has argued in a fictitious mode, how one of the unknown inhabitants may be commemorated by a fellow resident of the village. There is nothing austere in this commemoration, nor is there the mark of gaudy celebration; there is simple narration of simple events, which achieve a new dimension by the truth and reality they contain. The humble truths of country life are humbly celebrated in the churchyard, away from the attention of the wider world, in peace and tranquillity.

21.9 COMPREHENSION EXERCISES

1. Paraphrase the poem giving special attention to the various figures of speech and allusiveness contained in it.
 2. Write a note on the atmosphere of the poem.
 3. What features of an elegy are present in the poem?
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21.10 GEORGE CRABBE (1754-1832)

Biographical Note

George Crabbe was born in 1754 at Aldrough, on the east coast of England and came of a poor family. He practised medicine for some time and then took up literature. He also took order and became chaplain to the Duke of Putland, and then received several livings which placed him above need.

Crabbe's first important work was **The Library** (1781) which enjoyed fair success. His next work, **The Village** (1783), brought him fame. This was followed by a long period of silence. **The Parish Register** came in 1807, **The Borough** (1810), **Tales in Verse** (1812), **Tales of Hall** (1819). These works did not add to his reputation, which **The Village** already created. George Crabbe died in 1832.

Crabbe's Poetry : A Product of Experience

George Crabbe too, wrote about the country, but there is a difference in Crabbe's portrayal when compared to that of Goldsmith or Burns among his contemporaries. The country, as is known, was for a long time regarded as a place for repose, of calm, tranquility and happiness. Even in the Virgilian **Eclogues** we find the country being depicted as a place of idyllic calm. There are happy shepherds' blissful lovers and prosperous farmers who are content to be under the shelter of Mother Nature. The Poetry of Robert Burns (1759-1796) hails this spirit of happiness and calmness. Even in Goldsmith's **The Deserted Village** we see the picture of rustic calm and happiness. Goldsmith, of course, juxtaposes the desertion of the country, consequent of the Enclosure Acts, alongside its teeming life. There is, however, no pessimism on Goldsmith's part. Neither is there any attempt to portray any kind of truth borne of experience in his poetry. Goldsmith's poetry is more in the vein of commentary.

Crabbe's poetry, on the other hand, is the product of a man of experience, who has seen beyond the beauty of the cultivated field into the toils of the farmer, which have made its beauty a reality. He sees into the poverty of the farmer's family, into the rigours of old age and in a way, helps remove the veil of idyllic charm of rustic life. His poetry is more realistic, in the sense it is shorn of all illusions. The realistic novels of D. H. Lawrence, at the end of nineteenth century and the beginning of twentieth century, portray such realism of the working classes in which he shows the troubles that they undergo.

21.10.1 The Village

Dr. Johnson helped Crabbe in the revision of **The Village** and said that the poem was "original, vigorous and elegant". According to James Boswell, Johnson also found Crabbe's poem of "The false nations of rustic happiness and rustic virtue.....quite congenial with his own".

The Village is a poem written in heroic couplet. Its tune is not satirical, it is realistic in as much as it tries to put forward the true picture of things. Here are a few excerpts from the poem :

The Text
The Village
From Book-1

The village life, and every care that resigns
O'er youthful peasants and declining swains¹;
What labour yields, and what, that labour past,
Ages in its hour of languour² finds at last;
What form the real picture of the poor,
Demand a song — the Muse³ can give us more.
Fled are those times when, in harmonious strains⁴.
The rustic poet praised his native plains.
No shepherded now, in smooth alternate verse,
Their country's beauty or their nymphs⁵, rehearse;
yet still for these we frame the tender strain,
Still in our boys found Corydons⁶ complain,
And shepherds' boys their amorous pains⁷ reveal,
The only pains, alas! They never feel.

14

39 I grant indeed that fields and flocks⁸ have charms
For him that grazes or for him that farms;
But, when amid such pleasing scenes I trace
The poor laborious natives of the place,
And see the midday sun, with fervid⁹ ray,
On their bare heads and dewy¹⁰ temples play;
while some, with feebler heads and fainter hearts,
Deplore their fortune, yet sustain their parts :
Then shall I dare these real ills to hide
In tinsel trappings" of poetic pride?
No; cast by fortune on a frowning coast,
Which neither groves not happy valleys boast;
Where other cares than those the Muse relates,

And other shepherds dwell with other mates;
By such examples taught, I paint cot¹²,
As truth will paint it, and as fards will not:
Nor you, ye poor, of lettered scorn complain,
To you the smoothest song is smooth in vain;
O'er come by labour, and bowed down by time,
Feel you the barren flattery¹³ of a rhyme?
Can poets sooth you, when you pine for bread,
By winding myrtles¹⁴ round your ruined shed?
Can their light tales your weighty griefs o'power,

62 Or glad with airy mirth the toilsome hour?

.....

.....

172 Ye gentle sould, who dream of rural ease,
whom the smooth stream a smoother sonnet please¹⁵;
Go! if he peaceful cot your praises share,
Go, look within, and ask if peace be there :
If peace be his — that drooping weary sire¹⁶,
Or theirs, that offspring¹⁷ sound their feeble fire;
Or hers, that matron¹⁸ pale, whose trembling hand
Turns on the wretched hearth the expiring brand¹⁹!
Nor yet can there itself obtain for these
Life's latest comforts, due respect and ease;
For yonder see that hoary²⁰ swain, whose age
Can with no cares except his own. engage;
Who, propped on that rude staff,²¹ looks up to see
The bare arms bare broken from the withering tree
On which, a boy, he climbed the loftiest bough, .
Then his first joy, but his sad emblem²² now.
He once was chief in all the rustic trade;
His steady hand the straightest furrow²³ made ;
Full many a prize he won, and still is proud
To find the triumphs of youth allowed.
A transient pleasure²⁴ sparkles in his eyes;
He hears and smiles, then thinks again and sighs.
For now he journeys to his grave in pain;
The rich disdain him, nay, the poor disdain;

199 Alternate masters now their slave command,
 Urge the weak efforts of his feeble hand;
 And, when his age attempts its task in vain,
 With ruthless taunts of lazy poor complain.

Glossary

1. declining swains — hesitating lovers.
2. languour — rest
3. Muse — Inspiration
4. harmonious strains — melodious songs.
5. nymphs' — lady love's.
6. Corydens — shepherds who appear in Virgil's Eclogues (c42-37BC).
7. amorous pains — pangs of love.
8. fields and flocks ~ example of alliteration.
9. fervid — intense
10. dewy — beaded with the sweat of their brow.
11. tinsel trappings — in sham and artificial decorative rhymes. This is also an example of alliteration,
12. cot —cottage.
13. barren flattery — empty praise.
14. myrtleless — every green shrub with leaves and white scented flowers. The 'myrtle' is a plant which is symbolical of love.
15. Note the line for alliterations.
16. weary sire — old father
17. offspring — child
18. matron — mother
19. expiring brand — coal, ember about to extinguish
20. hoary — old
21. rude staff— old, firm stick used for support.
22. emblem — symbol.
23. furrow — ridge
24. Full many a prize — recall Gray's **Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard**
25. tranient pleasure — a fleeting pleasure.

Paraphase

In the various excerpts from Book I of **The Village**, Crabbe portrays the various cares and worries of the country side.

In the very first lines of the poem, Crabbe says that the worries that plague the peasants and the rustic lovers, the fruits of their labours and age that marks the end of their labours, whatever marks these, and the other toils of the country life never find a mention in poetry, for there is Muse, which can create poetry out of this. This is so much so to say that no poetry has been written about the problems, the anxieties and the worries that plague the people of the country. All poetry written about the country so far, dealt with the pleasures, the calmness and the happiness of the country. Seldom did a poet consider the pains taken to arrive at the pleasures,

In the next few lines Crabbe says that gone are the times of such melodious songs, where the poet praised his native plains. Now, no shepherd would rehearse in verses of alternate rhymes the beauty of his country or that of his lady love. Yet, however the poets try to sing in a melodious strain, and depict stories of shepherds like the old Coryden (ref. glossary); tender tales of love and fulfilment, but also! never discuss the pains of these shepherds.

In the next extract (II 39-62) Crabbe describes the life of a peasant. He says that indeed, the fields and flocks have a unique charm for farmers who farm these land. But, Crabbe says that when he sees these peasants getting scorched by the fiery midday sun and labouring patiently with booms beaded with sweat it is indeed a picture of pity. Among them are some with feeble heads and faint hearts, who accepting their misfortune, labour ceaselessly to the best of their abilities. Seeing such misery, is it then fit, the poet asks, that he should try to hide them beneath the veil of a picture of false beauty and decoration, through poetry rhymes?

No, indeed, says the poet. Cast by misfortune on a strange coast, where there is neither grove nor valley, amidst such worries as the Muse may never know, amongst the shepherds who dwell with more than one mate, does Crabbe prefer to write his poetry. He would rather compose poetry on the truth of life rather than paint a romantic and illusive picture of it. To the modern poet he says that to him the smoothness of his rhyme is in vain because, the modern poet has never felt the labour, nor has he been bowed down by time. The emptiness of his rhyme is more than evident. Crabbe asks, in some irritation whether the soothing rhymes of poetry can soothe one's hunger or if poetic myrtles could shelter the shelterless. The light and happy tales can never measure the heavy griefs of life and neither can it uplift sorrow by its airiness.

In the next and final extract (III 172-199) Crabbe further vents his scorn

against complacency surrounding rural poetry. He asks those who only take note of rural ease and smooth sonnets to go and visit a village once and see if real peace exists there. He asks them to make the aged father, drooping with age, the children who surround the meagre fire. He asks them to look at the pale mother who with her trembling hand shifts the embers of a fast extinguishing fire. There is poverty and misery written on every corner of the countryside. There is then the example of a once robust country youth, who had become old with age. He is now precariously propped on the support meted out to him by his crooked walking stick. He looks up wistfully at the bare tree which as a boy he had often climbed, even its highest branch. The tree was once a seat of joy, but now is merely the lone symbol of his robust and gay youth.

This man was once the chief of the rustic trade, here, meaning farming. His once steady hand could make the deepest furrows in the soil. His labours had won him prizes galore and he is still proud to be reminded of his former glories. Now, a fleeting pleasure sparkles in his eyes as he remembers his past days, and then against he sighs at the thought of his old age and imminent death. His days are numbered and the rich disdain him. Even the poor look down on him, due to his inadequacies. He is none but needless extra of the society and a slave to their commands. Even when he tries to work with his feeble hands, he is rudely taunted by all around him for his incapacities.

There is nothing pleasant in such a sad and grim picture as Crabbe paints. It is this grimness brought about by age and enhanced by poverty which is Crabbe's focus. Through these examples he tried to expose life as it really is in the countryside.

21.11 COMPREHENSION EXERCISES

1. Paraphrase 11 172 to 199 of The Village and say how Crabbe portrays the truth of life in the country.
2. How different is Crabbe's portrayal of the country from the conventional rural poems?

21.12 ROBERT BURNS (1759-1796)

Biographical Note

Robert Burns was born in 1759, in Scotland, and was the son of a farmer.

He was educated mostly at home, alongside working in the farm-fields. His first poems were circulated in manuscript form and his first published work was, **Poems, Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect** (1786). The success of this anthology brought him into the literary circle of Edinburgh.

There is a certain primitivism about Burn's poetry. Being a farmer himself, in his poetry he describes the rusticity of rural lands. His primitivism brings him close to nature and commere everyday life, which anticipates the triumph of Nature in the poetry of the Romantic Movement.

Burns found his own poetic idiom and expression from the older Scottish vernacular poetry of the eighteenth century, particularly those of Allan Ramsay and Robert Fergusson. Burn's poetry has many Scottish words. Burns returned to life of farming in his own country and died prematurely in 1796.

21.12.1 A Red, Red Rose

The poem that we shall study is a little lyric piece **A Red, Red Rose** often called a song. James Hingsley suggests that it may be a song Burns simply collected, without even reconstructing it. Burns himself spoke of it as a simple old Scots song which I had picked up". The song has been widely regarded and Thomas Crawford says of it that it is "a lyric of genius, made out of the common inherited material of folk-song. Here is the text of the song written in 1794:

The text:

A Red, Red Rose

O my love's¹ like a red, red rose²,
That's newly sprung³ in June;
O my love's like the melody⁴
That's sweetly played in tune.
As fair art thou, my bonnie lass⁵,
So deep in love am I; and I will love thee still, my dear,
Till a' the seas gang dry*.
Till a' the seas gang dry, my dear⁷,
And the rocks melt wi' the sun⁸;
And I will love thee still, my dear,
While the sands o' life⁹ shall run¹⁰.
And fare thee weel, my only love¹¹!

And fare thee weel a while!
And I will come again, my luve,
Tho' it were ten thousand mile¹²!

Glossary

The poem is written in the Scottish dialect and the colloquial tone of the poem may be perceived in the spelling which are more colloquial than formal. The rhyme scheme is that of an alternate rhyme, with slight variations.

1. luve — meaning love, the emotion and also the lover's beloved.
2. like a red red rose — this is a simile where a comparison between the beloved and a red rose has been instituted. The tender, soft and precious sweetness of the rose has been invoked to describe the nature of his lady love.

There is alliteration in "red, red rose", with the repetition of the letter 'r' here used for emphasis. It is the force of this alliteration that makes the title of the poem attractive and instantly shifts our attention to a red rose. But the poet clarifies in the very first line of the poem that it is the lover's lady love who is beautiful like a red rose and that, the poem is about love and not merely about a red flower.

3. newly sprung — blossomed; bloomed.
4. my luve's like a melodie.— meaning my love's like a sweet song "which may be played for its rhythmic'splendor. This is another example of a simile, where a comparison between love and music has been instituted.
5. bonnie lass — The word bonnie means pleasant, sweet and the word bonnie means pleasant, sweet and the word 'lass' is rustic term for a young girl.
6. Till a' seas gang dry — means 'till the seas go dry'. The lover pledges to love his beloved, till the seas go dry meaning in effect, that he would love her forever.

This is an instance of hyperbole, that is an extended exaggeration used for emphasis.

7. The repetition of the same line. This is called a refrain, and is a frequent feature of a song, where emphasis is conveyed by repetition.
8. rocks melt wi' the sun — again an instance of hyperbole meaning that the lover would forever love his beloved. It is evident that the hard rocks will never melt, and by implication the lover says, his love would never end.

9. sands o' life — This is a metaphor, that is a comparison between life and an hourglass is implied. The sands of the hourglass are the moments of which life is made.
10. while the sand o'life shall run — As long as life exists.
11. luvè — here, the word love is used for lady-love.
12. ten thousand mile — A very great distance, perhaps uncountable, but conveyed by the immensity often thousand. The lover says that even if he is separated from his beloved by a great distance, he would come back to her.

Paraphrase

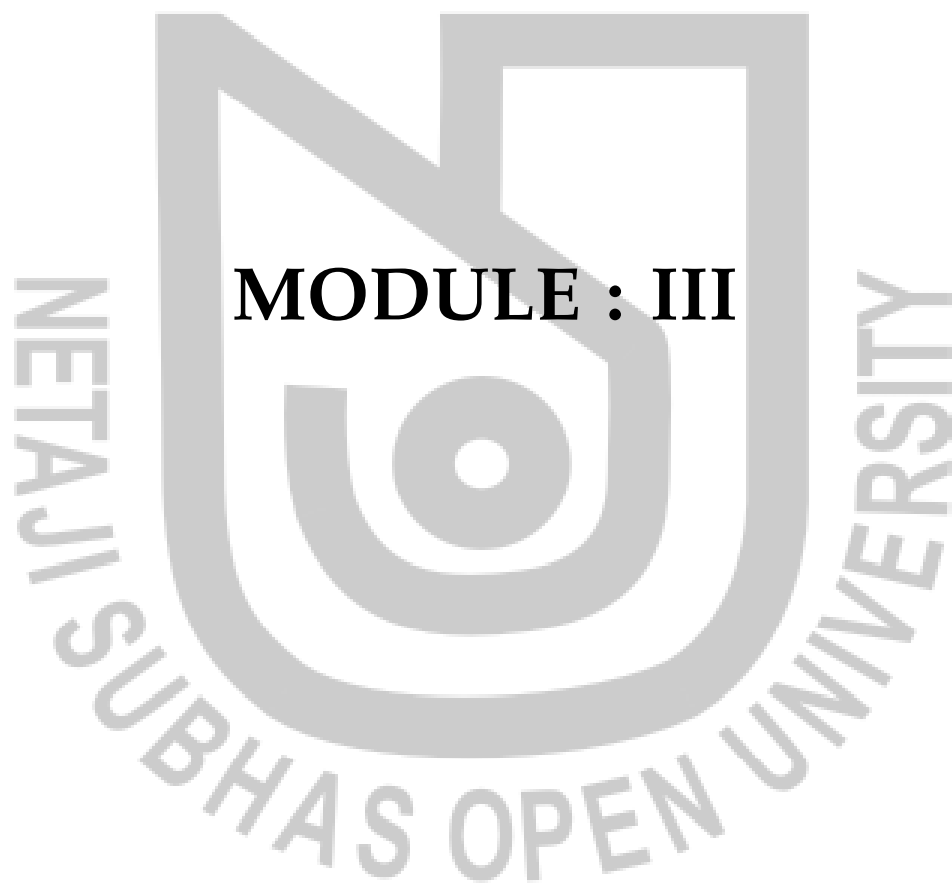
The poem begins on a general note where the lover describes his lady love and says that she is like the tender and sweet rose. His love is like the tuneful melody which may be sung as a delightful song of love. It is interesting that the poem becomes a tuneful melody by virtue of its beauty.

From the general note of the first verse, the tone of the poem changes. Now the lover directly addresses his beloved and marvels at her beauty, he pledges, through the many hyperboles that he would love her forever, and as long as life exists. It is in the very last stanza that we realise that the lover is taking leave of his beloved and going to a faraway place, where the lovers would not be physically present together. The lover promises his beloved that regardless of the physical distance between them he would forever love her and would surely come back to her.

The poem has folk element in it and is also somewhat a ballad. It reiterates the very common theme of the rustic lover swearing to love his beloved forever and also the familiar theme of return after a long separation. Although common, the theme is universal and has been represented in all literatures of the world. There is also a narrative element in the poem in as much as the fact that there is a 'story' in it, albeit a short one. This, coupled with the folk interest renders it to be a ballad. On the other hand, its shortness and the subjective element which naturally comes through the use of the first person singular person T helps it to be classified as a 'lyric'.

21.13 COMPREHENSION EXERCISES

1. Write the substance of the poem along with a critical note.
2. What is the rhyme-scheme of the poem?
3. Can you call the poem a ballad?



MODULE : III

UNIT 22 The Romantic Legacy : Reading Romantic and Victorian Poetry

Structure

- 22.0 Objectives
- 22.1 Study Guide
- 22.2 What is Romanticism ?
- 22.3 Features of Romanticism
 - 22.3.1 Subjectivism
 - 22.3.2 Lyricism
 - 22.3.3 Imagery
- 22.4 The Victorian Version
 - 22.4.1 Romantics with a Difference
- 22.5 Comprehension Exercises

22.0 OBJECTIVES

In this block, we will read some poetry that was written between 1789 and 1851. The first ten poems were written within 1820 and exemplify the Romantic Movement in English Literature. The last three poets with one poem each in this block, belong to the era that was named after its famous monarch, Queen Victoria, who came to the British throne in 1837. Of course, Tennyson and Browning had been publishing poems from the early their distinctive voices differentiate them from the poets of the earlier generation and justify a different label. Yet we can also talk of certain continuities in form, in style and in poetic mood that constitute the 'Romantic legacy' in Victorian poetry.

22.1 STUDY GUIDE

There are some basic common approaches to reading poetry through which we have already gone in Module I and II.

Generally, all poets writing in particular language share some common devices like metrical patterns, figures and tropes, allusions or references etc. Again, changes in social and cultural situations compel or motivate poets

belonging to different generations to discover new devices of poetic expression. Therefore, even as we read poetry, it is important for us also to learn how to identify the distinctive features of the poetry that we call 'Romantic'.

22.2 WHAT IS ROMANTICISM ?

Although the term 'Romantic' was in use in the early 19th century ('Deep romantic chasm'; **Kubla Khan**), it came to be used as a description of a particular movement in the literature of this period only from the middle of the century. However, the connotation of the term changed from the late 18th century. While the 'Augustans' used the term to mean something fantastical, or unreal, from the late 18th century, it acquired a more positive connotation later on. This coincided with a reaction against the Augustan love for clarity and order.

On the other hand, however, the Romantics rejected such clarity and order in literature as mechanical and artificial. Instead, they emphasized on the freedom of self-expression of the individual, the centrality of inspiration and found that the possibility, of discovering a deeper truth lay in the imagination of the individual.

22.3 FEATURES OF ROMANTICISM

22.3.1. Subjectivism

The Romantic poets responded to the French Revolution of 1789 in different ways, sometimes positive and sometimes negative. But all of them were dissatisfied with the existing state of things, particularly the acquisitive, dehumanized society created by the Industrial Revolution. While some of them looked towards an imagined future for the fulfilment of their aspirations, others turned to the distant past or to remote an exotic spaces. They also looked into the beauties of nature for inspiration as well as for solace. Emotional intensity, whether of joy or of suffering, was given an enormous poetic value by the Romantics. Emotions of regret, melancholy and horror became related by their very nature with their opposites : pleasure, joy and quietness. Elements of the irrational—such as dreams, visions, popular superstitions—were widely used by the Romantic poets to construct experiences which go beyond the superficiality of day-to-day reality. Such supernatural or fantastic elements, however, became credible in so far as

they reflected a subjected a subjective state and were presented as the externalisation of a mood.

22.3.2 Lyricism

The word 'Romantic' had its origin in 'romance' which referred to a set of languages originating in Southern Europe and derived from Latin. 'Romance' also referred to fictional narratives in these languages, which dealt with heroic, exotic and extraordinary subjects. The term 'Romantic' in the early 19th century takes over the sense of the exotic and strange and associates it with creative/imaginative activity. While the Romantics use different forms like the narrative, the dramatic, the sonnet, the ode etc., they give a new life to these forms by infusing into them a lyrical quality. They are filled with a subjective intensity and acquire the evocative quality of music. The lyric is thus the most typical form of Romantic poetry, but other forms such as odes ballads and sonnets also acquire a new quality through the infusion of the lyrical into them. The Romantics also discard ornamental rhetorical effects. The language is often very simple, but it acquires new dimensions through the evocative quality that is created out of it.

22.3.3. Imagery

Romantic poetry is rich in 'images' or word-pictures. These images may be of nature as in 'I wandered lonely....' or they may relate to human creations as in Keats' 'On First Looking Into Chapman's Homer'. But they are unique in their vividness and in their 'sensuousness', i.e., their capacity to reconstruct sense-impressions imaginatively through words. These images demonstrate the mastery of the Romantic poets over language and their absorption in the task of perfecting their technique and constructing the harmony of words and sense.

22.4 THE VICTORIAN VERSION

So far as the 'Victorians' are concerned, their poetry is set against a time when the revolutionary stirrings of the earlier part of the century are dying down, and a relatively stable society is in the making. The spirit of revolt and freedom that we find among the Romantics gives place to an acceptance of the slow rhythm of social progress. The romantic rebel-poet who was alienated from his own social milieu is replaced by the prophet with a superior vision who has an eminent place in society. Yet in spite of this, the poets of

the Victorian period retain a critical outlook on society, and express this sometimes through a mood of profound melancholy, which offers a contrast to the strident optimism that is the other aspect of their poetry. This melancholy sometimes takes the form of a nostalgia for the more coherent world-view of the past, which is set against the doubts and questionings of the present. This nostalgia links the Victorians with the earlier generation of poets.

22.4.1. Romantic with a Difference

The sense of a close relationship between the beauty and the sublimity of nature and the functioning of human moods and emotions, that is to be found in Romantic poetry, also inspires the Victorians. This is embodied in their nature-imagery, which, as in the Romantics, emphasizes subjectivity by blending moods and emotions with sense-impressions as in Arnold's 'Dover Beach'. However, the great flights of imagination through which the Romantics defy the boundaries of the commonsensical and create new, sensuous worlds of beauty for their readers, have had their scope reduced in Victorian poetry. The latter is more cautious and uses poetic language as a means of raising themselves as poets above the doubts and questionings and fragmented world-views that characterise the world. In 'Porphyria's Lover' Browning presents us with the stormy state of mind of the lover and yet remains detached from it.

Both Romantic and Victorian poetry use the lyrical, evocative mode, although Browning's more colloquial, conversational style stands out as an exception. The 'romantic legacy' of the Victorian poets also expresses itself in their reconstruction of older myths in a more modern context.

This legacy has been challenged from the latter half of the 19th century by the rise of 'realism', and subsequently 'modernism'. Yet the legacy is retained by any subsequent literary efforts that emphasize experimentations with words and images and seek to reach deeper levels of reality through imaginative liberation from the conventional.

22.5 COMPREHENSION EXERCISES

1. What are the features of romanticism ? (Refer to unit 1.3)
2. How far is Victorian Poetry different from the poetry of the romantics ? (Refer to unit 1.4)
3. Name two great historical events that influenced the romantics.

UNIT 23 The Great Romantics

Structure

- 23.0 Objectives**
- 23.1 Study Guide**
- 23.1 William Blake**
 - 23.1.1 Infant Joy**
 - 23.1.2 The Fly**
- 23.2 Comprehension Exercises**
 - 23.2.1 Summing up**
- 23.3 William Wordsworth**
 - 23.3.1 Animal Tranquillity and Decay**
 - 23.3.2 I wandered lonely as a cloud**
- 23.4 Comprehension Exercises**
 - 23.4.1 Summing up**
- 23.5 Samuel Taylor Coleridge**
 - 23.5.1 Kubla Khan**
- 23.6 Comprehension Exercises**
 - 23.6.1 Summing up**
- 23.7 George Gordon Byron**
 - 23.7.1 There is a pleasure**
- 23.8 Comprehension Exercises**
 - 23.8.1 Summing up**
- 23.9 Percy Bysshe Shelley**
 - 23.9.1 Ozymandias**
 - 23.9.2 To a Skylark**
- 23.10 Comprehension Exercises**
 - 23.10.1 Summing up**
- 23.11 John Keats**
 - 23.11.1 On First Looking into Chapman's Homer**
 - 23.11.2 To Autumn**
- 23.12 Comprehension Exercises**
 - 23.12.1 Summing up**

23.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit deals with some poems of leading poets of the Romantic Period in English literature. You will find that the poems evoke our imaginative feelings ; they present vivid images of natural objects and some of them are symbolic. In other words, the poems have two levels of meaning—one is the surface meaning and the other is much deeper than the surface meaning.

23.1 STUDY GUIDE

While going through the poems you will find that all the poets of this group are highly imaginative, but they have different modes of expression.

23.1 WILLIAM BLAKE

23.1.1 Infant Joy

‘I have no name—
I am but two days old.’
What shall I call thee ?
‘I happy am,
5 Joy is my name.
Sweet joy befall thee
Pretty joy !
Sweet joy but two days old—
Sweet joy I call thee.
10 Thou dost smile,
I sing the while—
Sweet joy befall thee !

Introduction

This poem appeared in Blake’s **The Songs of Innocence**, 1789. Blake illustrated his own poems and designed the pages. The illustration of this poem shows an infant on the mother’s lap and an angel admiring it. This design appears within a large red flower and the whole is suffused in golden light.

In the eighteenth century, collections of songs and ballads for children with illustration meant to give them religious lessons, were quite popular. Blake adopts this form, but uses it in his own way. Joy was not a common

name for girls in B's time. He is using the abstract noun. The child may be a boy or a girl.

Explanation

This poem has two stanzas. The rhyming pattern is quite flexible. It goes like this : a b c d d c, e f c g g c. In some lines, however, the last word of an earlier line is repeated, as for instance, in lines 1. and 5, and lines 2 and 8, thus producing an impression of rhyme. The words used by Blake are very simple, as may be understood even by a child. But the way in which the words have been put together adds to the significance of the poem. This simplicity of words combined with a depth of meaning is a characteristic of the best of Romantic poetry.

In the first stanza, the two-day old child is imagined by the poet as speaking. By making the child speak, the poet enters into the being of the child, as it were. In its first speech, the child says it has no name. In the second speech in response to the poet's question, the child names itself as "joy". The child says, "I happy am", not "I am happy". This arrangement of words makes the child identical with the idea of being happy. The child represents the state of pure joy. Child=joy. But Blake further strengthens this idea of the joyousness of the child by saying, "sweet joy befall thee", i.e., by blessing "joy" with more sweet joy.

In the second stanza, infant "joy" addressed by the poet. The repetition of the word "joy" four times in the second stanza establishes the child's identity as joy itself.

Further, the smile of the child makes the poet sing. Thus, through his association with "joy", the poet also becomes joyous.

The title of the poem is **Infant Joy**. In one sense, this means that Joy is the infant's name. In another sense it tells us that joy and infancy are one and the same. The poem may be seen as having some religious undertones because the child can be seen as the Christ-Child who personifies joy by bringing redemption to men. But even without the religious allusion, Blake always emphasized freedom and joy as the essence of childhood. This approach to childhood as having in it an element similar to divinity is to be found in other Romantic poetry also.

This is one of the 'songs' of innocence. This, of course, does not mean that the poem has been set to tune. It means that the poem shares some characteristics of a song. The repetition of key words throughout the poem gives the poem a musical quality and helps to evoke the basic mood of the poem. Such a poem is called a lyric.

23.1.2. The Fly

Little fly,
Thy summer's play
My thoughtless hand
Has brushed away.
5 Am not I
A fly like thee ?
Or art not thou
A man like me ?
For I dance
10 And drink and sing,
Till some blind hand
Shall brush my wing.
If thought is life
And strength and breath,
15 And the want
Of thought is death ;
Then am I
A happy fly,
If I live,
20 Or if I die.

Introduction

The poem occurs in the **Songs of Experience**, which first came out as a combined volume, **The Songs of Innocence and of Experience** (1794). The illustration (see Headnote to 'Infant Joy') shows a mother or a nurse teaching a child to walk while an older child plays with a racquet and a shuttle-cock. The scene is skirted by a dead tree. The poem is written in short lines common in nursery-rhymes. But it also recalls a more grim occasion when the Duke of Gloucester in Shakespeare's tragedy, **King Lear**, exclaims :

As flies to wanton boys are we to the gods,
They kill us for their sport.

The fourth stanza of 'The Fly' was added later.

Explanation

The poem consists of five stanzas in which there is rhyme between every second and fourth line. Here, the poet addresses the fly that he has just killed thoughtlessly. The word 'little' indicates the pity he feels for the fly.

The hand is controlled by thought. Here, the image of the hand involuntarily 'brushing away' the fly, indicates that the fly had been killed by a careless accident, not intentionally. In the second stanza, not only is the human individual said to be like the fly, but turning the sentence around, the fly is found to resemble the human individual. The argument in the second stanza is that 'men' and 'flies' are the same. This argument is supported in the next stanza as the man's "summer's play" ("I dance and drink and sing") is described. Like the man in *Thought-Obscured Youth*, the fly dances around and drinks honey and sings in summer. The man resembles the fly in another way. The "summer's play" goes on until he is destroyed by death as suddenly as a fly is brushed away by a 'blind' hand. The hand is 'blind' as it kills unintentionally and carelessly. By this 'transferred epithet' where the adjective blind is added to the 'hand' rather than the possessor of the hand the unpredictability and suddenness of death for man is suggested.

Here Blake sees death, for a man or for a fly, as utterly irrational but inevitable. If we read the poem minus the fourth stanza, then we can say that Blake ends his poem with the proposition that in this irrational universe, happiness lies in living and dying without thought. Like the fly who has no consciousness of its imminent death, man is happy when he can live without thinking, engrossed in 'summer's play'.

The fourth stanza, however, complicates matters and brings in a new dimension. In the irrational universe, man alone lives in his thought, not just in body. For man, to exist is to think. Therefore, a thoughtless life, like the fly's, is like death. Here, we come back to the word "thoughtless" in the first stanza. If the poet had not been thoughtless, he would not have killed another living creature. So, at this level, "want of thought is death" also means that want of thought in the poet causes death of a fellow creature. If we now re-read the fifth stanza in the context of the fourth, then we can say that the cruelty and irrationality of death remains. The poet is still like a fly, yet he is happy in being capable of thought and therefore capable of sympathy with fellow creatures.

In this poem, as in 'Infant Joy', the repetition of key words helps to evoke the basic mood. The words are simple but the evocativeness gives depth to the poem.

23.2 COMPREHENSION EXERCISES

1. Repetition of certain keywords is a poetic device which creates a certain effect in the reader's mind. Identify words that are repeated in **Infant**

- Joy** and in **The Fly** and describe what effect they create.
2. **Infant Joy** is said to be a 'song of innocence' while **The Fly** is said to be a 'song of experience'. 'Innocence' and 'Experience' are contrasting words. Try to explain the contrast in mood that you find between the two poems.
 3. Do you think the poem **The Fly** would have lost something if the poet had not interpolated the 4th stanza ? Justify your answer.
 4. The words in a poem are often evocative or suggestive. The literal meaning is not enough. Show how the word 'joy' in **Infant Joy** and the word 'thoughtless' in **The Fly** have been used suggestively.

23.2.1 Summing up

- A. Simple words, but depth of meaning.
- B. The moods of 'innocence' and 'experience' contrasted with each other.
- C. Pure joy of childhood in one poem, more sombre thought of the cruelty and meaninglessness of death in the other.
- D. Lyric quality created through repetition of words and through evocativeness.

23.3 WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

23.3.1 Animal Tranquillity and Decay

The little hedge-row birds,
 That peck along the road, regard him not.
 He travels on, and in his face, his step,
 His gait, is one expression ; every limb,
 His look and bending figure, all bespeak
 A man who does not move with pain, but moves
 With thought—He is insensibly subdued
 To settled quiet ; he is one by whom
 All effort seems forgotten, one to whom
 Long patience has such mild composure given,
 That patience now doth seem a thing, of which
 He hath no need. He is by nature led
 To peace so perfect, that the young behold
 With envy, what the old man hardly feels.

Introduction

This poem first appeared in **Lyrical Ballads**, 1798, published jointly by Wordsworth and Coleridge, under the title : **Old Man Travelling : Animal Tranquillity and Decay, A Sketch**. Six lines at the end of the first version, explaining the purpose of the old man's journey, were later dropped. These were :

— I asked him whither he was bound, and what
The pbject of his journey ; he replied
'Sir ! I am going many miles to take
A last leave of my son, a mariner,
Who from a seafight has been brought to Falmouth,
And there is dying in an hospital'.

The poet described this poem as 'an overflowing' from the longer poem subsequently composed under the name of **The Old Cumberland beggar**. The poem is an example of the successful use in poetry of 'a selection of language really used by men'. This effort to recover the simple rhythm of ordinary prose distinguished the poetry of Wordsworth from the ornate, rhetorical traditions of Augustan poetry.

Explanation

The poem is in blank verse, the vocabulary and the construction of sentences being very simple. It was in the 1798 version called a 'sketch', and indeed it is word-picture through which the slow movements of an old man, whom constant care and pain have transformed into the very embodiment of endurance, are recreated.

The very first image is that of the birds that come down looking for food on the road from the hedges that grow on its sides. The old man moves along so gently that even the birds, ever ready to take flight, do not take notice of him. His life of suffering has made the man almost one with the humble creatures of nature. What has 'decayed' as a result of long-endured pain is all active resistance to it. Instead, he has developed the passive patience that is to be found in the animal world. This patience also becomes the only means of his survival. This is the only expression that he has ; not only his 'face', but every movement excides this uniform tranquillity. He seems to have acquired this state of 'settled quiet' even without being aware of it, i.e., 'insensibly'. His 'bending' figure indicates the burden of age and suffering that he bears. Yet the restlessness that is the usual sign of pain is completely absent. Thus although he is only a poor and humble man, he

appears to have the calm of the philosopher, as if it is 'thought' that has made his movements so gentle, and not pain.

'Patience' has become his habit. He seems to be the very embodiment of it and as such it is not necessary for him to look for patience any more. When others, particularly young people like the poet, look at him they wonder at his fortitude and 'envy' him because they themselves lack it. But the old man being now above all feelings, some even to be immune to the feeling of peace. Wordsworth also writes about the settled patience of a poor, ordinary man who has had a hard life, in his 'Resolution and Independence'. Simple though the subject is, his treatment gives it a poetic beauty.

23.3.2 'I wandered lonely as a cloud....'

I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host, of golden daffodils,
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

Continuous as the stars that shine
And twinkle on the milky way,
They stretch'd in never-ending line
Along the margin of a bay :
Ten thousand saw I at a glance
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

The waves beside them danced, but they
Out-did the sparkling waves in glee :—
A poet could not but be gay
In such a jocund company!
I gazed—and gazed—but little thought
What wealth the show to me had brought;

For oft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude ;
And then my heart with pleasure fills
And dances with the daffodils.

Introduction

This celebrated lyric was composed between late March 1804 and April 1807 and published in **Poems in Two Volumes** 1807. Wordsworth and his sister Dorothy had settled at Dove Cottage, Grasmere in December 1799 where they would remain till May 1808. The Lake Districts landscape, familiar to Wordsworth from his childhood, consisted of sharp peaks called 'fells' with lakes called 'mere' or 'water' in between. The daffodils growing beside Ullswater are also vividly described in Dorothy's journal. The poet himself wrote :

The daffodils grew and still grow on the margin of the Ullswater, and probably may be seen to this day as beautiful in the month of March nodding their golden heads beside the dancing and foaming waves.

Explanation

The poem consists of four stanzas, each consisting of a unit of four lines, a quatrain, followed by a unit of two lines, a couplet. As in many of his poems, Wordsworth emphasizes loneliness or solitude, which enables the poet to have an experience which keeps on being revived through memory. In this poem, the golden daffodils become the very embodiment of pure joy for him. Their movements in the breeze of early spring are described through a number of verbs like "fluttering", "dancing", "shine", "twinkle", "tossing", "danced", "sparkling", "flash". Not only the movements but also the bright colours of the flowers are hinted at through these words. Also notice how words signifying joy are repeated throughout the poem : "sprightly", "glee", "gay", "jocund", "bliss", "pleasure".

At the beginning, the poet's mind is empty. He compares himself with a cloud that has spent its-moisture and being empty, floats on high. In this vacant mood, the crowd or host of daffodils offers a contrast to his own state and makes a vivid impression on him. In the second stanza, they are compared to stars on the milky way. Just as in the milky way there is a continuous brightness without any of the stars being individually visible, so, too, the daffodils appear like a continuous halo while each flower is not separately to be seen. Of course, the poet does not know what their exact number is. "Ten thousand" only suggests that they are numerous. The line of flowers seems to be endless.

In the third stanza, we find a certain similarity between the waves of the lake and the movements of the flowers. It is the same wind which runs through both. The movement of the golden daffodils is even more vivid than the movement of the waves which, too, are sparkling. The poet's solitude

thus fills up with the companionship of nature which surrounds him with bright colours and dancing movements. He is no longer lonely. At the moment, however, the poet does not think about these things, but is content of feast his eyes on the scene. The show, however, does not only bring him joy for the present. The wealth it stores up for him is described in the last stanza.

Here he comes back to the present and says that even today he can “see” the daffodils once again in his mind’s eye at certain moments when he is in vacant or in pensive mood, i.e., either when his mind is empty or when he is reflecting. He says that loneliness can bring this pleasure of conjuring up the past in imagination. The impression is so vivid that he is able to revive the same pleasure which he had felt when he had actually seen the dancing daffodils. Now, it is his memory and his imagination which recreate the dancing daffodils.

23.4 COMPREHENSION EXERCISES

1. An image is a word-picture. It does not only describe something, but gives a concrete and vivid presentation. Go through the two poems by Wordsworth and try to point out from the texts how he builds up an image of the old man travelling and of the daffodils.
2. The Introduction to, ‘Animal Tranquillity and Decay’ tells us that Wordsworth dropped the last six lines of the poem in later editions. Do you think the poem is complete as it is now or would it have been better if the lines had been included ? Can you guess why Wordsworth dropped the lines ? Substantiate your answer.
3. In ‘I wandered lonely...’ many words expressing similar ideas are used by Wordsworth to highlight the central theme of the poem, e.g., ‘lonely’, ‘solitude’. Identify other ideas repeated through Synonymous words and show how they are used to highlight the theme.
4. Would you call Wordsworth a ‘simple’ poet ? Give reasons for your answer on the basis of the poems you have just read.

23.4.1 Summing up

1. Basically simple experiences given a poetic quality.
2. Close relations between man and nature emphasized.
3. An atmosphere of quietness and peace.
4. Dignity of the common man finds a place.

23.5 SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE

23.5.1 Kubla Khan

In Xanadu did Kubla Khan
A stately pleasure-dome decree ;
Wriere Alph, the sacred river, ran
Through caverns measureless to man 5
Down to a sunless sea
So twice five miles of fertile ground
With walls and towers were girdled round:
And there were gardens bright with sinuous rills,
Where blossomed many an incense-bearing tree ;
And here were forests ancient as the hills, 10
Enfolding sunny spots of greenery.
But oh! that deep romantic chasm which slanted
Down the green hill athwart a cedarn cove!
A savage place ! as holy and enchanted
As e'er beneath a waning moon was haunted 15
By woman wailing for her demon-lover !
And from this chasm, with ceaseless turmoil seething,
As if this earth in fast thick pants were breathing.
A mighty fountain momentarily was forced :
Amid whose swift half-intermitted burst 20
Huge fragments vaulted like rebounding hail,
Or chaffy grain beneath the thresher's flail ;
And 'mid these dancing rocks at once and ever
It flung up momentarily the sacred river.
Five miles meandering with a mazy motion 25
Through wood and dale the scared river ran,
Then reached the caverns measureless to man,
And sank in tumult to a lifeless ocean;
And 'mid this tumult Kubla heard from far
Ancestral voices prophesying war ! 30
The shadow of the dome of pleasure
Floated midway on the waves :
Where was heard the mingled measure
From the fountain and the caves,
It was a miracle of rare device, 35

A sunny pleasure-dome with caves of ice !
 A damsel with a dulcimer
 In a vision once I saw:
 It was an Abyssinian maid,
 And on her dulcimer she played, 40
 Singing of Mount Abora.
 Could I revive within me
 Her symphony and song,
 To such a deep delight 'twould win me,
 That with music loud and long, 45
 I would build that dome in air,
 That sunny dome ! those caves of ice !
 And all who heard should see them there,
 And all should cry, Beware ! Beware !
 His flashing eyes, his floating hair ! 50
 Weave a circle round him thrice,
 And close your eyes with holy dread,
 For he on honey-dew hath fed,
 And drunk the milk of Paradise.

1798

Introduction

The poem has the alternative title 'A Vision in a Dream. A Fragment', and according to Coleridge's own version was written in 1797. When it was published in 1816 in '**Christabel' and other Poems**, Coleridge wrote in the preface that in the summer of 1797, he was in ill health and while staying at a farmhouse between Porlock and Lynton had been prescribed a medicine which probably contained opium. Reading a seventeenth century book called **Purchas his Pilgrimage** (1613) he fell asleep under the influence of medicine and had a vision of Kubla Khan's palace which had been described in the book. Simultaneously, he also composed 300 to 400 lines of poetry in his sleep and was interrupted, while he was writing them down on walking up, by 'a man from Porlock' who had come to see him on business. When he returned to his composition he found that the rest of the poem had passed from his memory. This story has been contested by Coleridge scholars as being fictitious and it has been pointed out that an opium-dream cannot produce this kind of a poetic composition. However, the poem is characterised by the vividness and omission of obvious logical linkage

between one image and another that one finds in dreams.

Dorothy Wordsworth records the existence of the poem in 1798 although the original manuscript has not survived. But a later draft belonging to c. 1810 has been recovered, which probably means that Coleridge came back to the poem from time to time before publishing it. Although it is called a fragment, the stanzas of the poem are linked to one another by evocative imagery. The lines in **Purchas his Pilgrimage** which inspired the poem are as follows :

'In Xamdu did Cublai can build a stately palace, encompassing sixteen miles of plain ground with a wall, wherein are fertile Meadows, pleasant springs delightful Streams and all sorts of beasts of chase and game, and in the midst thereof a sumptuous house of pleasure, which may be removed from place to place.

Explanation

The name Kubla Khan is derived from the name of the 13th century Chinese emperor whose court was visited by the Venetian traveller Marco Polo. However, Coleridge's Kubla Khan is not identical with the historical figure. He merely conjures up the association of a powerful monarch who uses forces of nature to create a world of **exotic** beauty around himself. The word 'decree' i.e., order, indicates the great power of the monarch over his own domain. He has even used parts of the 'sacred' river Alph to make fertile the vast tracts of land surrounded by walls and towers and the gardens are brightened up by little streamlets of water which wind or move 'sinuously' through them. The brightness and symmetry of the gardens created by Kubla is however contrasted with the dark **caverns** of immeasurable depth through which the river runs and the 'sunless sea' into which it falls.

Similarly, the ancient forests are contrasted with the 'sunny spots of greenery' devised by Kubla. These forms of nature were wild and mysterious and lie beyond the world that Kubla governs.

The river 'Alph' is Coleridge's own invention. It is associated with the first letter of the alphabet, ancient Ethiopian 'Alph', Greek 'Alpha', Hebrew 'Aleph', and also with rumours of a mythical place in ancient Ethiopia being the original source of all language and civilisation. Further 'Alph' also recalls the Greek river Alpheus which ran underground. All these associations, apart from many references in Romantic poetry to 'river' or 'water' as a metaphor

of creative power, suggest that in describing Kubla's grand creations, Coleridge is also likening Kubla to the poet who gives shape to things of beauty, over which he reigns. But his creative or imaginative power, like the river Alph, follows its own mysterious and hidden route and ultimately falls into the sea of death. The poet Has only partial control over it.

The second stanza emphasizes the mysteriousness of the river's source. It is imagined as originating from a mighty spring arising out of a 'deep romantic chasm'. The 'slant' makes the chasm invisible to human eye, moreover it is hidden by a cover of tall evergreen cedar trees. It is a 'savage' place, but also 'holy'. Its primitive character is stressed and it is described as a site for the possible union of the 'earthly and the supernatural, the 'woman' and her demon-lover'. In this way the process of composing poetry too, indirectly compared to the union of the human with the supernatural. But the 'waning moon suggests the decline of coativity when the two are inevitably separated from each other Thus the chasm from which the river of creativity bursts forth also conceals the threat of isolation and pain, embodied in the image of the wailing woman.

Notice too the very strong verbs that characterize the river : 'seething', i.e., bubbling up or foaming ; 'forced', 'vaulted', that is jumped up high under the impact; 'flung up'. This powerful bursting out of the fountain which caused bits of rock to fly around all the time is compared to showering of hail during a hail-storm or the flying around of the chaff-filled grain at the time of threshing. It is thus shown to be a 'mighty' river which is untamed by man and also destructive, reducing the rocks to 'fragments'. Without such destruction, the river cannot flow out. Similarly, poetry is created only by destroying the hurdles that ordinary life puts on the path of the poetic vision. But this destructiveness reminds Kubla of another kind of destruction, destruction of all human achievements by time, In the roar of the river Kubla hears the voices of his dead forefathers 'prophesying war'. The past warns about the future, when the beautiful kingdom built by Kubla will be ruined by war, as many such beautiful kingdoms were ruined before.

The repetition of the adjective 'sacred' in connection with the river and of the phrase 'caverns measureless to man' comes like the refrain of a song, stressing the main theme. In the second stanza, the sea is said to be 'lifeless' whereas it had been described as 'sunless' before. This makes its association with death more evident. The last lines of the second stanza bring out more clearly the metaphoric connection between Kubla's creations and the creations

of a poet. Coleridge called imagination an 'esemplastic' or shaping power through which a 'reconciliation of opposites' is achieved. It is in such imaginative reconciliation that the pleasure of poetry lies. Thus Kubla's convex 'dome of pleasure', casting its shadow on the waves, forms a perfect circle with the concave caverns, catches the echo of music from the fountain and the cave and achieves the miracle of combining opposites, the 'dome' and the 'caves', 'sun' and 'ice'. But this poetic perfection is transitory as suggested by the description of the shadow floating midway on the waves.

The third stanza, at the beginning, appears to have very little connection with the first two. But looking at it more closely, we find Coleridge here making the comparison between Kubla and the poet more evident. Abyssinia is another name for Ethiopia, associations with which were already established in the first stanza. Mount Abora may be derived from the 'Mount Amara' described by Milton in **Paradise Lost**, Bk IV ; this is an Abyssinian Paradise, from which all language and civilisation arose, according to myth. Then the 'Abyssinian maid' with the dulcimer may be the muse of poetry, the highest gift of language and civilisation. Reviving her music in his mind is for the poet an act of creative pleasure, of 'deep delight'. This delight may help him to create in his imagination the miracle reconciling opposites that Kubla is supposed to have built in actuality. The poet can make people 'see' as images what they hear as music. The final description of the inspired poet as being isolated from ordinary men is taken from Plato's **Ion**, where poetic creativity is compared with the sacred **frenzy** of the devotees of Bacchus who, Plato says, while drawing water from the rivers find it transformed to milk and honey. This capacity of working miracles makes ordinary people treat the poet with awe and causes them to draw away from him ; 'Beware ! Beware ! and 'weave a circle round him thrice' etc. This description of the poet also brings back to us the woman possessed by the demon-lover and lamenting separation from the latter with perpetual wailing. Poetic joy thus also alienates the poet from the ordinary. **Kubla Khan** in this way may be read as a poem about poetic creativity.

Glossary

- Cedarn : Adjective from 'cedar', covered with cedares.
Momently : Occuring at every moment.
Dulcimer : A musical instrument with metal strings of graduated length over a trapezoidal sound box, struck with small hammers.

23.6 COMPREHENSION EXERCISES

1. In **Kubla Khan**, Kubla's creations and the natural surroundings within which these are placed are contrasted with each other. Show how these contrasts are brought out by the poet.
2. **Kubla Khan** does not make explicit, but none-the-less, suggests similarities between Kubla's creations and the imaginative creations of a poet. Point out where these suggestions occur in the poem, explaining your answer.
3. Coleridge called **Kubla Khan** a 'vision in a dream'. Does the poem have some dream-like qualities? What are they? Substantiate your answer.
4. Point out some of the similes and metaphors, i.e., figures of speech based on finding similarities in different things, in **Kubla Khan**. Also explain them.

23.6.1 Summing up

1. A visionary poem which Coleridge calls a 'fragment' but which none-the-less hangs together.
2. A poem on imaginative creation and its dangers and beauties.
3. Imagination as reconciling opposites.
4. Creation of new and significant images out of diverse older materials: 'Kubla Khan', 'river Alph', 'Mount Abora'.

23.7 GEORGE GORDON BYRON

23.7.1 There is a pleasure

There is a pleasure in the pathless woods,
There is a rapture on the lonely shore,
There is society, where none intrudes,
By the deep Sea, and music in its roar :

I love not Man the less, but Nature more,
From these our interviews, in which I steal
From all I may be, or have been before,
To mingle with the Universe, and feel
What I can ne'er express, yet cannot all conceal.

Roll on, thou deep and dark blue Ocean—roll!
Ten thousand fleets sweep over thee in vain;

Man marks the earth with ruin—his control
Stops with the shore; upon the watery plain
The wrecks are all thy deed, nor doth remain
A shadow of man's ravage, save his own,
When, for a moment, like a drop of rain,
He sinks into thy depths with bubbling grown,
Without a grave, unknell'd, uncoffin'd, and unknown.

His steps are not upon thy paths,—thy fields
Are not a spoil for him,—thou dost arise
And shake him from thee; the vile strength he wields
For earth's destruction thou dost all despise,
Spurning him from thy bosom to the skies,
And send'st him, shivering in thy playful spray
And howling, to his Gods, where haply lies
His petty hope in some near port or bay,
And dashest him again to earth :—there let him lay.

The armaments which thunderstrike the walls
Of rock-built cities, bidding, nations quake,
And monarchs tremble in their capitals,
The oak leviathans, whose huge ribs make
Their clay creator the vain title take
Of lord of thee, and arbiter of war—
These are thy toys, and, as the snowy flake,
They melt into thy yeast of waves, which mar
Alike the Armada's pride or spoils of Trafalgar.

Thy shores are empires, changed in a save thee—
Assyria, Greece, Rome, Carthage, what are they ?
Thy waters wash'd them power while they were free,
And many a tyrant since; their shores obey
The stranger, slave, or savage ; their decay.

Has dried up realms to deserts :—not so thou ;—
Unchangeable, save to thy wild waves' play,
Time writes no wrinkle on thine azure brow:
Such as creation's dawn beheld, thou rollest now.

Thou glorious mirror, where the Almighty's form
Glasses itself in tempests ; in all time,—

Calm or convulsed, in breeze, or gale, or storm,
Icing the pole, or in the torrid clime
Dark-heaving—boundless, endless, and sublime.
The image of eternity, the throne
Of the Invisible ; even from out thy slirne
The monsters of the deep are made ; each zone
Obeys thee; thou goest forth, dread, fathomless, alone.

Introduction

This is an extract from the fourth and last canto of Byron's **Childe Harold's Pilgrimage**. The fourth canto was the outcome of Byron's visit to Italy in 1816-17 and his sojourns in Milan, Venice and Rome. This poem however tells no story of the pilgrim who is on a journey to redeem himself of his guilty memories. In the extracted passage the pilgrim is not mentioned at all and we have the author speaking in his own person about his own meditations on time and nature which are more powerful than all the great achievements of man.

Explanation

This stanza-form used by Byron was invented by Edmund Spenser and used in the **Faerie Queene** (1590-96). So this is called the Spenserian stanza. In it we have eight five-foot iambic lines—"iambic pentameters"—followed by an iambic line of six feet, i.e. iambic hexameter or Alexandrine. The lines rhyme a b a b, b c b c, c.

The poem begins with the poet's expression of adoration to nature. The solitude of nature gives him pleasure and provides him with food for thought. Hence, human presence is **intrusive**, while in nature he finds true society. The fifth line in the first stanza is in the form of an antithesis. The contrast between his attitude to man and his attitude to nature is expressed through the balance of the two parallels.

In the second stanza, the ocean is invoked as manifesting the tremendous power nature. Man works havoc on earth through violence and war. But he has no control over the ocean. The destructive power of the ocean is much more than man's. It leaves no sign of the wrecks wrought by men, but engulfs them and him, too. The fearsome image of man sinking into the ocean like a drop of rain emphasizes this power. Repetition of words like "ruin", "wrecks", "ravage", "spoil", "destruction" evokes the mood of fear and awe that Byron wishes to conjure up.

In the third stanza, he comes back to another image of puny man as a mere plaything of the ocean. A rising wave throws him to the skies and then again dashes him to earth.

In the fourth stanza, there is a more explicit reference to human monarchs and tyrants whose pride is shattered by the ocean. The great wooden ships are compared to mythical seamonsters. These ships were built by conquerors in their pride and given names which assert their mastery over the sea. But the makers of the ship are made of mortal clay and cannot compete with the ocean, although they may boast to have decisive power in war. To the ocean, these are mere toys. When the ocean turns frothy like yeast, great fleets like the Armada of Spain or the French ships at Trafalgar completely disappear under it.

In the fifth stanza, Byron talks of the great empires of ancient times—which are now in ruins. Now they are under a different power or back to primitive savagery. Rich kingdoms have turned into deserts, but the ocean which had then washed their shores still remains the same.

In the last stanza, the ocean is compared to a mirror in which an eternal and ineffable power is reflected. This power is described as the 'Almighty'. The ocean is sublime in mingling beauty with terror. The eternity is too vast for man to visualize. The ocean seems to be a visual representation of eternity. We see its surface, but can only imagine its boundaries or what dreaded creatures swarm in its depths. Byron's description has a grandeur and solemnity which evoke in us the romantic mood of awe at the sight of the great powers of nature.

Glossary

Leviathan: A sea monster. Anything very large and powerful, specially a ship. In Hobbes' book of that name (1651), it is a metaphor for an autocratic monarch.

Armada : A fleet of warships, specially the naval force sent by Philip of Spain in 1588 against England. The fleet was destroyed by the English navy. The scattered survivors were destroyed in a storm while returning to Spain.

Trafalgar : A cape on the south coast of Spain, where in 1805, the British fleet defeated the forces of Napoleon, thus creating a big setback for the latter's project to invade Britain.

Carthage: A city on the North coast of Africa founded in 814 B.C. It became a major power in the Mediterranean and came in conflict with the Greeks and then the Romans. It was destroyed by the Romans in 146 B.C.

23.8 COMPREHENSION EXERCISES

1. 'There is **society** where **none intrudes**'—this is a 'paradox' where an apparently absurd or contradictory statement conceals a deeper meaning. Elucidate the deeper meaning in this statement.
2. Analyze some of the images in stanzas 3 and 4, where the helplessness of man against the sea is picturized.
3. 'Armada', 'Trafalgar', 'Assyria', 'Greece', 'Rome', 'Carthage'—What is common about them ? How do they help to establish the power of the ocean ?
4. Compare and contrast Byron's nature-descriptions with Wordsworth's.
5. Byron addresses the 'ocean' as if it is living. How does this increase the effect of the poem ?
6. When the emotion of fear mingles with our perception of beauty, a 'sublime' mood is created. Give some instances of how this is done in Byron's poem.

23.8.1 Summing up

1. A majestic and sublime description of the power of nature.
2. Human company rejected for nature.
3. The insignificance of human power and ambition against the unrelenting power of nature.
4. 'Personification' of nature.
5. Visualisation of the abstract idea of 'infinity' through the ocean.

23.9 PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

23.9.1 Ozymandias

I met a traveller from an antique land
Who said : Two vast and trunkless legs of stone
Stand in the desert. Near them, on the sand,
Half sunk, a shattered visage lies, whose frown,
And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read
Which yet survive (stamped on these lifeless things),
The hand that mocked them and the heart that fed ;
And on the pedestal these words appear:
'My name is Ozymandias, king of kings ;

Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair !'
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare,
The lone and level sands stretch far away.

Introduction

'Ozymandias' was written by Shelley late in 1817. It came out of a friendly contest with Horace Smith, with both the poets writing sonnets on the same theme. The figure of Ozymandias whose empire is said to be surrounded by desert may be derived from Western accounts of the great Egyptian monarchs of old. The scene described in the poem however, may not have followed any single written account. It may be pointed out that interest in the ancient civilization of Egypt was widespread, particularly following Napoleon's invasion of Egypt in 1798, and the compilation in Napoleon's time of an account of Egyptian civilization called **Description of Egypt** (1809-1828). Shelley is also known to have been familiar with the works of Constantin, Count of Volney, whose **Travels in Syria and in Egypt** (1787) and **'The Ruins, or Meditations on Revolutions of Empires** (1791) give accounts of the dramatic rise and fall of ancient civilizations. Shelley was a hater of **tyranny** and had stated democratic sympathies. While admiring Napoleon for his meteoric rise from obscurity, Shelley also hated him for having betrayed the ideals of the French Revolution by declaring himself Emperor of France. While describing the futility of power in the ancient world, Shelley may also be thinking of the downfall of the modern tyrant and the destruction of his **imperial** ambitions. Napoleon was defeated in 1815.

Glossary

antique : ancient, having existed since old times.

visage : face or features as expressive of feeling and temperament.

colossal : of gigantic proportions. The term 'kolossos' was used by the Greek writer Herodotus to describe statues of Egyptian temples. It also referred to the enormous statue which is said to have stood astride the entrance to the harbour of Rhodes in ancient Greece.

Explanation

This poem is a sonnet in fourteen lines, the rhyme-scheme being a b a

b a c d c e d e f e f. This is a very unusual rhyme-scheme for a sonnet. But this complicated rhyme-scheme brings a certain discipline to the poet's sense of unbounded awe at the mighty spectacle he beholds. His awe becomes tempered with irony about the self-defeating pride of Ozymandias.

In the very first line, the poet tells us that he got this description from a traveller. This creates a sense of great distance. The traveller's description starts by evoking a sense of fear and mystery. The two vast legs of stone are trunkless, i.e., the body is missing. Also, it stands in the middle of a desert without any other sign of human habitation. The mystery of the identity of this colossal ruin is further increased by the fact that the stone head which lies on the ground nearby and which had obviously belonged to the statue now in ruins, is itself shattered, making the features almost unrecognizable. It is half-covered in sand, too. However, in the fourth and the fifth lines, some identification marks are perceived on the shattered visage. The "frown", the "wrinkled lip", the "sneer of cold command" tell us that it represented someone supremely powerful, ambitious and contemptuous of others. The poet says that the unknown sculptor, who fashioned the statue, must have closely studied these qualities on the living face so that even when the visage is shattered, the sculptor's impression of the tyrant's character survives in the features even though they are made of lifeless stone. When alive, the tyrant's heart had kept alive his sense of domination. 'Them' in line 8 refers to 'passions' in line 6. 'Hand that mocked them' probably means that what his hand could achieve was mere 'rhubbery', i.e., unsuccessful imitation of what his proud heart aspired to.

In line 9 the mystery is unravelled as the name of the tyrant is discovered on the pedestal. Line 11 has a double meaning. Ozymandias, when he had these words inscribed beneath his statue, had wanted other tyrants to look at his great achievements and to despair of surpassing them. He had thought that his great works would remain forever unrivalled. But the next line tells us, "nothing beside remains". The great empire, which had surrounded the statue, has been completely destroyed by Time. So the line, "look on my works,.....", also means that the powerful now looking at the ruins may despair, thinking of the impermanence of a tyrant's glory. This sense of despair is strengthened by the last two lines where the sands stretching around the huge ruined statue are described by four adjectives signifying emptiness and **futility** : "boundless and bare", "lone and level".

The shortness or brevity that we find in the poem strengthened its stark effect. The awe that the massive ruins inspire in the poet who imagines them

from the traveller's account, is tempered and beautifully balanced off by the pitiless irony with which the tyrant's pride is shown to be futile.

23.9.2 To a Skylark

Hail to thee, blithe Spirit !
Bird thou never wert,
That from Heaven, or near it,
Pourest thy full heart
In profuse strains of unpremeditated art.
Higher still and higher
From the earth thou springest
Like a cloud of fire;
The blue deep thou wingest,
And singing still dost soar, and soaring ever singest.
In the golden lightning
Of the sunken sun,
O'er which clouds are bright'ning.
Thou dost float and run;
Like an unbodied joy whose race is just begun.
The pale purple even
Melts around thy flight;
Like a star of Heaven,
In the broad daylight
Thou art unseen, but yet I hear thy shrill delight.
Keen as are the arrows
Of that silver sphere,
Whose intense lamp narrows
In the white dawn clear
Until we hardly see—we feel that it is there.
All the earth and air
With thy voice is loud,
As, when night is bare, .
From one lonely cloud
The moon rains out here beams, and Heaven is overflowed.
What thou art we know not;
What is most like thee?

From rainbow clouds there flow not
Drops so bright to see
As from thy presence showers a rain of melody.

Like a Poet hidden
In the light of thought,
Singing hymns unbidden,
Till the world is wrought
To sympathy with hopes and fears it heeded not :

Like a high-born maiden
In a palace tower,
Soothing her love-laden
Soul in secret hour
With music sweets as love, which overflows her bower :

Like a glowworm golden
In a dell of dew,
Scattering unbeholden
Its aerial hue
Among the flowers and grass, which screen it from the view!

Like a rose embowered
In its own green leaves,
By warm winds deflowered,
Till the scent it gives
Makes faint with too much sweet those heavy-winged thieves :

Sound of vernal showers
On the twinkling grass,
Rain-awakened flowers,
All that ever was
Joyous, and clear, and fresh, thy music doth surpass :

Teach us, Sprite or Bird,
What sweet thoughts are thine :
I have never heard
Praise of love or wine
That panted forth a flood of rapture so divine.

Chorus Hymeneal,
Or triumphal chant,
Matched with thine would be all

But an empty vaunt,
A thing wherein we feel there is some hidden want.

What objects are the fountains
Of thy happy strain ?
What fields, or waves, or mountains ?
What shapes of sky or plain ?
What love of thine own kind ? what ignorance of pain ?

With thy clear keen joyance
Languor cannot be :
Shadow of annoyance
Never came near thee :
Thou lovest—but ne'er knew love's sad satiety.

Waking or asleep,
Thou of death must deem
Things more true and deep
Than we mortals dream,
Or how could thy notes flow in such a crystal stream ?

We look before and after,
And pine for what is not :
Our sincerest laughter
With some pain is fraught;
Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought.

Yet it we could scorn
Hate, and pride, and fear;
If we were things born
Not to shed a tear,
I know not how thy joy we ever should come near.

Better than all measures
Of delightful sound,
Better than all treasures
That in books are found.
Thy skill to poet were, thou scorner of the ground!

Teach me half the gladness
That thy brain must know,
Such harmonious madness

From my lips would flow
The world should listen then—as I am listening now.

Introduction

This poem was written near Leghorn in late June 1820. Mary Shelley wrote :

It was on a beautiful summer evening while wondering among the lanes whose myrtle hedges were the bowers of the fire-flies, that we heard the carolling of the skylark which inspired one of the most beautiful of his poems.

A few weeks before, Shelley had read in Plato's **Phaedrus**, 'Socrates' discourse on the soul. The soul "when perfect and fully winged... soars upwards and orders the whole world, whereas the imperfect soul losing her wings and drooping in her flight, at last settles on the solid ground." Shelley's skylark soars so high that it becomes invisible. Yet its song can be heard from the ground. It represents a state of perfection which the imperfect mortal can only aspire after.

Explanation

The poem consists of twenty-one stanzas, each with four short lines followed by one long. The short lines are basically three-foot trochaic. The long ones are six-foot iambic. It has been said that the short lines followed by a prolonged flating last line resembles the lark-song with its extended trill. The form of the poem is that of an ode in which the skylark is addressed.

At the very beginning, the poet makes it clear through the term of address that it is not the bird he is addressing, but the pure and perfect joy embodied in the song of the invisible bird. He calls the bird "blithe spirit, bird thou never wert". The word "heaven" suggests the perfection or closeness to perfection that the bird represents. It does not have to think about the song. The spirit is the song itself. The beauty that others can create through thought and labour emanates naturally from the blithe, i.e., joyous spirit.

In the next three stanzas, the flight of the bird is described. The fire that rises from earth to heaven is so bright that we can hardly look at it. Similarly, the song of the bird seems to conceal the bird itself in a veil of brightness. "Cloud of fire" is an oxymoron, a figure of speech in which two apparently contradictory terms appear in conjunction. Here the brightness of the song itself conceals the bird. The bird's flight is vertical. It rises above the clouds, radiant with the hues of the setting sun. But even then, it has just begun its

upward flight and rises higher into the purple light of the evening. As a star remains invisible at daytime, so the bird remains hidden in the evening light.

The intensity of joy embodied in the bird's song, as earlier in "cloud of fire", is expressed through the metaphor of light. In stanza 5, this is compared to the bright light of Venus as morning star which can be seen for a while after sunrise. Later, as it gradually narrows with the strengthening of daylight, its presence is still felt. Again, in stanza 6, the unseen bird pouring out its song is compared to the moon pouring out its light while itself hidden behind a single cloud. This mysterious nature of the bird's joyous song is sought to be communicated through a series of similes in stanzas 8 to 12. As the poet says in stanza 12, all that we can think of that is "joyous and clear and fresh" are imperfect similes of the absolute spirit of joy that the bird's song represents.

Thus the bird is compared to a poet whose individual identity is concealed by the brightness of his imagination and whose spontaneous songs stir up the whole world to visualize things it had not thought of before. It is subsequently compared with a virgin singing of her pure love from the seclusion of a high palace tower. In stanza 10, the bird's song is compared to the glow-worm's light. While the glow-worm itself cannot be seen, its apparently aerial, i.e., unembodied light, illuminates the flowers and grass hidden by them. Again, in stanza 11, music, earlier compared with light, is now said to be like the intense scent of a rose that has lost its petals and therefore, can no longer be seen. Even when the rose has been thus deflowered, i.e., shorn of its petals, its fragrance enthralls the bees, called heavy-winged thieves" because the fragrance has made their wings lethargic. This blending of images based on the sense of hearing, of sight and of smell is characteristic of Shelley.

In the next three stanzas, 13, 14 and 15, the poet places different kinds of human music—praise of love or wine, marriage song, chant celebrating a victory—side by side with the bird's song, and finds all of them wanting in comparison. So he wonders what can be the source of inspiration of this spirit or bird. Is it nature? Is it love? Is the bird completely free of the experience of pain that all human beings have to go through? In stanzas 16 and 17, he comes to the conclusion that the joy expressed in the bird's song must be on a very different plane from anything that human creatures may experience. Human joy is always overshadowed by weariness and annoyance

that follow it. Human love is tainted by the feeling of having too much of it. The thought of death limits human happiness but the bird knows neither “languor” nor “annoyance” nor “satiety”. The joy of the bird would not have the purity of a “crystal stream” (“crystal” meaning crystal clear) if the bird did not have a deeper and a more positive understanding of death than man has. Thus it is possible that it is not ignorance of pain and death, but a deeper perception of these that the joyous song of the bird represents.

In stanzas 18 and 19, the poet contrasts the human situation with that of the skylark and says that man, being imperfect, always hankers after the unattained. In human experience joy cannot exist without pain, and it is out of sorrowful experience that human poets make things of beauty. This kind of a statement is called a paradox. In fact, Shelley says, our life is so bound up in contraries that if a man is completely immune to suffering, that person can never even aspire towards the pure joy that the bird represents. Hate, pride, fear, pain represents the ground reality from which a poet must soar high in order to create beauty. While the poet’s state is contrasted with the bird’s, at the same time, in his aspiration, the poet resembles the bird. The skylark, as the spirit that scorns the ground, thus becomes a better inspiration for the poet than music and books.

In the last stanza, the poet exhorts the skylark to teach him “half the gladness” known to the skylark. Because he is only a mortal, its full measure would not be available to him, but even a fraction of it would enable the poet to create such music as would enthral the whole world, as the skylark has enthralled the poet.

This inspired poetry is described by Shelley as “harmonious madness”. Again, this is an oxymoron. Madness indicates complete absorption in his inspiration and unconcern for the commonsense details of everyday world, which alone can create true poetic harmony. Again, this has a reference to **Phaedrus** : “He who, having no touch of the Muse’s madness in his soul, comes to the door and thinks he will get into the temple by the help of art—he, I say, and his poetry are not admitted.”

Glossary

- even : evening
vernal : belonging to the spring
Hymeneal : pertaining to marriage ceremony.

23.10 COMPREHENSION EXERCISES

1. How does the ruined statue of Ozymandias come to embody tyrannical power and pride ? What are the words and phrases that conjure up this effect ?
2. Are there any similarities between this poem and the previous poem by Byron ? Shelley's poem is much shorter; is it therefore less effective ? How does he use irony in the poem ? Substantiate your answer.
3. Shelley's poem **To a Skylark**, is addressed to bird. But he says in the very second line 'Bird thou never wert'. How do you explain this ?
4. Shelley compares the skylark with various beautiful objects in nature and the human world. Analyse these comparisons to show whether they are appropriate:
5. 'We look before and after/And pine for what is not', how is this state contrasted with the bird's state ?
6. 'Harmonious madness' is an oxymoron. Justify it as a description of the skylark's song and the poet's.

23.10.1 Summing up

1. Shelley's hatred of tyrannical power and his love for liberty.
2. Using a natural object as the visual embodiment of an idea.
3. Craving for a perfect state of joy and beauty combined with an understanding of the sorrows of human existence.
4. A keen sense of the music of words.

23.11 JOHN KEATS

23.11.1 On First Looking into Chapman's Homer

Much have I travelled in the realms of gold
And many goodly states and kingdoms seen;
Round many western islands have I been
Which bards in fealty to Apollo hold.
Oft of one wide expanse had I been told
That deep-browed Homer rule as his demesne;
Yet did I never breathe its pure serene
Till I heard Chapman speak out loud and bold :
Then felt I like some watcher of the skies
When a new planet swims into his ken;

Or like stout Cortez when with eagle eyes'
He stared at the Pacific—and all his men
Looked at each other with a wile surmise—
Silent, upon a peak in Darien.

Introduction

Keats' avid interest in Greek mythology developed while he was still in school. He did not have access to Greek language, however, and therefore, could not read Homer's poetry until in October, 1816, his friend Charles Cowden Clarke, the son of the headmaster of his old school, got hold of a text of George Chapman's (c. 1560-1634) translation of Homer's **Iliad** and **Odyssey**. The two friends read the works overnight, and the following morning, after walking back home, Keats wrote the poem within a couple of hours. It describes the intense imaginative excitement that his first reading of Homer's poetry gave him.

Glossary

- Realm : A kingdom; any region or territory, esp. of a specified ruling power.
Fealty : faithfulness to one's overlord.
Demesne : dominion, possession.
Serene : A dew or mist. Also as adj. clear, fine and calm (of weather, air, sky)
Ken : The distance that bounds the range of ordinary vision esp. at sea.

Explanation

This poem is a sonnet of 14 lines consisting of one rhyming unit of 8 lines (abba abba) and one of 6 lines (cd cd cd), The metrical scheme provides a framework of discipline for the poet's intense rapture.

The 'travelling' described in the first few lines is of course mental travel and the whole poems revolves round metaphors of. discovery, geographical or astronomical. It may be recalled here that at school,"Keats voraciously went through abridged accounts of voyages, and had also read Robertson's **History of America**.

But the 'realms of gold', also described as 'goodly states and kingdoms', refer to the imaginative worlds opened up by the poet's readings. His

experience of literature brought him the joy and excitement such as a traveller feels when travelling in new lands. 'Realms of gold*' are thus a metaphor for the wondrous and precious worlds of literature.

In the third and the fourth lines, the term 'western islands' refers to the different realms of Western European literature that the poet has so far gone through. Greece is in Eastern Europe. His introduction to Greek literature comes only now with his reading of Chapman's Homer. However, Keats sees Apollo, the Greek sun-god who also presides over poetry and music, as ruling over the 'western islands' too. These 'islands' are the creative worlds that 'bards' or poets have received as their own domains from Apollo himself. So these bards, too, owe allegiance to Apollo, who is seen by Keats as the ultimate source of all poetry. In his unfinished epic, **Hyperion**, Keats presents Apollo as the very embodiment of radiant and harmonious beauty. It is as such that in Keats' epic he stands poised to replace Hyperion, an older sun-god who had ruled merely through greater physical power. Keats, in this sonnet, also sees Apollo as the symbol of the highest and purest elements in ancient Greek or 'Hellenic' culture, which offered a beacon-light to subsequent European literature and culture.

In the next lines, he says that until he read Chapman's 'loud and bold' version, he had known about Homer and the domain of poetry that was Homer's, only from hearsay. Homer is here described by the epithet 'deep-browed'. This refers to the myth that Homer was blind. Eyes sunk in their sockets could make the brow look deep. But the word 'deep' could also refer to the depth of thought concealed behind the brow. In his sonnet on Homer, Keats again talks of the depth of Homer's vision into human life which surpasses his physical blindness: 'There is a triple sight in blindness keen'.

In the last six lines of the sonnet, Keats's pleasure and excitement in first experiencing Homer's poetry expressed through two similes. The first simile probably has some reference to Bonnycastle's **Introduction to Astronomy** where William Herschel's first discovery of the planet, Uranus, is vividly described. The planet, of course, is not new. It has always been there. But, when it first appears through the telescope of the patient astronomer who has been waiting for it for a long time, it fills him with the thrill of novelty. While looking at the planet, he also thinks of the rich source of knowledge and pleasure that it may prove to be. This is what Keats feels like.

The second simile has a slight factual error. It was not Cortez, the Spanish conqueror of Mexico, but Vasco Balboa, who was the first European to see the Pacific Ocean. In 1513, he reached the western coast of the Isthmus of

Panama known in former times Darien and spotted the Pacific from there. However, what is important here is the explorer's spirit, which is represented by Cortez in the poem. He is shown here at the exact moment of the discovery. The eagle's eyes are sharp and far-reaching and become a metaphor for the explorer's keen vision. As the explorer suddenly perceives the ocean at a distance, he is unable to speak due to an excess of exhilaration. His men, who stand behind him, cannot as yet share his view. So they look at each other, trying to guess what their leader has seen. Again, like the explorer looking at the Pacific, the poet feels that vistas of new possibilities have opened up through his first acquaintance with Chapman's Homer. It may be noted that both the plant and the Pacific are seen from a distance by the viewers. Homer's poetry is also a distant object for Keats. This increases the thrill of the first sight for him.

23.11.2 To Autumn

Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness!
Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun;
Conspiring with him how to load and bless
With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eaves run;
To bend with apples the moss'd cottage-trees,
And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;
To swell the ground, and plump the hazel shells
With a sweet kernel; to set budding more,
And still more, later flowers for the bees,
Until they think warm days will never cease,
For Summer has o'er-brimm'd their clammy cells.

Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy store ?
Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find
Thee sitting careless on a granary floor,
Thy hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind;
Or on a half-reap'd furrow sound asleep,
Drowsed with the fume of poppies, while thy hook
Spares the next swath and all its twined flowers;
And sometime like a gleaner thou dost keep
Steady thy laden head across a brook;
Or by a cider-press, with patient look;
Thou watchest the last oozings, hours by hours.

Where are the songs of Spring ? Ay, where are they ?
 Think not of them, thou hast thy music too,
 While barred clouds bloom the soft-dying day,
 And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue;
 Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn
 Among the river shallows, borne aloft
 Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies;
 And full-grown lambs loud bleat from hilly bourn;
 Hedge-cricket sing; and now with treble soft
 The redbreast whistles from a garden-croft,
 And gathering swallows twitter in the skies.

Introduction

This poem was written in September, 1819, when Keats was staying at Winchester. Here he had a favourite walk to the St. Cross meadows along the side of the small river Itchen. The evenings were becoming cooler and brought in their train thoughts of the approaching winter. Yet the days were still long. On September 21, he wrote to his friend, J. R. Reynolds, about these walks :

“How beautiful the Season is now—How fine the air—a temperate sharpness about it. Really, without joking, chaste weather—Dian skies—I never liked stubble-fields so much as now—Aye better than the chilly green of the Spring. Somehow, a stubble-field looks warm—in the same way that some pictures look warm. This struck me so much in my Sunday’s walk that I composed upon it”.

Glossary

- thatch eves** : the projecting part of a straw-covered roof.
- winnowing** : Separating chaff from grain by exposing it to a current of air.
- swath** : or swathe. Space covered by the one sweep of the scythe. Hence a row of corn ready for reaping.
- cider-press** : an instrument for pressing apples to make cider, a strong drink made from apple juice.
- river shallows** : Willows growing by the river side.

Explanation

This poem has been called an ode. Coming from ancient times, it is generally a rhymed lyric, often in the form of an address and dignified or exalted in subject. In this year, Keats wrote a number of poems in this form, mostly dealing with beauty and its transience, and **To Autumn** is the last of these. It is characterized by a mood of calm acceptance which is given a visual form in the description of autumn. The poem consists of three stanzas.

In the first stanza, autumn is seen as a spirit of benevolence. Its mists are life-giving and bring an abundance of fruits which represent the ultimate stage of the seasonal cycle. The autumnal sun is a "maturing" sun which brings fruition. "Load and bless with fruit"—lines, in which the idea of abundance is strengthened through a certain repetition of meaning in the two verbs, are typical of the style adopted by Keats. Notice the verbs in this stanza ; "bend", "fill", "swell", "pump" (here used as a verb). All of them strengthen the impression of fullness. The apple trees also are not bare, but covered with the rich green of moss. Ripeness has reached the innermost part of the fruits. The kernel in the hazel nut has become sweet. Again "more and still more flowers" suggests the same abundance through repetition. This abundance makes the bees think that summer will never come to an end. Their cells are clammy with honey and so full that honey is dripping. Here, sense-experience of the eyes, of taste and of touch has been blended and concretised through the words. This sensuousness is a characteristic of Keats's nature-poetry.

In the second stanza as well as in the first, while Keats presents us with this sensuous description, he also succeeds in investing autumn with certain human qualities. In the first stanza, autumn was seen as conspiring with the sun to bring the whole of nature to its utmost fullness and ripeness. In the second stanza autumn is seen as a patient worker in the field. Sometimes she can be imagined as resting after a full harvest.

The gentle wind of the afternoon is seen as moving through the hair of this personification, just as it moves through grain separating it from chaff. The picture again shifts, and autumn is seen as a reaper found sleeping in between two rows of grain. It seems that the poppies growing in between the grain have caused her to go to sleep with her work half-done. When the reaping is over, the fields will be empty. But the untimely sleep has postponed this emptiness and ensured that the flowers twined round the row of corn which lies next to her, remain untouched by the reaper's hook

or scythe. In this and the next two word-pictures, the poet suggests that autumn's work will soon be done. The gleaner carrying the harvested corn from the fields will leave them empty. The cider-press, when the last drops of apple-juice have been squeezed through it, will lie idle. So, from fullness will follow emptiness and death. Winter will come. But, for the moment the beauty of this autumnal fullness continues to linger.

In the last stanza, these thoughts of winter and imminent death are even more clearly articulated. The question, "Where are the songs of Spring?" contains its own answer. They are already far off. But the poet seems to prefer the music of autumn. In the last few lines, the sights of autumn get delicately blended with its sounds. Already the day is ending. But, the day's death brings with it a soft and gentle touch. The clouds "bloom" with the colour of the setting sun and the stubbles left on the harvested fields are coloured with a beautiful rosy hue and give them the warmth that Keats speaks of in his letter. This death is full of the gentle beauty of acceptance.

In the next lines, the words "wailful", "mourn", "sinking", "dies" emphasize this sense of ending which, though tinged with sadness, remains full of beauty. The lambs are now full-grown. They have reached the most mature state of their life. The gathering swallows about to migrate to warmer climates signify the imminence of winter. The red-breast robin, the only bird which will not leave the garden in winter, can be heard whistling. This whistle, too, is an aspect of autumnal music. The mourning of the gnats, the gentle sound of the wind, the bleating of lambs, the singing of hedge-crickets, the twittering of swallows together enhance the atmosphere of gentleness and peace.

23.12 COMPREHENSION EXERCISES

1. 'On First Looking Into Chapman's Homer' describes a young poet's excitement on discovering a precious world of poetry. Discuss the metaphors through which Keats communicates this excitement.
2. Originally the seventh line of 'Chapman's Homer' read 'Yet could I never tell what men could mean', Do you think the change Keats made has improved the poem? Give reasons for your answer.
3. Keats in addressing autumn endows it with a conscious being. Describe how he does this in the first two stanzas.
4. In the 'music' of autumn, there are indications of the coming of winter. Identify these indications in the poem with your comments.

5. 'Sensuous' poetry is that which imaginatively reconstructs the experience of the senses. Give some examples of such sensuousness from 'Ode to Autumn' with your comments.

23.12.1 Summing up

1. Poetry characterised by sensuous imagery.
2. Keen joy in things of beauty, combined with a very clear sense of transience and the need to accept it.
3. Consummate craftsmanship where images, myths, allusions, alliteration all combine to produce a harmonious effect.



UNIT 24 The Victorian Poets

Structure

- 24.0 Objectives
- 24.1 Study Guide
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- 24.6 Matthew Arnold
 - 24.6.1 Dover Beach
- 24.7 Comprehension Exercises
 - 24.7.1 Summing up

24.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit deals with three Victorian poets. Tennyson champions Victorian optimism; Browning represents intellectualism of the age in his psycho-analysis; Arnold gives expression to pessimism of the mid-Victorian Period. In Browning you will find a new mode of poetic expression known as **Dramatic Monologue**.

24.1 STUDY GUIDE

This unit will acquaint you with **Dramatic Monologue** used by Robert Browning. Both in Tennyson and in Matthew Arnold, you will find the features of romantic poetry—viz. response to nature, uses of images and metaphor. But in contrast to romantic poets like Wordsworth, Shelley and Keats, the Victorian romantics use nature as a background to human emotions. The metaphor of “Darkling plain” in “Dover Beach” is a gem in English poetry. Browning introduces psychology into English poetry. In his poem you will encounter a queer lover who is totally different from a lover in romances.

Thus, this unit enables you to :

- (a) discern the cross-currents of the Victorian mind;
- (b) comprehend the dimensions of romantic sensibilities;
- (c) understand what Dramatic Monologue is.

24.2 A. L. TENNYSON

24.2.1 Ring out, Wild bells

Ring out, wild bells, to the wild sky,
The flying cloud, the forsty light :
The year is dying in the night;
Ring out, wild bells, and let him die.

5 Ring out the old, ring in the new,
Ring, happy bells, across the snow :
The year is going, let him go;
Ring out the false, ring in the true.

10 Ring out the grief that saps the mind,
For those that here we see no more;
Ring out the feud of rich and poor,
Ring in redress to all mankind.

15 Ring out a slowly dying cause,
And ancient forms of party strife;
Ring in the nobler modes of life,
With sweeter manners, purer laws.

20 Ring out the want, the care, the sin,
The faithless coldness of the times ;
Ring out, ring out my mournful rhymes,
But ring the fuller minstrel in.

Ring out false pride in place and blood,
The civic slander and the spite ;
Ring in the love of truth and right,
Ring in "the common love of good.

25 Ring out old shapes of foul disease ;
Ring out the narrowing lust of gold ;
Ring out the thousand wars of old,
Ring in the thousand years of peace.

Ring in the valiant man and free,
30 The larger heart, the kindlier hand ;
 Ring out the darkness of the land,
Ring in the Christ that is to be.

Introduction

This lyric is numbered CVI in Tennyson's **In Memoriam, The Way of a Soul**, which was anonymously published by Tennyson in 1850 to commemorate the death of his friend, Arthur Hallam. Hallam and Tennyson developed a very close friendship while they were undergraduates at Trinity College, Cambridge, and when Hallam suddenly died of apoplexy on 15 September 1833, Tennyson felt: "a sudden and brutal stroke had annihilated in a moment a love passing the love of women". Soon after Hallam's death Tennyson started writing a series of short and initially independent lyrics in memory of his friend which were eventually woven together into a design in **In Memoriam**. A journey from suffering and despair towards and assertion of faith in a "God of love" is the pattern that we find in the poems. This poem must have been written some time between.

Explanation

In Memoriam three Christmases are described. While the two earlier descriptions are tinged with sorrow and regret over the loss, the third Christmas description begins with a resolute desire to banish all thought of the dead past and to look forward to a new future. In the Christian (Gregorian) calendar, Christmas is followed by New Year, and the bells tolling at midnight when the old year ends also signify the birth of the new. The bells in stanza CVI are the bells of New Year, but they also carry Christmas associations.

The flying cloud and frosty light associated with the end of December also evoke uncertainty in the poet's mind. But when the wild bells ring out, they bring with them a triumphant sense of joy in welcoming the New Year. It may be observed that the wild bells are 'happy' bells.

While the ringing of the bells denotes the poet's resolve to expel grief and thoughts of death from his mind, it also acquires a broader significance in relation to the age as a whole.

Thus, the conflict between rich and poor is seen as belonging to an old era and the poet wants the bells to usher injustice or redressal to all men. In the political sphere, old forms of partisan politics that create strife over causes which no longer have any meaning must be ended and nobler forms

of social existence are expected to be born. Here Tennyson may be thinking of the social strife and unrest that began with the French Revolution and erupted again in the early 1830s and took the form of violent revolutions. He wishes that such violent conflicts may not take place again. Lack of faith is seen by Tennyson as killing human warmth. Not only the destruction of religious faith, but also faith in social values is indicated here. This is the malady of the times. The New Year must heal man of this malady. He feels that his own poetry too suffers from this lack of faith. This mournful poetry must be replaced by that of poets who can sing with greater confidence. Other 'old shapes of foul disease' consist of false pride in social position, envy and greed for money which narrows the mind. He hopes that instead of these, the New Year will ring in an era when all men will strive for truth and love of good. He also hopes that in the new era the many wars fought in the past will be forgotten and a long era of peace will be introduced.

In the last stanza, he visualized the man of future, brave, free and more generous and loving. In this vision of the new man, there is an implicit reference to his dead friend whom he had idealized. But this new man will also be in the model of Christ. The occasion of Christmas reminds him of the Saviour who died for the redemption of Mankind. Christian mythology talks of the new age that will descend with the second coming of Christ, the millennium or one thousand years of Christ's prophesied reign in person on earth. This allusion serves to emphasize the poet's faith in progress towards a better social being. Hallam, the human friend, and the divine Christ are blended in Tennyson's vision of the ideal man of future.

Glossary

Saps : Weakens.

Minstrel : Medieval singer or musician ; hence any singer or poet.

Civic : of or pertaining to urban life.

24.3 COMPREHENSION EXERCISES

1. Explain how the allusion to Christmas and New Year is used in the poem.
2. Show how the poet's personal hopes and fears are mixed with his hopes and fears about the future of mankind in 'Ring out, wild bells'.
3. Explain the significance of the following terms as used in the poem; 'wild', 'frosty light', 'grief that saps the mind', 'Christ that is to be'.

24.3.1 Summing up

1. Use of Christmas and New Year as points of allusion.
2. A prophetic confidence to tone.
3. Evocation of a mood of hope giving the poem a lyrical quality.
4. Allusions to social and political events.

24.4 ROBERT BROWNING

24.4.1 Porphyria's Lover

The rain set early in to-night,
The sullen wind was soon awake,
It tore the elm-tops down for spite,
And did its worst to vex the lake:
I listened with heart fit to break.
When glided in Porphyria; straight
She shut the cold out and the storm,
And kneeled and made the cheerless grate
Blaze up, and all the cottage warms ;
Which done, she rose, and from her form
Withdrew the dripping cloak and shawl,
And laid her soiler gloves by, untied
Her hat and let the damp hair fall,
And, last, she sat down by my side
And called me. When no voice replied,
She put my arm about her waist,
And made her smooth white shoulder bare,
And all her yellow hair displaced,
And, stooping, made my cheek lie there,
And spread o'er all her yellow hair,
Murmuring how she loved me—she
Too weak, for all her heart's endeavour,
To set its struggling passion free
From pride, and vainer ties dissever,
And give herself to me for ever.
But passion sometimes would prevail,
Nor could to-night's gay feast restrain
A sudden thought of one so pale

For love of her, and all in vain :
 So, she was come through wind and rain.
 Be sure I looked up at her eyes
 Happy and proud ; at last I knew
 Porphyria worshipped me ; surprise
 Made my heart swell, and still it grew
 While I debated what to do.
 That moment she was mine, mine, fair,
 Perfectly pure and good : I found
 A thing to do, and all her hair
 In one long yellow string I wound,
 Three times her little throat around,
 And strangled her. No pain felt she ;
 I am quite sure she felt no pain.
 As a shut bud that holds a bee,
 I warily oped her lids ; again
 Laughed the blue eyes without a strain.
 And I untightened next the tress
 About her neck ; her check once more
 Blushed bright beneath my burning kiss :
 I propped her head up as before,
 Only, this time my shoulder bore
 Her head, which droops upon it still:
 The smiling rosy little head
 So glad it has its utmost will,
 That all it scorned at once is fled,
 And I, its love, am gained instead !
 Porphyria's love : she guessed not how
 Her darling one wish would be heard.
 And thus we sit together now,
 And all night long we have not stirred,
 And yet God has not said a word !

Introduction

This poem came out for the first time in the January 1836 issue of the **Monthly Repository**. In 1842 Browning gave the two poems **Johannes Agricola** and **Porphyria's Lover** the combined title of **Madhouse Cells I and**

II. In 1863, however, the two poems were separated. **Porphyria's Lover** depicts love as a destructive passion—a theme that recurs in Browning's poetry.

Explanation

The poem is a dramatic monologue, a form in which Browning excelled. The only speaker in the poem is the person referred to as Porphyria's lover. The reader is made to deduce that he is a lunatic confined to a 'madhouse cell'. But he is not confessing to himself. His story is addressed to a silent listener, perhaps a visitor, as is evident in the line, "Be sure I looked up at her eyes". The monologue, therefore, has a definite physical setting. Unlike in drama, the speech is not accompanied by any action (though the narrative involves action). Instead, one senses the speaker's varying moods as if these were actions within the character himself. Hence, the monologue is also dramatic.

The first few lines describe the speaker's confinement in his cottage while a bitter storm is raging outside. This internal storm also reflects the turbulent, state of the speaker's mood. Words such as "sullen," "tore", "spite" and "vex" seem to be expressive of both the chilling violence of nature and the speaker's nervous irritation. Breathless anticipation has made his heart "fit to break". Porphyria's unexpected entry relieves even the reader. Her floating movement and quiet grace are suggested by the phrase "glided in" and the sound of her name with its long vowels and soft consonants.

She shuts the door left ajar by her waiting lover and the harsh wind along with it. This prompt and spontaneous action (suggested by the word "straight") and the way she makes the forgotten fire-place light up are symbolic. Porphyria, with her bright "yellow hair" exudes a warmth not only of appearance but of the heart. She is quick to shed her damp cloak and shawl. The act of baring her "smooth white shoulder" testifies to her purity. The manner in which she draws her lover into physical intimacy is striking for its boldness as well as its gentle sensuousness. The spreading of her long "yellow hair" around their interlocked bodies completes the spell.

The lover's words so far suggest the intentness with which he has been looking at her. Now he hears her loving words. She speaks, or so he would have his listener believe, of her inner conflicts. Her passionate love for him is obscured by her lack of courage, her pride and social ties. The image is one of a bird struggling in a cage. On this night, however, her love has overcome all fears and obstacles. She has turned her back on restraints, and has come to him "through wind and rain". The contrast between the dampness

of the world outside and the warmth within the cottage also suggests a contrast between vanity and love. Then, Porphyria's lover is quick to assure his listener that those loving words did not leave him passive. The words, "Be sure I looked up at her eyes" make the reader realize with a shock that perhaps the lover had not looked Porphyria in the face until this moment of soaring gratitude. Howsoever comforting the knowledge may be for Porphyria's lover that she "worshipped him", the reader is meant to see in him a sense of superiority and self-satisfaction earlier evident in the phrase "she/Too weak". This suggestion of the lover's psychological state through the latter's own words is a characteristic of Browning's style.

In the next two lines, while the lover's happiness grows he wonders "what to do" ; 'doing' takes on a sinister meaning so far as the girl is concerned.

In Porphyria's radiant beauty and her loving surrender to him, the lover finds total happiness. But, as the word "moment" suggests, the lover is naturally aware that his complete possession of the beloved and their togetherness may not last. "That moment she was mine, mine....." The sound of the words "wound" and "around" recreate the slow movement of a madman's hand leading up to the jolting climax, "And I strangled her". The lover has "found a thing to do". He has acted; he has taken control; he has triumphed over the moment. The thought of the pain he has caused surfaces only to be driven back hastily ; "I am quite sure she felt no pain". He opens her eyelids as carefully as if the were opening the petals of a bud that hid a bee inside. That Porphyria's eyes should be lively even in death reassures him, as does her blush beneath his "burning kiss". The lover is no longer "pale"—it is his "warm" kiss that brings the blood back into his beloved's lifeless pale cheek. The roles have been reversed. "This time" it is his shoulder that supports the beloved's head, just as Porphyria had lain his cheek against her shoulder. He has accomplished what Porphyria had always wished for, but never dared. He has made their moment together an eternal one. Fulfilment has come in death. Time has stopped.

The dramatic quality of the poem comes out in that the murder draws no moral comment. Rather, we are given an insight into the lover's mind, so that the act appears to be entirely 'logical' from his point of view. The last line of the poem is mysteriously open. The lover exclaims that God has neither rebuked him nor congratulated him. God's silence makes his triumph all but complete. The question remains that the silence may signify God's anger.

The speaker re-lives the moment as he narrates. Porphyria's head "still" rests on his shoulder; he has not stirred since. The repetition of "and" at the beginning of successive lines gives the narrative a continuity and also suggests the high-strung breathless speech of madman.

24.5 COMPREHENSION EXERCISES

1. In a dramatic poem, the poet assumes a different **persona** and speaks in another voice. Does this mean that the poet is in sympathy with the character's point of view ? How does the poet maintain an ironical distance with Porphyria's lover ?
2. Would 'A Madhouse Cell' be as good a title for his poem as 'Porphyria's Lover' ? Give reasons for your answer.
3. Show how the poet gives us some indication of Porphyria's character indirectly through the lover's speech.
4. Can Porphyria's lover be called a 'romantic' character ? Give reasons for your answer.

24.5.1 Summing up

1. Browning's interest in the study of the 'abnormal' side of human character.
2. Creation of dramatic tension through the development of the speaker's character through the speech.
3. Theme of the 'instant made eternity' which reminds us the Romantics.
4. Nature reflecting human moods.

24.6 MATTHEW ARNOLD

24.6.1 Dover Beach

THE sea is calm to-night.
The tide is full, the moon lies fair
Upon the straits ;—on the French coast "the light
Gleams and is gone ; the cliffs of England stand,
Glimmering and vast, out in the tranquil bay.
Come to the window, sweet is the night-air!
Only, from the long line of spray
Where the sea meets the moon-blanch'd land,

Listen ! you hear the grating roar
Of pebbles which the waves draw back, and fling.
At their return, up the high strand,
Begin, and cease, and then again begin,
With tremulous cadence slow, and bring
The eternal note of sadness in. 14

Sophocles long ago
Heard it on the Aegaeon, and it brought,
Into his mind the turbid ebb and flow
Of human misery ; we
Find also in the sound a thought.
Hearing it by this distant northern sea. 21

The Sea of Faith
Was once, too, at the full, and round earth's shore
Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furl'd ;
But now I only hear
Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar, 25
Retreating, to the breath
Of the night-wind, down the vast edges drear
And naked shingles of the world. 28

Ah, love, let us be true
To one another! for the world, which seems
To lie before us like a land a dreams,
So various, so beautiful, so new,
Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light, 33
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain:
And we are here as on a darkling plain
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,
Where ignorant armies clash by night 37

Introduction

The date of composition of this famous lyric is not known with certainty. Although not published until 1867, it was probably written late in June 1851, during Arnold's visit to Dover with his wife, Fanny Lucy Wightman after their marriage on 10 June 1851. Some critics think that lines 1 to 28 were written at Dover and that the remaining lines (29-37) were rescued from some discarded poem to complete the new lyric. Dover is an old English

port which faces France across the British channel and is characterized by its white chalk 'cliffs.

Glossary

Straits : The narrow strip of water that is the English Channel.

moon-blanchéd : Tinged with the white moonlight.

tremulous cadence: a trembling or a finely wavy rhythm that gradually falls or sinks.

turbid : confused, unclear, muddy.

darkling : turning dark.

Explanation

The metrical pattern and rhyme-pattern are fairly flexible. There is no regular pattern. The lines are of uneven length.

The poem starts with a note of tranquillity as suggested by the 'calm' sea, the 'full' tide, the 'fair' moon, the 'glimmering' cliffs and the 'sweet' night air. The poet has a panoramic vision of the French coast and the English cliffs separated by the sea. In the sixth line, we come to know that the poet has a companion. In the next lines, however, as the description passes from the visual to the auditory, the beauty of the moonlit night is shot through with a sense of sorrow. This sorrow is embodied in the harsh sound of the pebbles pulled in by the waves and then, flung back on the beach. The sound never stops, only recedes to a distance from time to time. It is this sound associated with the restlessness of the sea that makes the poet think that it is echoing the "eternal note of sadness" in human life.

The poet's mind goes back from this to Sophocles, the famous Athenian dramatist of the fifth century B.C., who has been described by many as the greatest tragic writer of all times. The poet says that the sound of the Aegean Sea must have similarly reminded Sophocles of the human condition which only consists of more intense and less intense periods of misery. This 'ebb and flow' is 'turbid' both in the sense of 'muddy' and 'unclear'; 'muddy' in the case of actual ebb-tide and 'unclear' with relation to the flux of human sorrow the meaning of which cannot be understood. The northern sea lying between England and France brings the same message about the human state to the modern mind.

In the next lines, however, the poet differentiates the sorrow of modern man from that of the ancient world. He uses the sea now as a metaphor of faith,—a faith that is established firmly by sincere commitments to certain

social moral and religious values. He says that at one time in the past, the human world had been clad in faith, just as the full sea surrounds the earth's shore like a bright belt. But now the tide of faith is withdrawing itself and the human world is left naked without the protective covering of faith, just as the ebbing sea leaves the shores bare and dreary. At this point, the roar of the retreating sea reminds the poet of this loss of faith and it is his own melancholy thoughts on this that he finds echoed in that roar.

The last stanza is the poet's plea to his beloved to be true and loyal to one another. This exhortation becomes all the more poignant because the poet thinks that only a true love—relationship and mutual fidelity—can redeem human beings in this modern world which may seem to be like a wonderful land of dreams and promises but is actually a hopeless, dreary place shorn of basic human feelings such as love, joy, consolation, sympathy etc. The world is thus completely bereft of any light.

The poem ends on a note of despair as our life today is compared to a battle going on in the dark, where the armies do not know whom they are fighting and who they are fleeing from. In fact, one cannot even clearly understand when one is struggling and when one is making an escape. Alarms are the signals which indicate to the soldiers whether to advance or to retreat. The confused and uncertain state of the world means that the soldiers in this field of battle cannot with confidence read the signals that guide their life any more.

24.7 COMPREHENSION EXERCISES

1. The poet is visualizing the sea through a number of images. But these images of the sea are also used as a metaphor of the human condition. Try to explain how the poet does this.
2. Consider the appropriateness of the allusion of Sophocles.
3. Show how the images of moonlight and darkness are used in the poem.
4. What is the importance of the person being addressed in **Dover Beach** ? How does her presence enrich the poem ?

24.7.1 Summing up

1. Thought concretised through visual and auditory images of nature.
2. Nostalgia for lost faith may be contrasted with the triumphant mood in Tennyson's 'Ring out wild bells'.
3. A rich allusiveness to the past.

UNIT 25 Reading Modern Poetry

Structure

- 25.0 Objectives**
- 25.1 Study Guide**
- 25.2 The Socio-Political Background**
- 25.3 What is Modernism ?**
 - 25.3.1 The Role of Intellectuals**
 - 25.3.2 Modernism as a Creative Effort**
 - 25.3.3 Complexity in Modern Poetry**
- 25.4 Comprehension Exercises**
 - 25.4.1 Summing up**

25.0 OBJECTIVES

This module will discuss the poetry of the twentieth century. All forms of art elicit particular reading strategies from the audience. This module will try to suggest ways of reading the poetry of the twentieth century by highlighting some of the characteristics of the poetry.

25.1 STUDY GUIDE

This unit will help you to :

- (a) know about the time and socio-political conditions in which modern poets expressed themselves ;
- (b) discern the scope of Modernism as a creative effort, the role & intellectuals ;
- (c) understand the changed attitude of the modern poets ;
- (d) discern how far a modern poem is different from a poem of the earlier centuries.

25.2 THE SOCIO-POLITICAL BACKGROUND

This century has been one that has seen many changes. At the beginning of the century, the imperial powers of Europe had established their rule in much of Asia and Africa. The South American continent was in the process

of evolving forms of nationhood. America was rich but not very powerful globally. By the end of the century, much had changed. European countries lost their colonies ; wars had been fought on scales never before imagined ; the atom bomb created a sense of disillusionment about the possibilities offered by science. The establishment and dissolution of the Soviet Union offered briefly some hope for an alternative to the capitalist economic formations of the Western countries. Communication systems and new media like cinema, video and others changed the role of literature in society.

25.3 WHAT IS MODERNISM ?

There were many trends and movements in the poetry of this period. The first major movement in this period was modernism. Modernism encompasses the innovative artistic tendencies in all of the major art forms, including poetry. Many of the philosophical assumptions of modernism seem to be extensions of the ideas that were first articulated in the eighteenth century and came to be known as the Enlightenment. Some of the ideas that survived in different guises were a belief in the rationalistic, scientific approach of life, the assertion of the existence of an individual identity.

25.3.1 The Role of Intellectuals

However, these inherited ideas were seriously transformed by the works of intellectuals who in the last half of the nineteenth and early years of the twentieth century, challenged some of the fundamental assumptions about man and the world he inhabited. **Charles Darwin's** theories regarding the evolution of man seriously questioned established precepts regarding the origin of man and the universe ; **James Frazer's** anthropological studies made people aware of the structures of societies, religions and myths ; **Karl Marx's** analysis of the capitalist mode of production raised speculation about alternative methods of economic organisations of society while providing a powerful critique of the entrenched economic systems of the time ; numerous scientific discoveries like **Gregor Mendel's** work on heredity and **Max Planck's** quantum theory, were providing society with new ways of comprehending nature and the natural world ; **Sigmund Freud's** work on the human mind transformed the way in which individuals and their relations with other people and the outer reality were understood. All these intellectual enterprises combined to create what is often referred to as modern sensibility.

25.3.2 Modernism as a Creative Effort

Modernism as a creative endeavour was located mainly in Europe during the first three decades of this century and has been seen as an attempt to find, create and discover ways of representing these new modes of thought into artistic forms, like art, sculpture, music, architecture, film and of course, literature. Modernist poetry attempted to effect a clean break from the poetic traditions that preceded it. Not only did it change the way poetry was written, it also tried to determine the way poetry was to be read. Thus, T. E. Hulme, an essayist who provided many of the theoretical concepts about modernist poetry, says, "I object still more to the receptive attitude" of readers who, at the turn of the century had certain expectations about what the language and subject of poetry should be. To quote the literary historian, David Daiches in *A Critical History of English Literature* :

The poet was no longer the sweet singer whose function was to render in mellifluous verse and an imagery drawn with great selectivity from the world of Nature a self-indulged and personal emotion; he was the explorer of experience who used language in order to build up rich patterns of meaning which, however impressive their immediate impact, required repeated close examination before they communicated themselves fully to the reader. A core of burning paradox was preferred to a gloss of surface beauty.

25.3.3. Complexity in Modern Poetry

The poet was transformed from a singer about Nature, natural beauty and impressions about himself into a person whose poetry was difficult and required great attention and concentration from the reader. Sweet images and metaphors were abandoned in favour of a bright illuminating thought. Ezra Pound made the following comment about the previous century :

As for the nineteenth century, with all respect to its achievements, I think we shall look back upon it as a rather blurry, messy sort of a period, a rather sentimentalistic mannerish sort of a period.

This attitude meant that modern poems were often difficult, obscure and inaccessible to casual readings. Modernist poetry makes intellectual demands on its readers who must be prepared to use their rationality, intellect and knowledge to understand the dense and often disjointed language and structure of much modernist poetry. This has often led readers to complain of obscurity. However, when read with patience and effort, modernist poetry is rich, diverse and provides haunting images of modern life.

25.4 COMPREHENSION EXERCISES

1. Write a brief note on the political background to the 20th century poetry.
2. Name of intellectuals who gave new interpretations about man and his world.
3. Mention some fields of human activities in which Modernism found its expressions.
4. (a) What is the significant shift in the role of a modern poet ?
(b) What is his attitude to language of poetry ?

24.4.1 Summing up

1. The 20th century witnessed many socio-political changes during the closing years— loss of European colonies in Asia and Africa, the atomic explosion, the break-up of the Soviet Union, revolutionary changes in the communication systems.
2. Modernism—a leading trend in the poetry of the century.
3. Legacy of the Enlightenment in the 18th century—a rationalistic, scientific approach to life—a new assertion of individual identity.
4. Role of great thinkers like Charles, Darwin, Karl Marx and Freud in shaping modern sensibility.
5. Modern poetry is basically intellectual and experimental.

UNIT 26 Some Leading Modern Poets

Structure

- 26.0 Objectives**
- 26.1 Study Guide**
- 26.2 Gerard Manley Hopkins**
 - 26.2.1 His Time**
 - 26.2.2 Pied Beauty : The Text**
 - 26.2.3 Glossary**
 - 26.2.4 A Discussion**
- 26.3 Comprehension Exercises**
- 26.4 William Butler Yeats**
 - 26.4.1 Background**
 - 26.4.2 The Second Coming : The Text**
 - 26.4.3 Glossary**
 - 26.4.4 A Discussion**
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- 26.6 Thomas Stearns Eliot**
 - 26.6.1 The Love Song of J. Alfred Proufrock : The Text**
 - 26.6.2 Glossary**
 - 26.6.3 A Discussion**
- 26.7 Comprehension Exercises**
- 26.8 Ezra Pound**
 - 26.8.1 An Imagist**
 - 26.8.2 Two Poems : T'sai Chi'h and The Garden**
 - 26.8.3 A Discussion**
- 26.9 Comprehension Exercises**

26.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit deals with some representative modern poets. You will find that chronology (or arrangement of events with dates) is not as important as the mode of expression in discerning modernism in a poet. The poems discussed in this unit will give you an insight into the mind and technique of a modern poet.

26.1 STUDY GUIDE

In this unit you will come across some expressions like alliteration, imagists, symbolism, mysticism. You will find brief elucidations of these terms in the relevant sections. You will also find some glimpses into the mental world of these poets, who are more interested in expressing their reactions to the prevailing situations through the media of symbol, and images than in straight forward pronouncements. This indirectness tends to make these poets look difficult to read. But if you go through the texts and the Glossary you will find them quite illuminating and enjoyable. The COMPREHENSION EXERCISES will help you to form a clearer idea of the poets and of modern poetry in general.

26.2 GERARD MANLEY HOPKINS (1844-89)

26.2.1 His Time

The problem of trying to define an age or movement by chronological landmarks alone becomes clear if one considers the poetry of Hopkins. By chronological history, Hopkins can by no means be called a modern poet; however, Hopkins is often considered to be the first important modern poet by many critics, poets and literary historians. Hopkins' poems were first published in 1918, well after his death in 1889. By the time *The Faber Book of Modern Verse* was published in 1936, his reputation had grown so much that the number of pages devoted to his poems was second only to those of T. S. Eliot. Let us read one poem by Hopkins in order to understand how his poem differs from the contemporary Victorian poems and what constitutes the modern in his work.

26.2.2 Pied Beauty

Glory be to God for dappled things—
For skies of couple-colour as a brindled cow ;
For rose-moles all in stipple upon trout that swim;
Fresh-firecoal chestnut-falls ; finches wings ;
Landscape plotted and pieced—fold, fallow, and plough ;
And all trades, their gear and tackle and trim.
All things counter, original, spare, strange ;
Whatever is fickle, freckled (who knows how ?)

With swift, slow ; sweet, sour; adazzle, dim;
He fathers-forth whose beauty is past change;
Praise him.

1918

26.2.3 Glossary

pie : an irregular arrangement of spots or patches of colour

dappled : marked with spots or rounded patches of colour or shade

brinded : brownish with streaks of grey

stipple : dots of colours ; roughened surface

fresh-firecoal chestnut-falls : freshly fallen chestnuts which look as bright as lit coals

fold, fallow and plough : the landscape looks like rectangles of different colours because some fields are being used as pasture, some lying fallow and others are being ploughed for cultivation.

gear and tackle and trim : equipment used by various workmen

spare : rare

26.2.4 A Discussion

This poem, like much of the poetry of modernism, seems difficult to understand ; however, a slow and careful reading will reveal the meaning.

The poet is thanking and praising God for creating a world which is full of the splendour of colour, variety and individuality. Nature and Man both seem to be celebrating the beauty of the distinctive uniqueness of all objects. This beauty does not consist of “pure” elements ; rather the beauty is created by the irregular, random arrangement of colours and shapes.

The meaning is not particularly difficult. The difficulty lies in the way Hopkins experiments with language to convey his meaning. Hopkins disrupts conventional syntax in order to emphasise his ideas, thus the phrase *fresh-firecoal chestnut-falls* captures the sense of Hopkins’ intentions much more vividly than a conventional way of comparing the freshly fallen chestnuts to brightly glowing pieces of coal. The compounds represent the unique interwoven characteristics of objects that are being compared. The word *fresh* refers both to the glowing coals and to the newly fallen chestnuts. The compound *rose-mole* refers simultaneously to the colour and texture of the skin of the trout. In addition, the alliterative quality of the phrase enhances the sense of interconnection between the two disparate objects (the coal and the chestnuts) being compared. Thus Hopkins’ language is much condensed.

The 11 line poem consists of two sentences and they are both

unconventionally constructed in order to convey the meaning with greatest economy. However, the lines are not randomly constructed; rather there is a logic to the construction of the words and phrases. The structure of this poem is such that the references to God frame the poem. The poem begins with the statement *Glory be to God for dappled things*. The next five lines describe the variety of objects that are “dappled” or unique in their colouring and texture. These are also clubbed together : the first is an inanimate object of nature : the sky; this is followed by animals and fruits : the trout, the chestnut, the finches; next there is the world that has been moulded by man : the landscape of fields and finally there is the variety of men’s occupation and their gear or tools which are also unique to each man. In these lines, Hopkins alludes to the four elements—sky, water, fire, earth—as well as their inhabitants—finches, trout, coal, cow—and ends with a reference to man who is in charge of these elements with the use their various tools or equipment.

The next four lines generalise the observations of the preceding descriptions by listing all the glorious things created by God. The poem ends with an exhortation to praise God after having suggested the reason for doing so. Thus the structure of the poem and the sentences follow the logic of the meaning that Hopkins is trying to convey. Rather than use tired and clichéd descriptive language, Hopkins attempts to make the reader pay particular attention to the language in order to elicit greater involvement from the reader. The use of adjectives—*original, spare, fickle, freckled*, etc.—attempts to fuse disparate and different qualities. The overall effect is one of paradox, which in turn is disturbing and unconventional.

Hopkins uses an unconventional rhyme scheme for his poems which he claimed evolved from Old English poetry. His use of alliteration too can be traced to the influence of old forms of poetry. However, Hopkin’s use of alliteration, puns, internal rhymes and other forms of word play also suggests the underlying patterns in divine and human life. The juxtaposition of *fickle* and *freckled* conveys more in associative meaning (meaning not conveyed by attempting to understand merely superficial meaning).

It is in this rejection of a merely mimetic role of language in the poem that Hopkins seems deserve the place he is accorded as a modern poet. Language becomes more than a medium of expression; it becomes itself a part of what Hopkins is expressing : the patterns and juxtapositions of things. Hopkins is trying to use language itself to suggest and reflect the patterns he sees in the divine creation of the world around him. He is expressing this awareness of the patterns by using words in unusual juxtapositionings instead

of using words to create merely ornamental descriptions of reality or imitations of the external world.

A sense of the failure of language to represent reality in all its complexities is one of most notable characteristics of modern writers. Almost all modernist writers experiment with language in their attempt to represent reality more effectively than their predecessors.

26.3 COMPREHENSION EXERCISES

1. What is alliteration ?

2. Give some examples of alliteration from this poem

3. To what effect does Hopkins use alliteration ?

4. Try to use this poem to explain the phrase used earlier : *A core of burning paradox was preferred to a surface beauty*. You may use another poem as contrast if you wish.

26.4 WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS (1865-1939)

26.4.1 Background

According to many critics, the work of W. B. Yeats which spanned the years 1890 to 1939 can itself be read as a history of English Poetry in its various developments. Yeats was of Irish origin and this fact also deeply influenced his life and poetry. The beginning of the century saw a State of Emergency being imposed on Ireland and the birth of the Sinn Fein party which is still a leader in the Irish nationalists' fight for freedom from England's rule.

One of the most interesting aspects of modern poetry has been the repeated search for systems of symbols, stories and myths in many diverse belief structures.

The disruption caused to the traditional systems of belief, especially to Christianity, in the modern age has led writers to look to the classical past, folklore, myths for stories to reuse and retell in modern times. Yeats, in his long and creative career has constantly attempted to construct a personal system of symbols which draw from folklore from Ireland (where according to Yeats "...still lives undisturbed the last folk tradition of western Europe"), traditions of magic, of neo-Platonic mysticism. By the end of his career Yeats had evolved a complex system of symbols, but his power as a poet lies in his ability to communicate meanings even to readers unfamiliar with his own personal system of symbolism. In his own words, "...surely, at whatever risk, we must cry out that imagination is always seeking to remake the world according to the impulses and the patterns in that great Mind, and that great Memory." In phrases such as this, Yeats seems to be referring to a Jungian concept of a universal or racial memory which ensures that symbols and meanings are understandable by all.

Let us read a poem by Yeats to observe the power that much of modernist writing gained by using stories, structures and symbols that existed in the readers' minds.

26.4.2 The Second Coming

Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere

The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity.

Surely some relevance is at hand;
Surely the Second Coming is at hand.
The Second Coming! Hardly are those words out
When a vast image out of *Spiritus Mundi*
Troubles my sight : somewhere in the sands of the desert
A shape with lion body and the head of a man,
A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun,
Is moving its slow thighs, while all about it
Reel shadows of the indignant desert birds.
The darkness drops again; but now I know
That twenty centuries of stony sleep
Were vexed to nightmare by a rocking cradle,
And what rough beast, its hour come round at last,
Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born ?

26.4.3 Glossary

The Second Coming : the belief found in the Bible that God will send once again his son, Christ, to earth

Spiritus Mundi : Soul or Spirit of Universe. In Yeats' use of this concept, this Spirit connects all the individual souls into Great Memory within which the history and memory of the entire human race is deposited. The also is a reservoir of images that the poet can draw on.

gyre : literally a spiral turn, here used as representing a cycle of history
The blood-dimmed...intensity : refers to the civil war after the Soviet Revolution in Russia in 1917

a rocking cradle : the cradle of new-born Christ

Bethlehem : name of the place where Jesus was supposed to have been born.

26.4.4 A Discussion

This poem expresses Yeats' sense that civilisation was reaching the end of a cycle. The end of civilisation would be accompanied by destruction and terror. This poem captures quite vividly the sense of apprehension, terror and destruction that Yeats seem to be anticipating. The power of the poem

is created by the multiple layers of symbols and myths that Yeats can draw on and which create a resonance in the readers' minds.

The phrase *Second Coming* refers to the Christian belief that Christ will return to earth in the future. In this poem, however, Christ's coming is not associated with redemption or forgiveness or mercy. Instead of heralding a new age, this poem seems to be foretelling the destruction and end of the known world of culture and innocence.

With the awakening of interest in past or primitive societies following Frazer's pioneering work *The Golden Bough*, myths were seen as narrative representations of pre-rationalistic modes of explaining, relating and organising the self, nature and community. Myths were seen as stories and structures of belief which captured a world view that was coherent, stable and shared. Modernist writers who felt alienated from community or society attempted to recreate the sense of wholeness and coherence that they found in the myths of primitive societies either by appropriating them into modern situations or by creating new myths which were capable of containing the reflecting the complexities of modern times.

In this poem, Yeats uses the easily recognisable Christian religious beliefs. This would enable most of his own readers to understand the implications of the poem. Yeats, disturbed by the horrors of World War I and the Soviet revolution in Russia as well as the conflict between Ireland and England, began to feel despair and hopelessness. This is imagined in the "vast image" of a lion with a human head. This pitiless, inhuman *rough beast* is the second coming.

Mythical resonances are also heard in the description of the beast which is the opposite of the sphinx, who is generally seen as a wise creature.

26.5 COMPREHENSION EXERCISES

1. Attempt an explanation of the first two lines :

2. What is a symbol ?

3. Point out two examples of Yeats' use of symbols in this poem :

4. What, in your opinion, is the effect of Yeats' use of Christianity as a myth ?

26.6 THOMAS STEARNS ELIOT (1888-1965)

26.6.1 Text : The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock

*S'io credesse che mia risposta fosse
A persona che mai tornasse al mondo,
Questa fiamma staria senza piu scosse.
Ma perciocche giammai di questo fondo
Non torno vivo alcun, s'i' o il vero,
Senza tema d'infamia ti rispondo*

Let us go then, you and I,
When the evening is spread out against the sky
Like a patient etherised upon a table;
Let us go, through certain half-deserted streets,
The muttering retreats
Of restless nights in one-night cheap hotels
And sawdust restaurants with oyster shells;
Streets that follow like a tedious argument
Of insidious intent
To lead you to an overwhelming question...
Oh, do not ask, "What is it ?"
Let us go and make our visit.

In the room the women come and go
Talking of Michelangelo.

The yellow fog that rubs its back upon the windowpanes,
The yellow smoke that rubs its muzzle on the windowpanes
Licked its tongue into the corners of the evening,
Lingered upon the pools that stand in drains,
Let fall upon its back the soot that falls from the chimneys,
Slipped by the terrace, made a sudden leap,
And seeing that it was a soft October night,
Curled once about, and fell asleep.

And indeed there will be time
For the yellow smoke that slides along the street,
Rubbing its back upon the windowpanes;
There will be time, there will be time
To prepare a face to meet the faces that you meet;
There will be time to murder and create,
And time for all the works and days of hands
That lift and drop a question on your plate;
Time for you and time for me,
And time for a hundred indecisions,
And for a hundred visions and revisions,
Before the taking of a toast and tea.

In the room the women come and go
Talking of Michelangelo.

And indeed there will be time
To wonder, "Do I dare ?" and, "Do I dare ?"
Time to turn back and descend the stair,
With a bald spot in the middle of my hair—
(They will say : "How his hair is growing thin!")
My morning coat, my collar mounting firmly to the chin,
My necktie rich and modest, but asserted by a simple pin—
(They will say : "But how his arms and legs are thin!")
Do I dare
Disturb the universe ?
In a minute there is time
For decisions and revisions which a minute will reverse.

For I have known them all already, known them all—
Have known the evenings, mornings, afternoons,

I have measured out my life with coffee spoons;
I know the voices dying with a dying fall
Beneath the music from a farther room.
So how should I presume ?

And I have known the eyes already, known them all—
The eyes that fix you in a formulated phrase,
And when I am formulated, sprawling on a pin,
When I am pinned and wriggling on the wall,
Then how should I begin
To spit out all the butt-ends of my days and ways ?
And how should I presume ?

And I have known the arms already, known them all—
Arms that are braceleted and white and bare
(But in the lamplight, downed with light brown hair!)
Is it perfume from a dress
That makes me so digress ?
Arms that lie along a table, or wrap about a shawl.
And should I then presume ?
And how should I begin ?

* * *

Shall I say, I have gone at dusk through narrow streets
And watched the smoke that rises from the pipes
Of lonely men in shirt-sleeves, leaning out of the windows ?

I should have been a pair of ragged claws
Scuttling across the floors of silent seas.

* * *

And the afternoon, the evening, sleeps so peacefully!
Smoothed by long fingers,
Asleep...tired...or it malingers,
Stretched on the floor, here beside you and me.
Should I, after tea and cakes and ices,
Have the strength to force the moment to its crisis ?
But though I have wept and fasted, wept and prayed,
Though I have seen my head (grown slightly bald) brought in
upon a platter,

I am no prophet—and here's no great matter;
I have seen the moment of my greatness flicker,
And I have seen the eternal Footman hold my coat, and snicker,
And in short, I was afraid.

And would it have been worth it, after all,
After the cups, the marmalade, the tea,
Among the porcelain, among some talk of you and me,
Would it have been worth while,
To have bitten off the matter with a smile,
To have squeezed the universe into a ball
To roll it toward some overwhelming question,
To say : "I'm Lazarus, come from the dead,
Come back to tell you all, I shall tell you all"—
If one, setting a pillow by her head,
Should say : "That is not what I meant at all.
That is not it, at all."

And would it have been worth it, after all,
Would it have been worth while,
After the sunsets and the dooryards and the sprinkled streets,
After the novels, after teacups, after the skirts that trail along the floor—
And this, and so much more ?—
It is impossible to say just what I mean!
But as if a magic lantern threw the nerves in patterns on a screen :
Would it have been worth while
If one, settling a pillow or throwing off a shawl,
And turning toward the window, should say :
"This is not it at all,
That is not what I meant at all."

* * *

No ! I am not Prince Hamlet, nor was meant to be;
Am an attendant lord, one that will do
To swell a progress start a scene or two,
Advise the prince; no doubt, an easy tool,
Deferential, glad to be of use.
Public, cautious, and meticulous;
Full of high sentence, but a bit obtuse;

At times, indeed, almost ridiculous—
Almost, at times, the Fool.

I grow old...I grow old...
I shall wear the bottoms of my trousers rolled.

Shall I part my hair behind ? Do I dare eat a peach ?
I shall wear white flannel trousers, and walk upon the beach.
I have heard the mermaids singing, each to each.

I do not think they will sing to me.

I have seen them riding seaward on the waves
Combing the white hair of the waves blown back
When the wind blows the water white and black.

We have lingered in the chambers of the sea
By sea-girls wreathed with seaweed red and brown
Till human voices wake us, and we drown.

1915

26.6.2 Glossary

S'io credesse...rispondo : From Dantes *Inferno*. "If I thought that my reply would be to one who would ever return to the world, this flame would stay without further movement; but since none has ever returned alive from this depth, if what I hear is true, I answer you without fear of infamy." Punished for being a false counsellor, Guido da Montelfeltro is shut up' in a flame. He tells Dante about his "evil doings because he is confident that Dante will not be able to return to earth to speak of them.

progress ; in the old sense of a state journey of a royal or noble person

sentence : opinions

26.6.3 A Discussion

T. S. Eliot represents, for many, the best and worst in the Modernist movement. Certainly, he is the best representative of Modernism in poetry. His influence both as a poet and as a critic has been felt throughout the twentieth century. In addition, he was for many years the editor of *Criterion* an influential literary quarterly. This poem is the first of his poems to be

written in a distinctly modernist style. Many of the influences on Eliot came from Europe, and like many writers of the twentieth century, Eliot drew on intellectual traditions as diverse as Greek and classical philosophy, Christian belief and ancient Eastern texts. In addition, Eliot's poetry, including *The Wasteland* and the poem under discussion are distinctly urban in tone and sensibility.

This poem was written soon after Europe was engulfed in **World War I** with many of the nations taking sides in the conflict. The shock to a generation of artists and writers cannot be understated. The shock was probably worse for the group of writers who came to Europe from America as they believed in the traditions of civilisation and culture that Europe seemed to represent. In this poem we meet one of the first antiheroes of the twentieth century as it seems to many writers that heroic acts are no longer possible in the world where good and evil are all confused, and individuals can no longer make a mark in the events happening around them.

The first few lines of *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* represent one of the typical devices of modernism—the use of the “daring metaphor.” The first line is deceptive in its simplicity, leading the reader on to expect a conventional address to a close one. This complacency is severely disrupted once the metaphor is completed. The remainder of the first section is allusive and evocative in effect. The allusion to a *patient etherized upon a table* or *streets that follow like tedious argument of insidious intent* refer to the mental state of the speaker rather than an “objective” description of surroundings. To the speaker, life seems to be a series of incompatible, depressing and overwhelming sensations. The evening and the streets, for instance, are given human qualities; however the human qualities turn out to be negative, passive, “insidious”. At the same* time the word “etherised” also could be said to connote a spirituality. The surroundings become sinister, dreary and passive. The “sudden leap” of the fog/cat too ends in the lethargic sleep without any action.

Yet there is a sinister side as captured in the words *mutterings, restless* which capture the alienation of the speaker from the surroundings. This is further emphasised in the couplet “In the room...Michelangelo” as the speaker seems totally isolated from the conversations, which, it is implied, are trivial conversation undertaken as fashionable small talk. The conciseness of the images is opposed to the vagueness of the speaker's quest. He does not tell us what the “Overwhelming question” is. Nor do we know who the companion is, nor any of the other relevant parts of the story. Despite this,

the character of the speaker as nervous to the point of being neurotic, witty, illogical and self-obsessed is conveyed to us through the particular kind of language that he uses.

This poem is a poem about the inability of the hero to act. He is overwhelmed by the very objects he desires and so he does not know how to begin. Even the beginning is seen as presumption, not a natural act. The speaker is constantly overwhelmed by eyes that fix him like an insect struggling in vain and by the arms, the smell, the very existence of the desired. Just as the desired is seen in fragments, so too the speaker represents himself as fragments of a head growing bald, of arms and legs growing thin. The speaker himself is disjointed, and pitiful. Thus, the speaker, who knows that he is *not Prince Hamlet, nor was meant to be* cannot act and must be satisfied with the memories of the mermaids, whose songs he has overheard though they were not meant for him.

The poem tells the story of the speaker through these series of allusive descriptions and metaphors. Thus, the lines

*I should have been a pair of ragged claws
Scuttling across the floors of silent seas.*

seem to be obtuse if taken literally. However, these lines can be analysed to understand their purpose in the scheme of the poem. The *ragged claws* refer to a crab by the rhetorical device of metonymy where the part of an object is used to represent the whole. This is done to emphasise the part being referred to. This is a device that is being used by Eliot repeatedly in this and other poems. The reference to the crab is allusive of the lines in *Hamlet* in which the movements of the crab (which cannot move forward) are associated with age: "for you yourself, sir, should be as old as I am, if, like a crab, you could go backward." The verb *scuttling* is defined as: "scurry; hurry along; run away; flee from danger or difficulty; a hurried gait; a precipitate flight or departure"—all suggesting a defensive, scared, nervous movement. The phrase *the floors of a silent sea* suggests the overwhelming and oppressive silence which represents a calm and immobility. Thus, the note of despair, of hopeless helplessness that the speaker's voice and words embody in the entire poem are intensified in these few lines in which the speaker thinks that his existence would have been better as a pair of ragged claws.

Much of the difficulty of the poem arises from the fact Eliot and other Modernist poets do not use connective and transitional passages or phrases. The meaning is built up by juxtapositioning images without explaining or introducing them properly. In a poem that is titled "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" the readers' expectations are undermined by the deliberate

avoidance of “romantic” or sentimental images and language. In place of an emotionally climactic moment, the readers are offered an emotional anti-climax. In addition, there are allusions to works of literature ranging from Dante, Hesiod, Shakespeare, the *Bible*, and metaphysical poetry. These allusions are often oblique and modern readers often have to rely on the copious footnotes that accompany the text in order to grasp the dense and rich nature of the poem.

Eliot uses these methods consciously, as it seems that the fragmentary, sudden, apparently illogical nature of modern life and existential conditions can only be captured or represented by a style that is also fragmentary, illogical and abrupt. This style also gives more importance to the subjective than objective methods of representing the world. As mentioned earlier, the descriptions offered in this poem describe the speaker’s mental landscape more vividly than they describe the physical landscape.

At the same time, the sense of despair and desolation that is the dominant tone of much of modern poetry does not fall into self-pity or self-indulgent wallowing in despair mainly because of the tone of irony that is re-introduced into the idiom of poetic language after a long absence. The drama of the image of the speaker being martyred after a prolonged period of suffering in the lines

But though I have wept and fasted, wept and prayed,
Though I have seen my head...brought in upon a platter,
I am no prophet

is undermined by the phrase which is inserted within parentheses (*grown slightly bald*). This phrase, while mocking the speaker’s own hyperbole in daring to compare himself to John the Baptist, simultaneously returns us to the speaker’s own fears about the process of ageing and accompanying physical deterioration that occupy his mind.

T. S. Eliot aspired to the definition of poetry offered by T. E. Hulme who wished for precision, “dry hardness”, images that could capture the “exact curve of the thing” to replace sentimental outpourings. Eliot in his critical essays wrote about the need to recover the “unified sensibility” of the metaphysical poets. In a famous passage from one of his essays (*The Metaphysical Poets*) he writes :

Tennyson and Browning are poets, they think; but they do not feel their thought as immediately as the odour of a rose. ‘A thought to Donne was an experience; it modified his sensibility. When a poet’s mind is perfectly equipped for its work, it is constantly amalgamating disparate

experience; the ordinary man's experience is chaotic, irregular, fragmentary.

This is the principle behind Eliot's profusion of vivid images that are "chaotic, irregular, fragmentary." Through the method of juxtaposition, he attempts to capture the "unified sensibility" in which thought and feeling are captured in a single image.

26.7 COMPREHENSION EXERCISES

1. Look up and explain the references to John the Baptist and Lazarus.

2. Explain in your own words the significance of the title :

3. Find three examples of *modernism* in this poem.

i. _____

ii. _____

iii. _____

4. Explain any *two* of the examples above with reference to your understanding of modernist poetry :

26.8 EZRA POUND

26.8.1 An Imagist

The importance of the image as a means through which to capture complex feelings, ideas and sensations was first theorised by the group of poets who were known as the Imagists. Ezra Pound was the most prominent poet of this group which included H. D., Amy Lowell William Carlos Williams, Ford Madox Ford and others. Like T. E. Hulme, these poets also attacked the superfluous overflow of words and images that characterised much of the writing of the nineteenth century in favour of the “hard, dry image.” Ezra Pound defines the image as follows :

An Image is that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time.

In addition the Imagists advocated concentration of words, the use of ordinary language rather than a consciously poetic language and the use of free verse rather than traditional forms of rhyme and rhythm. Although the movement was relatively short lived, it had a great influence on modern writing especially in its emphasis on the importance of the image.

26.8.2 Two poems

T'sai Chi'h

Ezra Pound

The petals fall in the fountain,
the orange-coloured rose-leaves,
Their ochre clings to the stone.

1913

The Garden

Ezra Pound

En robe de parade

—Samain

Like a skein of loose silk blown against a wall
She walks by the railing of a path in Kensington Gardens,

And she is dying piecemeal
of a sort of emotional anaemia.

And round about there is a rabble
Of the filthy, sturdy, unkillable infants of the very poor.
They shall inherit the earth.

In her is the end of breeding.
Her boredom is exquisite and excessive.
She would like someone to speak to her,
And is almost afraid that I
will commit that indiscretion.

1913

En robe de parade : dressed formally, as for a state occasion

26.8.3 A Discussion

Let us consider the first poem. It is written according to the precepts of the Imagist movement. T'sai Chi'h is the name of a Chinese poet who lived in the first century AD and wrote poems using only five Chinese characters or alphabets. The Imagists and other modernists were eclectic in their use of various forms and influences from all over the world and from all times. The East Asian poems which used concise, vivid imagery in a structured form were particularly admired by the Imagists.

In these poems the image itself becomes a "direct treatment of the thing" and attempt to "capture the exact curve of the Thing." Unnecessary adjectives and empty poetic and rhythmic conventions are abandoned in favour of conciseness : in Pound's own words a poet should aim "To use absolutely no word that does not contribute to the presentation."

In this poem, the main impression is that of the colours. It is a mood or a moment that is captured by the sparse language. This language is deliberately antipoetic in nature, but by reducing the complexity of the language, the complexity of the phenomenon is emphasised. Pound called on poets to "make it new!" This was a call to revolutionise the concept of appropriate poetic matter, language and form.

The second poem begins with a striking image of the girl as she is walking in the garden. The first stanza captures the image of the girl in her languid listlessness. The second stanza introduces the crowd of poor, dirty child. The line with its Biblical echoes, *They shall inherit the earth* is not said in expectation but fear. This stanza reflects one of the attitudes found in

many modern writers and artists—that of elitism. The modern writers, by and large, shared a sense of dissatisfaction with the present. They disapproved of what they considered to be the crass commercialisation and conventionalism of the middle class, its values and its art. They expressed this disapproval in many ways : in some writers it took the form of social protest, in others, most offensively in Pound, it took the form of a fascist attitude.

The introduction of the “I” in the last lines is also problematic. There is no clue regarding the status or position of the speaker. What is represented in the poem is the situation of the speaker, that is, a glimpse of this particular moment of the speaker’s existence.

Many of the modernist writers especially Pound, Eliot, Wyndham Lewis were accused of creating works which politically speaking, were elitist and even fascist in advocating the superiority of particular individuals over the “herds” of common folk. Friedrich Nietzsche provided many of the philosophical concepts for this attitude including that of the *Urbemensch* or Superman who was morally superior to the rest of humanity. Many early twentieth century writers including George Bernard Shaw, Joyce, Lewis, Pound and Lawrence were influenced by this concept. This attitude is reflected in the notorious statement made by the artist Pablo Picasso in an interview in 1935 :

There ought to be an absolute dictatorship...a dictatorship of painters. ...a dictatorship of one painter...to suppress all those who have betrayed us, to suppress the cheaters, to suppress the tricks, to suppress mannerisms, to suppress charms, to suppress history, to suppress a heap of other things.

However, it must be said in their defence that most of these artists and writers believed in the importance of art and the devaluation of art in modern society was a source of their disgust and impatience with the ordinary middleclass people.

26.9 COMPREHENSION EXERCISES

1. What is an image ?

UNIT 27 More About Poets

Structure

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27.0 OBJECTIVES

This Unit deals with some distinctive poets of the modern period. Some poets like D. H. Lawrence are unique. While going through various poems which are representative of the poets, you will find that modern poetry encompasses a vast area and linguistic expressions also are both simple and complex. Modern poetry is not stereotyped.

27.1 STUDY GUIDE

In this unit you will come across a wide variety of poets with their individualistic approaches and sensibilities of their own. D. H. Lawrence is as different from Sassoon as Ted Hughes is from Sylvia Plath. Lawrence is a primitivist; Sassoon a war poet dealing with horrors of modern war. Ted Hughes writes about animals whereas Sylvia Plath is a “confessional” poet in unit 3.7.1 you will come across a term “Postmodernism” which deals with the science of literature rather than with the philosophy of literature. It is the latest literary trend and it is not determined by chronology.

27.2 DAVID HERBERT LAWRENCE (1885-1930)

27.2.1 A poet of Distinct Outlook

Though D. H. Lawrence is acknowledged as a great novelist, he has also written poetry, drama, essays and short fiction. Although a modernist in many ways, Lawrence’s *style* was very different from that of other contemporary writers and it has been very difficult to classify his work, and impossible to ignore it. Lawrence, unlike most of the other great writers of the period was of working class origins. His father was a miner in the Midlands of England and he only managed to escape the life of a miner himself through his education. His mother was also a source of encouragement and support.

We find in Lawrence’s work attitudes which challenge many of the values of the times. In Lawrence’s poetry we find a tendency to criticise the so-called civilised world and especially the culture produced by the modern, contemporary society of mass production, consumerism and mechanisation. In opposition is set a dark, instinctive world of nature and primitive cultures. The poem that follows sets up this opposition between the majesty, cruel and sinister though it may be, and man’s pettiness.

27.2.2 Text : Snake

A snake came to my water trough
On a hot, hot day, and I in pajamas for the heat,
To drink there.
In the deep, strange-scented shade of the great dark carob tree
I came down the steps with my pitcher
And must wait, must stand and wait,
 for there he was at the trough before me.
He reached down from a fissure in the earth-wall in the gloom
And trailed his yellow-brown slackness soft-bellied down,
over the edge of the stone trough
And rested his throat upon the stone bottom,
And where the water had dripped from the tap, in a small clearness,
He sipped with his straight mouth,
Softly drank through his straight gums, into his slack long body,
Silently.

Someone was before me at my water trough,
And I, like a second-comer, waiting.

He lifted his head from his drinking, as cattle do,
And looked at me vaguely, as drinking cattle do,
And flickered his two-forked tongue from his lips, and mused a moment,

And stooped and drank a little more,
Being earth-brown, earth-golden from the burning bowels of the earth
On the day of Sicilian July, with Etna smoking.

The voice of my education said to me
He must be killed,
For in Sicily the black black snakes are innocent, the gold are venomous.

And the voices in me said, If you were a man
You would take a stick and break him now, and finish him off.

But I must confess how I liked him,
How glad I was he had come like a guest in quiet,
 to drink at my water trough

And depart peaceful, pacified, and thankless
Into the burning bowels of this earth ?

Was it cowardice, that I dared not kill him ?
Was it perversity, that I longed to talk to him ?
Was it humility, to feel so honoured ?
I felt so honoured.

And yet those voices :
If you were not afraid, you would kill him !

And truly I was afraid, I was most afraid,
But even so, honoured still more
That he should seek my hospitality
From out the dark door of the secret earth.

He drank enough
And lifted his head, dreamily, as one who has drunken,
And flickered his tongue like a forked night on the air, so black,
Seeming to lick his lips,
And looked around like a god, unseeing into the air,
And slowly turned his head,
And slowly, very slowly, as if thrice adream
Proceeded to draw his slow length curving round
And climb the broken bank of my wail-face.

And as he put his head into that dreadful hole,
And as he slowly drew up, snake-easing his shoulders,
and entered further,
A sort of horror, a sort of protest against his withdrawing
into that horrid black hole,
Deliberately going into the blackness, and slowly drawing himself after,
Overcame me now his back was turned.

I looked round, I put down my pitcher,
I picked up a clumsy log
And threw it at the water trough with a clatter.

I think it did not hit him;
But suddenly that part of him that was left behind
 convulsed in undignified haste,
Writhed like lightning, and was gone
Into the black hole, the earth-lipped fissure in the wall-front
At which, in the intense still noon, I stared with fascination.

And immediately I regretted it.
I thought how paltry, how vulgar, what a mean act!
I despised myself and the voices of my accursed human education.

And I thought of the albatross,
And I wished he would come back, my snake.

For he seemed to me again like a king,
Like a king in exile, uncrowned in the underworld,
Now due to be crowned again.

And so, I missed my chance with one of the lords
Of life.
And I have something to expiate:
A pettiness.

1923

27.2.3 Glossary

albatross : reference to Coleridge's poem *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*

27.2.4 A Discussion

This poem is quite simple and the meaning should be clear. This poem inverts the usual relationship between man and snake. Normally, a person is scared by the snake and therefore tries to kill it. His education and training have taught the man that one should kill the poisonous snakes, but he appreciates the beauty, dignity and majesty in the animal and treats it like a guest. However, at the end, the man's "civilised" education prevails and he throws a stick at the snake and immediately regrets it. He realises that his act was a childish, petty, stupid act and it compares unfavourably with the dignity and beauty of the "uncrowned king".

The language of the poem is also very simple. Unlike the other modernists poems you have read, this is straightforward and direct. However, Lawrence, like Yeats, does use a complex system of symbols in many of his poems. Here, we find one being used, that of darkness or blackness. In Lawrence, contrary to usual Western ideas, darkness is associated with positive values and white with weakness, often arising out of education, civilisation and a loss of moral, emotional strength.

Lawrence's poetic language is often colloquial and seems to follow patterns of speech. However, it is at the same time, extremely poetic and conscious.

Lawrence's poem has been included here to represent a parallel poetic tradition to that of the "high modernists" like Yeats, Eliot and Pound.

27.3 COMPREHENSION EXERCISES

1. Make a list of qualities that are normally associated with the snake in Western literature :

2. Explain the meaning of the last two lines :

3. Point out some of the ways in Lawrence builds up the beauty of the snake :

4. What prompts the speaker to throw a log at the snake ?

5. How is the poet's attitude to the incident conveyed to the reader ? Point out some lines where the poet expresses his own attitude, (not the speaker)

27.4 SIEGFRIED SASSON (1886-1967)

27.4.1 A War Poet

During this period, there was one group of poetry that was directly an outcome of one of the devastating events of history—the first world war (1914-1918). The beginning of the world war was signalled by Britain declaring war on Germany in August 1914. Soon many countries in Europe had taken sides in this conflict including France, Russia, Bulgaria and Turkey. Soon Japan and eventually the United States of America joined in and the war truly took on global dimensions. Though seen by many as a quarrel between the powerful, imperialist nations of Europe over the right to dominate over the rest of the world, this war affected the lives of the common man more profoundly than any other previous war.

Almost 90,00,000 people, mostly young men were killed in this war which was the first to use weapons of mass destruction like poisoned gas, and deadly ammunition.

The new techniques of warfare included the horrors of trench life with mud-filled trenches infested with rats and other pests. Huge long fences of barbed wire that had to be cut by individuals, ruined landscapes of the

countryside, trees burnt and twisted by artillery fire, inhuman machines like tanks and heavy artillery, all these become the oppressive symbols of the war which claimed a generation of young men. This was the first war which affected civilian lives on such a devastating scale and intensity. They comparatively innocent wars associated with cavalry charges and high rhetoric of the nineteenth century were replaced by the grim, deadly horror of the technologically advanced warface of the first world war.

Britain suffered particularly high losses and it is no wonder that a generation of poets have come to be known as the “war poets” as their poetry reflected the horror, pain misery and futility of their lives. Siegfried Sasson, Wilfred Owen and Isaac Rosenberg were the best poets of this group and their poetry captured the horror and pity associated with this war.

27.4.2. Text : They

The Bishop tells us : “When the boys come back
They will not be the same; for they’ll have fought
In a just cause: They lead the first attack
On Anti-Christ; their comrades’ blood has bought
New right to breed and honourable race,
They have challenged Death and dared him face to face.”

“We’re none of us the same !” the boys reply.
“For George lost both his legs ; and Bill’s stone blind ;
Poor Jim’s shot through the lungs and like to die ;
And Bert’s gone syphilitic; You’ll not find
A chap who’s served that hasn’t found *some* change.”
And the Bishop said : “The ways of God are strange !”

1917

27.4.3 A Discussion

One of the themes that was repeated in many of these war poems was the contrast between the propaganda surrounding war and the actual horror of the battlefield. Many of the poems targeted way in which the government and other institutions glorified the war in order to attract the young men as volunteers. The reality was carefully kept secret from the society at home. In many ways, this is the first concerted attack on the power of the government to use its official machinery to campaign a particular attitude resulting in the “brain washing” of society. The growing power of institutions and

governments over the channels of communication and the capability to intervene in the daily lives of the people is another of the concerns of the twentieth century.

In this poem, the poet exposes the hypocrisy of the church in supporting the cause of war. The Bishop uses the grandiloquent language of religious frenzy to describe the war as a "just cause". The enemies are described as the "Anti-Christ". This a clear example of the use of rhetorical and highly charged emotional language to arouse emotions in the audience. The rest of the first stanza too follows the same patten of the glorification of war. The deaths of the men are glorified in poetic terms.

The second stanza scores its point by being deliberately simple in the litany of wounds and irrevocable damage the soldiers have suffered in the war. The boys have changed, but that change is not a spiritual baptism as suggested by the words of the Bishop ; rather it is a loss of their lives, their limbs, their capacity to live. The last words of the Bishop are presented ironically.

In this poem the impersonal personal pronouns "us" and "they" are used in contrast to the individualised names in the second stanza. The propaganda and rhetoric can be used in vague, generalised and abstract ways ; however, it falters when confronted with the individuality of experience as represented here by the boys' list of the changes brought about by war. As mentioned earlier, fears about the existence of an unthinking, uncritical "herd" mentality of society were compounded by the way in which patriotism and jingoism was propagated by those in political and social authority. The poignancy of the boys' wounds and losses is presented in simple language, shorn of rhetoric and embellishments in sharp contrast to the flowery, formal language used by the Bishop.

Though poetry against war has, unfortunately, had to be written several times throughout the twentieth century, perhaps none is quite so haunting as that produced by the first world war.

27.5 COMPREHENSION EXERCISES

1. Why is the poem titled "*They*" ?
-
-
-

2. Identify words with religious connotations from the Bishop's speech the reveal his attempt to glorify the war.

3. Modern poetry often use *irony*. Comment on the use of irony in this poem, with specific reference to the last line:

4. Why does the poet use the word Bishop when referring to the speaker of the first stanza, but uses individual names for the second stanza ?

27.6 W. H. AUDEN

27.6.1 A Poet with Social Agenda

Introduction

The worldwide economic depression in the thirties forced a generation of poets to react to the pathetic living conditions of the period as unemployment, poverty, and misery began to overwhelm Europe. In 1936, the Fascist overthrow of a democratically elected Left-leaning Government in Spain seemed to sharpen the fight between the Left and the establishment. Auden was among the many writers and artists who left strongly enough about the war to go to Spain and fight or join the international brigade in the fight against General Franco's right-wing forces.

Auden, Stephen Spender and Cecil Day-Lewis were three of the major British poets of this period who attempted to forge a poetry which combined

modernism with a socially and politically committed agenda. This decade is often called the “pink decade” as the overwhelming voice of this period was leftist. The writers of the age protested what Auden called the “low, dishonest decade.” While marx and marxism was the most influential philosophy of the time, many of these writers, including Auden were also deeply interested in the writings of Sigmund Freud. Much of the poetry of this time was attempting to create poetry that was sensitive, accessible and committed to the populist agenda. While, like the high modernists, they relied on the classical heritage for much of their resonances, they also made conscious efforts to include forms of popular culture in their repertoire. Auden, especially, was enthusiastic about the music hall tradition which had provided the lower classes of England much of their entertainment in irreverent songs and skits. The best of the poetry of the period combines the humanist concern of the poets with a grace and wit of modern poetry.

27.6.2 Text : Musee des Beaux Arts

About suffering they were never wrong,
The Old Masters : how well they understood
Its human position; how it takes place
While someone else is eating or opening a window or just
walking dully along ;
How, when the aged are reverently, passionately waiting
For the miraculous birth, there always must be
Children who did not specially want it to happen, skating
On a pond at the edge of the wood :
They never forgot
That even the dreadful martyrdom must run its course
Anyhow in a corner, some untidy spot
Where the dogs go on with their doggy life and the torturer’s
horse
Scratches its innocent behind on a tree.

In Brueghel’s *Icarus* for instance: how everything turns away
Quite leisurely from the disaster; the ploughman may
Have heard the splash, the forsaken cry.
But for him it was not an important failure ; the sun shone
As it had to on the white legs disappearing into the green
Water; and the expensive delicate ship that must have seen

Something amazing, a boy falling put of the sky,
Had somewhere to get to and sailed calmly on.

1940

Musee des Beaux Arts : Museum of Fine Art. The particular reference is to the Museum in Belgium in which the poet saw the painting being described in the poem.

Brueghel (1520-1569) A Flemish painter who painted the picture of Icarus referred to in the poem.

Icarus : According to ancient legend, Daedalus the clever workman crafted a pair of wings with which he and his son Icarus would fly around. However, Icarus flew too high and the sun melted the wax which held together his wings. As a result he fell into the sea and died.

27.6.3 A Discussion

Could we reproduce the painting ?

Modern poetry often refers to other forms of art and comments on them. In this poem, Auden is referring to a painting by Brueghel of the fall of Icarus. In this painting, the scene of Icarus falling is in the background of the painting which depicts the normal activities of farming, sailing etc. that continue unperturbed and unaware of the drama and tragedy of Icarus' fall. Auden uses this painting to express his own reactions to the scene that is depicted and make some generalisations about the nature of art and society.

The first stanza of the poem praises the great painters of the past who understood the nature of suffering and misery in the ordinary world. One of the aspects of tragedy is that most people around do not understand or are not aware of what is happening as they walk down the street or eat or continue with the routine of their daily lives. Children who were around at the time when the older people were waiting in anticipation for the birth of Christ were self-absorbed in their games. Even the most dreadful martyrdom and suffering could not affect the activities of the animals who continued oblivious to the human activity around them.

In this stanza, the poet stresses two aspects of suffering: one, that it does not seem to affect those who are not directly involved in it and two, that society is indifferent to the tragedies and sorrows that are happening all the time. The grandeur and epic quality of suffering or an important event does not usually exist at the moment of happening but is added later on by legend, art and history.

Auden uses the example of the painting of the fall of Icarus by Brueghel

as one that depicts the indifference of the ordinary people to the tragedy of Icarus. The farmer continues with his ploughing, and the ship that can be seen in the background sails on while the body of Icarus is dropping into the ocean.

The words "important failure" are interesting. The fall of Icarus is usually told as an example of the folly of aiming too high and trying to do things beyond one's limitations. It is told as a story of the human propensity to attempt to do things beyond what seems "natural". It is not natural for man to fly, yet this dream has always obsessed man. Thus, Daedalus crafts wings made from feathers and wax and can use them to fly. However, his son who is warned about the danger of flying too close to the sun disregards the caution and aims to go even higher and the wax which holds his wings together begins to melt. His wings break, and he falls. Thus, man is never satisfied with what he can achieve, and his attempt to do the impossible results in failure and tragedy. This is, therefore, an important story. The failure is an important one. This story is one which is a comment on mankind in general, rather than merely a story about Icarus; yet the men carry on with their daily affairs, oblivious to the sense of achievement that man initially gets in defying gravity and flying and then in the sense of failure as man over-reaches his capability and dies in the attempt. Auden in this poem stresses the inability of man to appreciate the miraculous, the glorious part of human life. Instead, most men remain engrossed with the petty demands of daily life; this is also what the painting is about.

Of all paintings, Auden probably chose to write about this particular one because it captured what some people think is a modern phenomenon: the loss of a sense of community and involvement with other human beings. The tendency to remain involved with one's own life, its trivialities and especially the commercial activities of daily life distort man's ability to see anything larger than life, just as the ship goes forward on its route without a thought for what must be an amazing sight.

In Auden's poems, we find that like many of the "pink generation" of writers they exhibit very complex reactions to the society around them. While they understood many of its negative aspects, especially in terms of the economic hardship that the capitalist system seemed to be inflicting on the poorer sections of society, the problem of alienation, of self-absorption, of trying to remain concerned with one's personal problems rather than trying to look at larger social and political issues were also aspects of modern society that the modern writers repeatedly addressed in their works. Even

the form of this poem reveals this problematic duality in the way it uses a classical painting as the trope or reference point to make an observation about social attitudes. The work of this group of poets attempted to combine many of the formal aspects of modernism with a more easily understandable language and issues.

27.7 COMPREHENSION EXERCISES

1. What is the *miraculous birth* ?

2. What is the theme of this poem ?

3. Explain the opening lines : *About suffering they were never wrong./ The Old Masters : how well they understood / Its human position*

4. Why does the poet introduce animals in the first stanza ?

27.8 TED HUGHES

27.8.1 A Poet of Nature

In the modern period, there was a change in the way in which Nature was described and the relation between man and Nature. This is a very complex phenomenon but in the poems of D. H. Lawrence we find one aspect of these changes. Nature is opposed to civilisation in such a way that Nature and all that is natural is seen as positive and strong while civilisation and its products are seen as negative, petty and pitiful. In the poem *Snake*, Lawrence accuses “the voices of my accursed human education” of compelling him to throw a stick at the snake who seems to be.....like a king,

Like a king in exile, uncrowned in the underworld, Now due to be crowned again.

Yet this new way of seeing nature was not all so simplistic. Ted Hughes is one of the modern poets who tried to bring “back into English poetry and unsentimental intimacy with the hidden country.” This hidden side of Nature seems to be powerful, ruthless, instinctive and dangerous. These qualities are juxtaposed, usually indirectly or by allusion to the civilising effect of modern society. This civilising effect is characterised as a fatal weakness leading to the deformations of the modern world.

27.8.2 Text : Pike

Pike, three inches long, perfect
Pike in all parts, green tigering the gold.
Killers from the egg : the malevolent aged grin.
They dance on the surface among the flies.

Or move, stunned by their own grandeur,
Over a bed of emerald, silhouette
Of submarine delicacy and horror.
A hundred feet long in their world.

In ponds, under the heat-struck lily pads—
Gloom of their stillness :

Logged on last year's black leaves, watching upwards.
Or hung in an amber cavern of weeds

The jaws' hooked clamp and fangs
Not to be changed at this date ;
A life subdued to its instrument;
The gills kneading quietly, and the pectorals.

Three we kept behind glass,
Jungled in weed : three inches, four,
And four and a half: fed fry to them—
Suddenly there were two. Finally one

With a sag belly and the grin it was born with.
And indeed they spare nobody.
Two, six pounds each, over two feet long,
High and dry and dead in the willow-herb—

One jammed past its gills down the other's gullet:
The outside eye started : as a vice locks—
The same iron in this eye
Though its film shrank in death.

A pond I fished, fifty yards across,
Whose lilies and muscular tench
Had outlasted every visible stone
Of the monastery that planted them—

Tilled legendary depth :
It was as deep as England. It held
Pike too immense to stir, so immense and old
That past nightfall I dared not cast

But silently cast and fished
With the hair frozen on my head
For what might move, for what eye might move.
The still splashes on the dark pond,

Owls hushing the floating woods

Frail on my ear against the dream
Darkness beneath night's darkness had freed,
That rose slowly towards me, watching. 1959

27.8.3 A Discussion

This is a sinister poem which disturbs the reader by capturing the inhuman and instinctive ferocity of the fishes that are being described. The words in the first stanza "tigered" and "malevolent" suggest the cruel aspect of the fish, but this is also contrasted with the next line in which their gracefulness is suggested in the phrase "They dance on the surface among the flies." The combination of the "submarine delicacy and horror" is perfectly balanced so that while chillingly cruel as they attack and kill each other, the fish are also strangely fascinating and attractive in their emerald grandeur.

One of the themes of the later half of the century has been to question the rise and domination of the scientific attitude to life. Many, including the poet Hughes seem to feel that too much self-consciousness has become a weakness in modern man as it has caused a large gap between his rationality and his instinct which in turn has led to a situation where man is unable to act decisively. Thus the phrase "Pike in all parts." The source of the pike's power is the fact that it is not divided into contradictory attitudes as it can lead "A life subdued to its instrument." There is no theorising or rationalising its own life or experience. Thus the pike gets its power and will to act from an undivided sense of the self.

These writers feel the need to celebrate the irrational, instinctive side of man's nature as they believe that the scientific ideal, while as Hughes writes, "it is a powerful ideal, it has created the modern world. And without it, the modern world would fall to pieces ; infinite misery would result. The disaster is, that it is heading towards infinite misery" anyway. The disassociation of man from his innermost instincts has led to a nihilism and sterility that is equally detrimental to man's energy and survival. Face to face with this determined self hood of predatory animals that Hughes writes about like the jaguar, the pike, the hawk, man finds himself cowed and insignificant.

The end of this poem connects the power of the pike to ancient and indestructible energies by suggesting that lilies and "muscular tench" or freshwater fish have outlasted the monastery that placed them there. The monastery, a symbol of the Christian faith has disintegrated, but the elements of nature as opposed to the man-made monastery and its religion, are still thriving. The line "It was as deep as England" connects the natural elements

with ancient pre-Christian history and legends.

The poet is intimidated by the power of these “dream darkness” and afraid to cast his rod to catch the fish. Thus the supposed superiority of modern man is unnerved and made impotent in face of such ancient, sinister power.

The interesting aspect of this poem is that it does not, unlike, Lawrence’s or earlier poetry about animals, sentimentalise the natural world. Contrast this poem with Keats’ *Nightingale* or Shelley’s *Skylark*, for instance. While the poem celebrates the strength and ruthlessness of the pikes, it also reflects a horror at the cannibalistic acts of the three pikes that the poet had kept in a glass container. In fact it is precisely the complete contrast to human values that seems to elicit an overawed respect from the poet. The fact that the pikes are so cruel, fierce and destructive is what makes them the opposite of human and thus the opposite of modern civilisation which teaches rationality and compassion rather than instinct and ruthlessness. Yet the completeness of action that the pike can achieve seems to attract the poet and reduce him to inaction, frozen, because of his rationalistic fear of the unknown, the instinctive.

In this poem, the poet returns to a language that is simple and straightforward, though powerful and suggestive. It is, unlike the language of the earlier modernists, not allusive, but highly emotionally charged. Reread Lawrence’s poem *Snake* and see if you can identify similarities and differences in the poets’ attitude to Nature.

27.9 COMPREHENSION EXERCISES

1. Identify words and phrases which describe the pike :

2. What is the effect of these words ?

3. Explain in your own words the phrase *Tilled legendary depth*. What does it mean in the poem ?

4. Explain the phrases *Pike in all parts*.

27.10 SYLVIA PLATH

27-10.1 Text : The Colossus

I shall never get you put together entirely,
Pieced, glued, and properly jointed.
Mule-bray, pig-grunt and bawdy cackles
Proceed from your great lips.
It's worse than a barnyard.

Perhaps you consider yourself and oracle,
Mouthpiece of the dead, or of some god or other.
Thirty tears now I have laboured
To dredge the silt from your throat.
I am none the wiser.

Scaling little ladders with giuepots and pails of lysol

I crawl like an ant in mourning
Over the weedy acres of your brow
To mend the immense skull plates and clear
The bald, white tumuli of your eyes.

A blue sky out of the Oresita
Arches above us. O father, all by yourself
You are pithy and historical as the Roman Forum.
I open my lunch on a hill of black cypress.
Your fluted bones and acanthine hair are littered

In their old anarchy to the horizon-line.
It would take more than a lightning stroke
To create such a ruin.
Nights, I squat in the cdnucopia
Of your left ear, out of the wind,
Counting the red stars and those of plum-colour.
The sun rises under the pillar of your tongue.
My hours are married to the shadow.
No longer do I listen for the scrape of a keel
On the Wank stones of the landing.

27.10.2 Glossary

The Colossus : The huge statue that stood in the harbour of Rhodes in Greece around the third century B.C.

Tumuli : ancient burial mounds

Oresteia : The trilogy of plays written by Aeschylus the Greek dramatist in the fifth century B.C. which tells the story of Orestes' efforts to avenge the murder of his father Agamemnon by his mother Clytemnestra.

27.10.3 A Discussion

Reading Sylvia Plath's poetry and understanding it is interwoven with an understanding of her life and her personality. In the modern age, the glare of publicity affects the act of reading as both the personal and creative life of the authors are written are all sensationalised. Plath's life was a troubled and dramatically short one, Her writings are all centred around her own

dilemmas, dramas, and about her own inner state. This kind of poetry often labelled “confessional” invites the reader to study the poet’s life as well as her poetry, The subject of the poem is the poet. Many of the poets discussed earlier seem to assume a shared sense of social and moral crisis with their readers. Plath’s concerns are entirely personal and the landscape created is that of the poet’s psychological state. The poem attempts to reflect the outer reality as seen through the eyes of the troubled, fragile and deeply personal consciousness of the poet.

This poem is also an extremely personal one. Many of Plath’s poems deal with her troubled relationship with her father, who is dead. The poem depends on the way she identifies her father with the huge statue of the Colossus as it develops the comparison in minute detail throughout the poem. The strength of Plath’s poetry lies in her ability to sustain the comparison in such a powerful way through the entire poem. This effect is achieved through a crafting of details within the larger metaphorical frame. The pattern of images is thoughtfully and consciously created to impart a sense of the intense emotional response of the poet to her troubled and complex relationship with her father. The poet describes her repeated attempts to extricate herself from the influence of her father who looms large and immobile in her psyche. The poem is addressed to her father, now dead.

The central image is that of her father as the huge, ruined unfeeling, marble statue of Colossus which is now ruined. The first line relates the two—the poet’s personal endeavour to come to terms with the memory of her father and the objective reality of the ruined statue—in an inextricable conjunction. The first lines express the poet’s inability to create a proper memory of her father. The next lines show the deliberately animal or inhuman aspect of the father that the daughter sees. Already in the first stanza the main impressions of the poet’s relationship with her father have been created.

The next stanza develops these strands. The father is related to an oracle, that is the voice of god or the ancestors. The oracle has divine sanction and must be obeyed. The poet has, for thirty years (her age at the time of writing this poem) attempted to clean the statue’s throat in order to receive a true clear message but has failed.

The third stanza emphasises the sense of inferiority that the poet suffers from as she compares herself to an ant which crawls along the huge statue, The poet carries glue to repair the statue and lysol to clean it. Yet the power of this stanza is emphasised by the images of death that are also brought into

the language ; the ant is in mourning, the statue's eyes are like burial mounds. The poet is commemorating the father's death but the father is dead, blind and unable to speak.

In the fourth stanza, the references to Greek and Roman history impart a sense of timelessness to the emotion of the poet. The poet's relationship with her father is as troubled, as violent as that of the Greek tragedies. Like the Roman Forum, the father is powerful and eloquent. However, the statue is also littered and dirty.

Despite the trauma suggested in the lines so far, the poet can still squat in the huge luxuriant curls of the statue's ears in order to take shelter from the wind. As the end suggests, the poet is still married, still unable to break free from the father, even though he is only a shadow, even though the poet no longer hopes for a sign of life from the statue.

The power of poems like this arises from the fact that Plath can successfully build up a wealth of metaphors that convey the poet's tortured perspective with a sustained emotional charge. The appeal is not rational but emotional and her perspective is established by the ability to involve the reader's emotions with her own, rather than rationally arguing a case for her point of view. Thus the reader is overwhelmed into accepting and responding to the emotional content of the language which is created with the poet at the emotional centre of the poem. In poems like these, the focus of poetry is shifted from the objective world to the highly individualised and personal world of the poet.

27.11 COMPREHENSION EXERCISES

1. What is a metaphor ?

2. Give two examples of metaphor from the poem :

3. Can you express the effect of PlauYs use of the colossus as the central image ?

4. What is effect of Plath's use of animal imagery in the poem ?

27.12 SEAMUS HEANEY

27.12.1 A Post-modernist

Introduction

Seamus Heaney is a poet of Irish origin. Like many of the other Irish writers of the modern period like Yeats and James Joyce, Heaney too had to address the issues born out of the ongoing civil war in Irish that had taken a particularly violent turn in the second half of the twentieth century. Yet, his poetry is much more than merely a political response. Rather in his best poems Heaney seems to be searching for a recreated community, not with any sense of nostalgia but rather with a view to try to bridge the distances of past and present by working out new, creative relationships with the past, the history and the community. This particular poem, probably his best-known poem is also simultaneously concerned with the creative act of writing.

One of the characteristic of what has come to be called post-modernism is the creator's preoccupation with the creative activity itself. Many works of art are self-reflexive, that is they explore their own origins and conditions of being. This poem too is about writing.

27.12.2 Text : 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 this old man.

My grandfather cut more turf in a day
Than any 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.

1966

27.12.3 A Discussion

In this poem, Heaney celebrates the act of digging as he remembers his father in his youth and then his grandfather. The poet then acknowledges the fact that his path is different: "I have no spade to follow men like that". However what he has instead is his pen. Thus digging becomes a symbol and the poem more than just a nostalgic look back at the rustic activities of his forefathers. Instead, it connects the poet's activities with the activities of the traditional way of life; poetry becomes associated with the powerful, meaningful activity of digging and the poet's connection with the soil, the history of the place is reiterated.

The poem emphasises the sensual, physical nature of the planting and reaping of potatoes. By connecting this activity with that of writing, Heaney seems to be promising the same sensuous, down-to-earth quality in his poetry. Similarly, the hard work and strain of the two men are emphasised. The "straining rump" the shaft "levered firmly" then "heaving sods over his shoulder" captures the efforts of the two men as they work.

Similarly the poet too has to be committed to his poetry which should be strong and meaningful.

However, the most important allusion is to the fact that his grandfather who could "cut more turf in a day/Than any other man on Toner's bog" would dig deep, "going down and down/For the good turf." The poet seems to suggest that he' too will have to dig deep into the history and traditions of his community in order to produce the best, most satisfying kind of poetry. Only by celebrating his past, his family traditions and his community can Heaney write the best kind of poetry. Yet, he also recognises the difference of the creative activity and the farming activity. The attempt to create a connection between the past and the present through the form of the poem is what makes a very simple poem embody complex ideas.

Like many of the modern poets, Heaney's language and form is extremely, in fact deceptively simple. It seems as if his poetry is merely descriptive—in this particular case as if he is merely describing his forefathers and his own reactions to them as children. However, the first and last line where he mentions the pen in his hand serve to elevate the poem to the status of more than a merely descriptive one. In the first line, the pen is just a pen ; by the time we reach the last line, the pen becomes more than an instrument of writing. The pen becomes the means through which the poet uses the rich and satisfying past for the creation of contemporary poetry. The process of digging is part of a process by which the poet uncovers his own sense of self, of nation, of community as "living roots" are uncovered by the metaphorical act of digging.

27.13 COMPREHENSION EXERCISES

1. What is the theme of the poem ?

2. Why does the poet remember his father and his grandfather as they are digging ?

3. What is the connection, if any, between the spade and the pen in this poem ?

4. Explain in our own words the phrase *Through living roots awaken in my head* :

UNIT 28 Poets with Contemporary Themes

Structure

- 28.0 Objectives**
- 28.1 Study Guide**
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 - 28.2.2 Text : Telephone Conversation**
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- 28.4 Slinger Francisco**
 - 28.4.1 Text : Dan is the Man in the Van**
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28.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit deals with two poets who wrote about two important issues—the evil of racism and the dull, soulless western-style education system. You will find great novelty in these two seminal poems that characterise the mechanical modern society. You can not miss the bitterness in the tone of the poets.

28.1 STUDY GUIDE

This unit is a prelude to the Module IV which deals with topics like Colonialism, Imperialism (Module IV unit 3). You will find that poets are acutely alive to their surroundings. You will also understand how greatly poems in this unit are different from poems of the earlier ages. This understanding will help you to grasp the vast scope for poetry and the responsibilities of poets towards their world.

28.2 WOLE SOYINKA

28.2.1 An Anti-Racist

In the post-world war II period, colonised countries all over the world began to fight for their political independence from the various colonising powers of Europe. Alongside the political assertions of independence came a new social and cultural awareness about the ideological aspects of the colonising process. In the British colonies, especially, the impact of the educational system and the values that it transmitted to generations of children came under review as colonised peoples began the process of the “decolonisation” of the mind. This is a fascinating and complex process that we too in India are undergoing. The next two poems deal with the clash of cultures of the colonised and colonising peoples.

Racism is one facet of the ideological value system that supports colonisation. By creating a value system in which white people are inherently superior and black people are inherently inferior, the actions of the white colonising peoples were given some perverted justification. Simultaneously, the ideological domination of the colonisers ensured that the black people themselves also suffered from a sense of inferiority. Thus, the non-white peoples also began to feel apologetic about their non-white skin colour. The poem that follows is about the racism that pervades a large section of British society and also about the complex reactions of the people who are suffering from racial discrimination.

28.2.2 Text : Telephone Conversation

The price seemed reasonable, location
Indifferent. The landlady swore she lived
Off premises. Nothing remained
But self-confession. “Madam,” I warned,
“I hate a wasted journey—I am African.”
Silence. Silenced transmission of
Pressurised good-breeding. Voice, when it came,
Lipstick coated, long gold-rolled
Cigarette-holder pipped. Caught I was, foully.
“HOW DARK?M...I had not misheard...”ARE YOU LIGHT
OR VERY DARK?”...Button B. Button A. Stench
Of rancid breath of public hide-and-speak.
Red booth. Red pillar-box. Red double tiered
Omnibus squelching tar. It *was* real ! Shamed

By ill-mannered silence, surrender
 Pushed dumbfoundment to beg simplification.
 Considerate she was, varying the emphasis—
 “ARE YOU DARK? OR VERY LIGHT” Revelation came.
 “You mean—like plain or milk chocolate ?
 Her assent was clinical, crushing in its light
 Impersonality. Rapidly, wave-length adjusted,
 I chose. “West African sepia”—and as afterthought,
 “Down in my passport.” Silence for spectroscopic
 Flight of fancy, till truthfulness clanged her accent
 Hard on the mouthpiece. “WHAT’S THAT?” conceding
 “DON’T KNOW WHAT THAT IS.” “Like brunette.”
 “THAT’S DARK, ISN’T IT?” “Not altogether.
 Facially, I am brunette, but madam, you should see
 The rest of me. Palm of my hand, soles of my feet
 Are a peroxide blond. Friction, caused—
 Foolishly, madam—by sitting down, has turned
 My bottom raven black—One moment, madam !”—sensing
 Her receiver rearing on the thunderclap
 About my ears—“Madam,” I pleaded, “wouldn’t you rather
 See for yourself ?”

1962

28.2.3 Glossary

Button B. Button A. : Buttons in a pay phone
peroxide blond : usually refers to hair bleached to look blond

28.2.4 A Discussion

This poem describes a situation in Britain where the speaker is of African origin and the person on the other end, the landlady, is white. The speaker has obviously had previous experiences of going to see premises for rent that have been refused to him because of the colour of his skin. That is why the speaker decides on a “self-confession.” This itself indicates a further aspect. The speaker’s-voice, accent and language must be indistinguishable from that of a “white” speaker. This would indicate that the speaker is educated in the English system and has perfect control over the language and idiom of English. Yet this does not qualify him in any way : he still has to face discrimination on the basis of the colour of his skin.

The speaker is met with silence as the lady tries to decide what she would do. Her “good-breeding”, that is training to do the socially proper

and correct thing is under pressure from this unexpected situation : she does not want to seem rude and bigoted, yet she finds it difficult to accept the caller's non-white identity. The voice is described as "lipstick coated, long gold-rolled/Cigarette-holder pipped." This really attempts to reflect the speaker's conception of the kind of woman who would react in this manner. The description suggests a woman from a lower middleclass background with pretensions of culture.

The question, "How dark ? Are you light or very dark ?" seems outrageous to the speaker. The use of capitals reflects the shock that the speaker feels at having being asked such a question. It is so unexpected that he does not know what to reply. Also a sense of humiliation is strong as the speaker presents this "public hide-and-speak" : the situation in which he is having to answer these questions. The repetition of the word "red" in the next line shows the speaker's heightened awareness of colour as he wonders about how he should reply to the question about his own classification.

The woman, who does not understand the speaker's reactions at all, believes that the speaker is ill-mannered, and so again asks the same question in a slightly different form. This time the speaker replies as the significance of the question begins to register. The comparison with chocolate suggests the sense of commodification that the speaker feels as he compares his own colour to an object.

The speaker's answer "West African sepia" is unintelligible to the speaker whose concern is, like typical racists to determine whether the speaker is more dark or less dark. In the racist view of things, the closer a person's skin colour is to white, the more acceptable he or she is, while the darker one's colour, the more objectionable he or she is.

The speaker's clarification by use of the word "brunette" and then later "peroxide blond" brings into the poem the varying shades that exist in the so-called "white" races who may have different colouring. Brunette refers to some one with dark brown hair and dark eyes and a relatively darker complexion. A peroxide blond refers to someone who does not naturally have fair hair, but bleaches it to look yellow.

The humiliation of the speaker as he responds to the landlady's comment, "That's dark isn't it" by pleading and trying to emphasise the parts of him that are fair—the plains of his hand and the soles of his feet—and trying to excuse the parts of him that are dark shows how desperate he has become to present himself in a way that might be acceptable to the values of the lady. In doing do, he has to debase himself and ends with a plea for her to see and judge whether he is fair enough for the role of a tenant.

This poem dramatises the racist attitude that exist in people who were once dominant politically, economically and in military terms. The residue of these attitudes have remained though the political and economic power may have been overthrown. However, these attitudes are so deeply ingrained that the racists, like the landlady, may not even be aware of the nature and depth of the humiliation being felt by those who face these insidious forms of discrimination every day. The lady in her “light impersonality” does not mean to be offensive, but the deep-rooted prejudice about dark-coloured skin seems quite natural to her and so she can ask such questions without really understanding the implications of her questions and comments.

In this poem, the speaker seems to be actually more educated and articulate and sensitive than the landlady. The poem is well-crafted and well-written with the rhythms and metaphors all developed in the accepted standards of modern poetry in English. In many ways, it expresses the outrage of the poet regarding racist attitudes, but does not radically challenge the position, assumptions or ideology of English poetry.

The last poem in this module is a challenge to the very concept of English poetry from the point of view of a colonised people. The subject matter, the language and the rhythms of the poem make it an indictment of the political use of English language and literature in the process of colonisation.

28.3 COMPREHENSION EXERCISES

1. Identify words and phrases which have to do with colour.

2. Can you identify any power play in the poem ?

3. How is the power play established ?

4. This poem is also about the problem of communication between human beings. Can you identify lines in which this theme is explored ?

28.4 SLINGER FRANCISCO

28.4.1 Text : Dan is the Man in the Van

I

According to the education you get when you small
You'll grow up with true ambition and respect from one an all
But in my days in school they teach me like a fool
The things they teach me I should be a block-headed mule.

Pussy has finished his work long ago
And now he resting and thing
Solomon Agundy was born on a Monday
The Ass in Xhe Lion skin
Winkiri Blinkin and Nod
Sail off in a wooden shoe
How the Agouti lose he tail and Alligator trying to get Mickey liver
soup.

II

The poems and the lessons they write and send from England
Impress me they were trying to cultivate comedians
Comic books made more sense
You know it was fictitious without pretence
J.O. Cutteridge wanted to keep us in ignorance.

Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall
Humpty Dumpty did fall
Goosey Goosey Gander
Where shall I wander
Ding dong dell.....Pussy in the well
RIKKI...TIKKI TAVI
Rikki Tikki Tavi

III

Well Cutteridge he was plenty times more advanced than then scientists
I ain't believe that no one could write so much foolishness
Aeroplane and rockets didn't come too soon
Scientist used to make the grade in ballon
This time Cutteridge done make a cow jump over the moon.

Tom Tom the piper son
Stole the pig and away he ran
Once there was a woman who lived in a shoe
She had so many children she didn't know what to do
Dickery Dickery Dock
The mouse ran up the Clock
The lion and the mouse
A woman pushing a cow up a ladder to eat grass on top a house.

IV

How I happen to get some education my friends I don't know
All they teach me is about Brer Rabbit and Rumpelstilskin...O
They wanted to keep me down indeed
They tried their best but didn't succeed

You see I was dunce and up to now I can't read.
Peter Peter was a pumpkin eater
And the Lilliput people tie Gulliver
When I was sick and lay abed
I had two pillows at my head
I see the Goose that lay the golden egg
The Spider and the Fly
Morocoy with wings flying in the sky
They beat me like a doe to learn that in school
If me head was bright I woulda be a damn fool.

28.4.2 Glossary

There are numerous references to English nursery rhymes like Pussy, Solomon Agundy (Grundy), Humpty Dumpty, Goosey Goosey Gander, Tom the piper's son, the old woman who lived in a shoe, Dickery Dickery Dock, Peter the pumpkin eater etc.

There are also several references to Western fairy tales and other children's stories like the ass in the lion's skin, the lion and the mouse, Brer Rabbit, Rumpelstilskin. There are references to more "literary" texts as well like Rudyard Kipling's story about the mongoose Rikki Tikki Tavi and *Gulliver's Travel* by Jonathan Swift. However these texts are also very problematic texts as Kipling's work is generally seen as a jingoistic and insensitive account of colonisation in India and Gulliver too is on voyages to new lands. The lilliputs actually capture Gulliver but as he is so big and strong, they cannot really control him.

Cutteridge : the English Director of Education in Trinidad and editor of the six volume *West Indian Readers* published between 1926 and 1929. This book was widely used as a text book in the colonial period.

Agouti : a small animal like a guinea pig. The story is a local Trinidadian story.

Morocoy : A kind of land turtle.

28.4.3 A Discussion

This is poem which challenges the concept of the Western-style education that the British exported to the colonies. In this poem, the poet claims that the education he got would have made him even more stupid. The bulk of the poem consists of phrases from typical English nursery rhymes and Western stories, folk tales and stories. The juxtapositioning of these phrases emphasises the fact that the colonised people feel that these stories are strange and irrelevant to them.

The language of the poem is a deliberate move away from the “proper” correct English of the colonisers. In many parts of the previously colonised world, English has become naturalised as it has mingled with local dialects and local speech rhythms and we now have “other englishes” like Indian English, Caribbean English, and Kenyan English. This poem is therefore suggesting even through its language that it is representing a different culture.

The rhythm of the poem is that of the calypso. The calypso is itself, like the language of the poem, a hybrid from made up of Caribbean and African rhythms. This is again a deliberate shift from the “classical forms” of Western poetry.

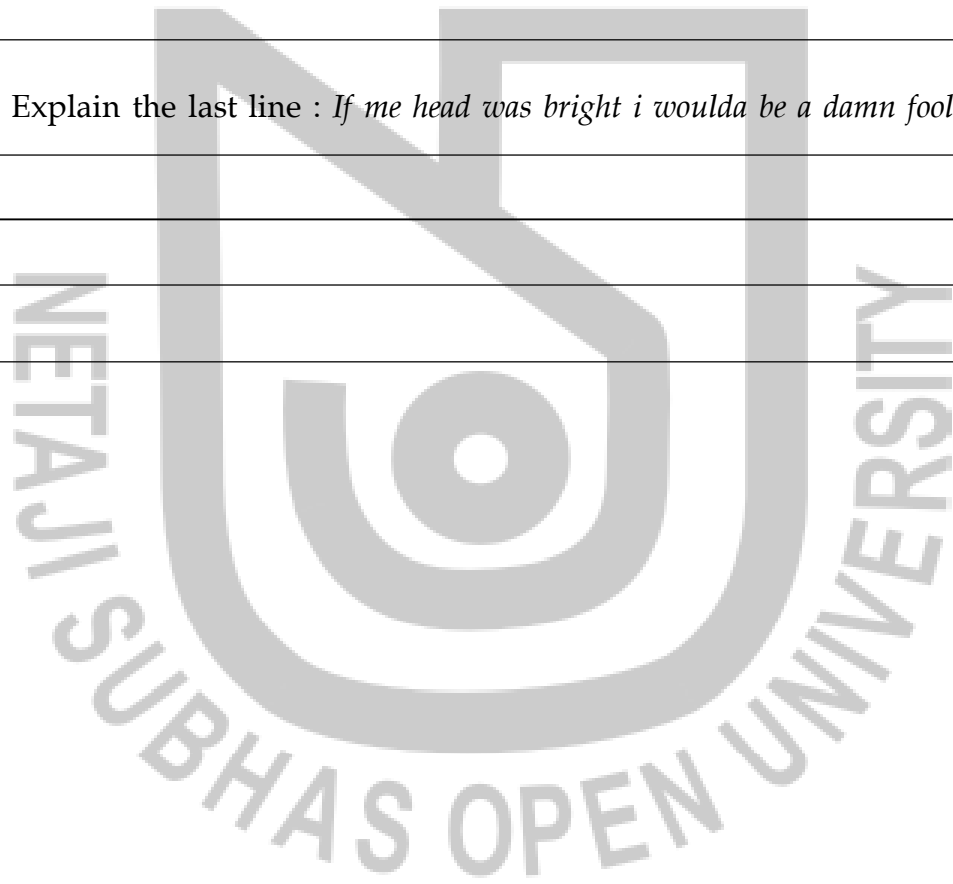
Thus this poem heralds a new wave of writing where the Euro-centric poetic traditions and questioned. This challenge is thus taking the political challenges of the independence movements to the sphere of culture and education.

28.5 COMPREHENSION EXERCISES

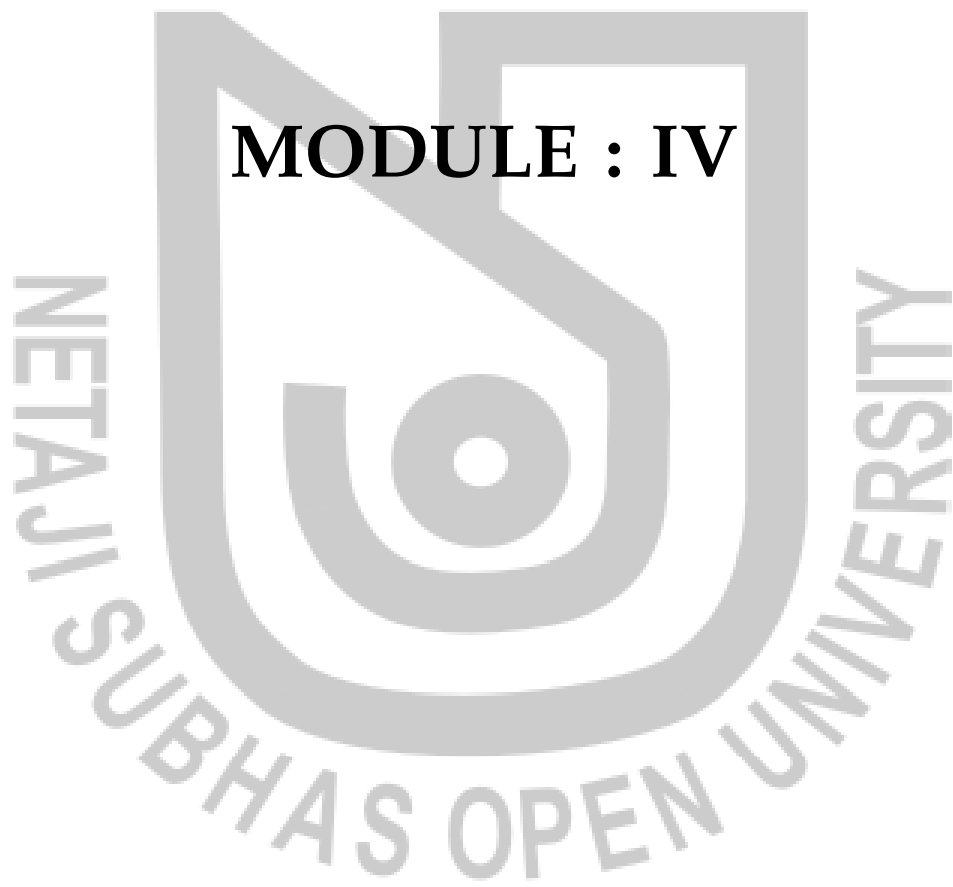
1. What is the theme of the poem ?

2. Why do you think the poet refers to Kipling's Rikki Tikki Tavi ?

3. Explain the last line : *If me head was bright i woulda be a damn fool*



MODULE : IV



UNIT 29 Feminist Methods of Reading Poetry

Structure

- 29.0 Objectives**
- 29.1 Study Guide**
- 29.2 Elements of Feminist Literary Criticism**
 - 29.2.1 Patriarchy**
 - 29.2.2 Sex and Gender as elementary categories**
 - 29.2.3 Marxism and Feminism**
 - 29.2.4 Discourse analysis and Feminism**
 - 29.2.5 Psychoanalytical theories and Feminism**
- 29.3 Comprehension Exercises**

29.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit deals with the question “what is feminist literature ?” and what are the ways in which you can apply it in interpreting poetry. The Unit also gives a brief description of different ways of doing feminist readings and the main themes within these different schools of feminism. At the end of your study of this unit you will be able to :

- recognize how the category of gender works within poetry
- describe the ways in which woman are represented in poetry
- read a poem with an understanding of how patriarchy and its forces work within it
- describe a vocabulary of feminist terms.

29.1 STUDY GUIDE

The comprehension exercises given at the end of each analysis will help you to discern the how patriarchal ideology works, what the relationship between sex and gender is, how sexual discrimination has to do with power and how all these manifest themselves in the literary text. In the next two units you will learn how feminist methods can be applied to poetry. Each poem included and analyzed in the Unit will* help you comprehend the patterns of words, images etc. and add to your in-depth understanding of

reading poetry. The meanings of difficult words appear at the end of each poem.

29.2 ELEMENTS OF FEMINIST LITERARY CRITICISM

There are several schools of Feminism and therefore, multiple ways in which feminist literary criticism has come to be formulated. What lies at the root of feminist literary criticism are two sets of ideas : that in a male-dominated world literary texts produced by men and women invariably bear the marks of that domination in form, language and imagery and writing by women are more often that not, marginalized. The former manifests itself in the use of stereotypes in which the power relationship between men and women within patriarchy remains intact and unquestioned. In recent years, the latter has been the focus of anthologies which have focussed critically on woman's writings which were earlier ignored within the cannon of English literature.

First of all, we shall focus on the notion of patriarchy.

29.2.1. Patriarchy

The word patriarchy originally means the rule of the father or the 'patriarch' and was formerly used to describe a particular type of 'male-dominated family'. Now it is used more generally to refer to male domination, to the power relationships which sustain the superiority of the male over the female in society and a characterize a system within which women are kept subordinate in a number of ways.

Linked to the patriarchal system is the ideology that men are superior to women, that women are and should be controlled by men and that women are a part of men's property. This system affects women's lived experiences and imposes severe restrictions on woman's attempts to represent their experiences. According to some feminists, patriarchal thought and knowledge are characterized by division, distinctions, oppositions and dualisms. Patriarchy, they claim, opposes mind to matter, self to other, reason to emotion and enquirer of object to enquiry. In each of these oppositions one side of the dualism is valued more than the other. Therefore, within patriarchy, the physical embodied by the man is often seen as more powerful than the spiritual embodied by woman.

These oppositions find expression in literary texts in two ways. Firstly as stereotyped notions about masculinity and femininity, in the depiction of

women characters as always being at the mercy of society or men or being rescued by benevolent men. Women are often depicted as 'virgins' or 'vamps'—the good women are rewarded and the bad punished. Secondly, through the institution of literature itself. The formation of a literary canon—which includes all the exemplary texts written in a language—often excludes writings by women. These stereotypes and exclusions become easier, to understand through two categories of description that feminists often use—the distinguishing categories of sex and gender.

29.2.2 Sex and Gender

Within feminist criticism, the category of sex refers to biological identity. That is, the biological attributes of being a woman or a man in the world. The biological differences between men and women distinguish their bodies and their reproductive functions. However, feminists argue that this is never the only determiner of difference between the two sexes. Patriarchal society assigns to each sex specific ways of behaving. The expectations of patriarchal society express themselves in the social roles each sex is given. Therefore, the rational attributes, physical strength etc.-are associated with the masculine gender and the emotional, physical weakness etc. are associated with the feminine gender. The male of the species is seen as the protector and female in need of constant protection. **Gender**, is thus a category which refers to the social rather than the biological. This category also helps us understand how stereotypical notions about men and women exist in society.

Within literary texts, or other cultural productions like theatre, sculpture, art, gender identities impose constraints on the ways in which men and women are represented. Feminist literary criticism often points out how in literary representations figures of women are usually split into the 'good' and the 'bad'.

Gender is an important category for most types of feminist critical practices. We offer below descriptions of three most important types of feminist criticism.

29.2.3. Marxism and Feminism

Marxism identifies capitalism and the mode of production which support it as the material base of a class system which is the source of all oppression. Traditional Marxism hold that the specific subjection of women will end when oppression sustained by capitalism will come to an end. Radical feminists, however, disagree with this view. For them it is patriarchy which

is a problem rather than a class system. The Marxist Feminists, on the other hand, are against this kind of polarization between male domination in a sexist society and class domination in a capitalist one. They prefer to work with a model which allows for two interlocking sets of social relations—one determined by patriarchy and the other by capitalism. Theirs is not the simple task of privileging one set of social relations over the other but the much more difficult task of showing how these two interlock.

Marxist feminists see patriarchy as an **ideology**, that is, a set of assumptions with which society operates and permeates every social relationship. The function of ideology, however, is **hegemonic**, that is, dominant or ruling within a social context so much so that it appears 'natural'. Within the context of literary studies, Marxist feminists would insist that on reading can be innocent. So-called innocent readings of texts produced in a patriarchy are likely to be male-centred. At the same time such readings are also the result of certain class alliances. Therefore, a feminist analysis of D. H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, would reveal the complex ways in which Lawrence depicts a passive female being redeemed by an active male and how this relationship is underpinned by a class relations—between an impotent aristocracy separated from a dynamic subordinate class.

Marxist feminism, however, has through the past decades supplemented Marxism with other analytical systems that were developing in the sixties and seventies. We offer below two such analytical systems.

29.2.4 Structuralism, Postmodernist Theories and Feminism

Theoretical accounts of difference that have been made available by structuralists have had important implications for feminist theories. Ferdinand de Saussure's account of difference emphasizes that difference matters in language because it is **essential to meaning**, that **meaning is relational** and depends on the difference between opposites. Taking their cue from structural linguistics, Feminists would argue that the category **man** means **man** not because it contains some essence of **man** but because we can contrast it with its opposite-woman. Such oppositional terms where each term is partly dependant on the other are called **binary oppositions**. The Post-Structuralist theorist, Jacques Derrida would argue that there are no neutral binary categories and one pole is usually dominant one. There is a relation of power between the two poles of a binary term. This part of Derrida's argument is seen as particularly useful by feminist critics to explain the inequality of power between the binary **male/female**. But we should really write : **MEN/**

women, MASCXJLINE/feminine in order to capture the power dimension.

Feminist methods of reading texts have been particularly influenced by many theories made available by postmodernism. You are already familiar with modernism and the ways in which most of the ideas of modernism were extensions of eighteenth century Enlightenment ideas. Postmodernist theories argue for the need to move away from centricisms of all kinds—that is a system where things at the centre occupy a dominant position and exercise power over those at the margins. For feminists this proves an useful model with which to understand a world which is 'androcentric' that is one which has man at the centre and women at the margins. The man occupies a primary position while women occupy a secondary position.

Discourse analysis as elaborated by Michel Foucault has also become an important component of feminist literary criticism. While this method will be more useful to analyze fiction or other forms of writings, we outline the general features so that it can be used to analyze the ideas and assumptions that underlie images used in poetry. A discourse is a particular way of representing a particular kind of knowledge. A discourse usually produces knowledge through language but it is also produced by social practices. All social practices would have a discursive aspect. Taking from Foucault, feminists would argue that the discourse about the relationship between men and women in patriarchal society was deeply implicated in practice—i.e., how men behaved towards women. A discourse is never produced by a single individual, many individuals produce it, institutions can produce it too. A discourse, is not about true or false statements about something. The descriptions they give involve the contestation of power. Power and knowledge directly imply one another. Feminist literary criticism sees this as tool with which to reveal the ways in which women are represented in literary texts. When we study the sonnets of Petrarch, for example, we find that the image of the idealized mistress is part of a larger discourse in patriarchy where women are subordinated to the desires of men. The figure of the woman reflects the glory of the man. Moreover, in the process of idealizing her, the male poet asserts his right to mould her according to his wishes. She is denied the right to speak for herself.

29.2.5 Psychoanalytical Theories and Feminism

Psychoanalytical theories have been particularly important for Feminist

critics. The fundamental argument in Psychoanalytical theories is that the 'other' is fundamental to the constitution of the self—both as a social subject and as a sexual being. Freud had elaborated this by focussing on the boy-child's erotic attraction for the mother. The father is seen as an obstacle that does not allow his desire to be fulfilled, When the boy discovers that the mother, unlike him, does not have a penis, he concludes that she has been punished by castration and that he too would be similarly punished if he persists in his desire. From this point, his identification is switched to the father. Girls on the other hand, identify with the father and on discovering her own difference from him—i.e., the lack a penis—she finds the only way to win him over is by bearing a man's child. In this way she takes on the mother's role. There have been many versions of Freudian theory and we shall here focus on one of ways in which feminists literary criticism have taken it up.

Patriarchal ideology tends to think of the writer as one who like the Divine Creator, fathers his work. Feminist critics also point out that the pen in the hand of the writer is invariably a symbol of the phallus. Just as in Freudian analysis the girl-child cannot identify with the father *and* be a girl, women who wish to write cannot write *and* be feminine. If they did they would transgress the norms set up by patriarchal authority. These norms demand, as we have seen in our brief discussion of patriarchy, that women be viewed as passive, docile, selfless angelic figures or, if they fail to conform to the norm—they are seen as evil monsters. In such a situation, women are denied the autonomy to articulate alternative self-images. When the culture of patriarchy forbids female authorship and defines norms of femininity, women writers usually attempt to revise and alter these norms and definitions. This is often done, through the figures of the madwoman, witches or the monstrous muses Plath depicts in her poem.

29.3 COMPREHENSION EXERCISES

1. What are the basic differences between sex and gender ?
2. What are the ways in which patriarchy depicts women's roles society ?
3. Why would a woman writer have to struggle harder to express herself in a patriarchal society ?
4. What methods of analysis can be applied to texts to understand the play of power in patriarchal societies ? How can such methods help us understand women's writings ?
5. In what ways does Freud's analysis of female sexuality help us understand women's creativity ?

UNIT 30 Poetic Form and Gender

Structure

30.0 Objectives

30.1 Introduction to Poetic form and Gender

30.2 Edmund Spenser, 'One day I wrote her name upon the strand'

30.2.1 Interpretation

30.2.2 Analysis

30.3 Comprehension Exercises

30.4 Elizabeth Barrett Browning, 'When our two souls stand up erect and strong'

30.4.1 Interpretation

30.4.2 Analysis

30.5 Comprehension Exercises

30.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit deals with the question "how are women represented in writings both by men and women?" and how the category of gender can be used to analyze such representations. The Unit introduces you to ways of reading gender in two poets who use the same poetic form. The sonnet form as used by Spenser uses the conventions of praising and immortalizing his lady-love. Elizabeth Barrett Browning, on the other hand, uses the same form but questions these same convention.

At the end of your study of this unit you will be able to :

recognize the ways in which literary forms and their conventions place limits on the way women can be represented.

describe the ways in which such conventions are overturned and questioned by women poets using the same form,

give a detailed analysis of the three poems.

30.1 INTRODUCTION TO POETIC FORM AND GENDER

Literary genres have been traditionally explained with reference to their own internal rules. The Spenserian sonnet is seen as a variation of the English sonnet with a different rhyme scheme. Thematically, however, the Spenserian sonnet shares much with the Petrarchan and the Shakespearean sonnet forms.

For I my selve shall lyke to this decay,
 And eek my name bee wyped put lykewize." 8
 "Not so," quod I, "let baser things devize
 To dy in dust, but you shall live by fame :
 My verse your vertues rare shall eternize,
 And in the heavens wryte your glorious name.
 Where whenas death shall all the world subdew, 12
 Our love shall live, and later life renew."

a second hand : a second time **eek** : also **quod** : quoth **devize** : plan

30.2.1 Interpretation

This sonnet by Edmund Spenser (1552-1599) is Sonnet 75 of *Amoretti*. In many ways Spenser follows the model of the Petrarchan sonnet by posing a problem in the octave and working out its resolution in the sestet. The quest of the poet to immortalize in verse the beauty and the love of his fair beloved also has Petrarchan echoes. However, Spenser substantially readjusts the Petrarchan model by seeing the mistress not as an unattainable model of perfection, but as a creature reflecting the glory of her Divine Creator. Traditional criticism would concentrate precisely on such differences and similarities in theme and rhyme scheme. Feminist literary criticism would subject this sonnet to a reading in which gender plays an important role. It would ask questions about representation and the literary the poet uses in order to depict figure of his lady-love.

In this poem Spenser considers the problem of making something that is mortal immortal. Speaking of his attempt to immortalize the name of his mistress, he says that his writing is susceptible to the forces of nature which ensure its erasure. His mistress, in fact, is given a voice and articulates her exasperation with his vain efforts since all mortal things are fated to die. The lover responds that only baser forms of life perish, but higher and virtuous forms of life can be immortalized in his art. In his art that their love shall find a life and live eternally.

At the apparent level, the woman is not a mute, passive recipient of male adoration. She has been granted a voice. However, a feminist interpretation would stress that her act of speaking serves a merely functional purpose. The question is articulated by the woman figure in order to enable the male poet to articulate his larger purpose of seeking immortality within art. The figure of the lady-love.

30.2.2 Analysis

Lines

1-4	“One day ...his pray	The poet attempts to immortalize the name of his beloved “by writing on the sand. But such writing, he discovers is easily erased by the natural elements—in this case, first the waves and then the tide. The poet is emphasizing the impermanent nature of such attempts made by mortal man.
5-8	“Vayne man... out lykewize.”	The poet’s beloved speaks here. But note that her words are a reflection of conventional wisdom more than anything else. She points out that things that are mortal have to die. It is a vain wish indeed to try and make such things endure. She too will die and her name will be erased from this earth.
9-12	“Not so... glorious name.’	The poet responds here to her objections. He says that only things that are lowly do not endure. Someone as noble as her shall live permanently in his poetry. Spenser here is drawing upon the conventional image of an idealized mistress. He is also contrasting the impermanence of life to the permanence of art.
13-14	“Where... life renew.”	In this way, even when death conquers the whole world, their love shall live on in his verse. Moreover, this immortalized love shall inspire future generations. Feminist criticism would emphasize that the mistress here has no other purpose than to be an occasion for the poet to talk about the immortality of his own poetry.

30.3 COMPREHENSION EXERCISES

1. Make a list of the qualities that are usually associated with the mistress in the sonnet tradition.
2. What is the theme of this poem ?
3. What is the purpose of the woman’s speech here ?
4. What is the poet’s own attitude to his mistress ? Point out some of the lines which make this clear,

30.4 ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING, 'WHEN OUR TWO SOULS STAND UP ERECT AND STRONG'

When our two souls stand up erect and strong,
Face to face, silent, drawing nigh and nigher,
Until the lengthening wings break into fire
At either curved point,—what bitter wrong 4
Can the earth do to us, that we should not long
Be here contented ? Think. In mounting higher,
The angels press on us and aspire 8
To drop some golden orb of perfect song
Into our deep, dear silence. Let us stay
Rather on earth, Beloved,—where the unfit
Contrarious moods of men recoil away
And isolate pure spirits, and permit
A place to stand and love in for a day,
With darkness and death-hour rounding it. 12

nigh : near **orb** : ball or sphere **contrarious moods** : feelings of antagonism

30.4.1 Interpretation

This sonnet by Elizabeth Barrett Browning (1806-1861), belongs to her very popular series of love poems entitled *Sonnets from the Portuguese* which she had dedicated to her husband, Robert Browning. As we have seen within the literary traditions of the West the sonnet form has mainly been a male-dominated genre where the lady-love is idealized and idolized by the adoring male-lover. In this poem we witness Elizabeth Barrett Browning's struggle to mould this form according to female requirements, telling the story of a love-affair from a woman's instead of a man's point of view. In this sonnet she emphasizes the equality between the two lovers and celebrates their relationship rooted on earth midst so many imperfections. Death which is inevitably encircle the lovers. Nevertheless, this imperfect state seems preferable to the perfection of heaven where their moment of silent communion may be disrupted by the music of the spheres. According to Elizabeth Barrett Browning it is the flawed conditions on earth which are responsible for secluding lovers who turn to each other. It is better to be granted a space on earth in which to love even if that love is threatened by ultimate extinction.

Working within the sonnet tradition, Elizabeth Barrett Browning

articulates the problem in the first eight lines—the octave. But note that the problem is articulated in the form a question—“what bitter wrong/Can the earth do to us, that we should not long/Be here contented ?” In the last six lines, the sestet, the poet attempts a solution by stressing that the purity of the love for two souls equal to one another can draw them closer in a world full of strife. Interestingly this seems to question the longing for immortality and heavenly perfection expressed so often in sonnets written by men about their love for the mistress.

At an apparent level, the poem shares a common conceit with Andrew Marvell’s ‘To his coy mistress’. Marvell too, emphasizes the need to succumb to desire while one is living before age and death destroy youth, beauty and love. But we must note here that Elizabeth Barrett Browning does not place either of the lovers on a higher plane as Marvell does. On the contrary, she celebrates love of two equal souls uncontaminated by the corrupt earth. Her stress on equality and her insistence that love can be sought and found by two souls on earth raise questions that are very different from those asked by male sonneteers from Petrarch onwards.

30.4.2 Analysis

Lines

- | | | |
|------|----------------------------|--|
| 1-4 | “When...
point” | The poet envisages the communion of lovers as a spiritual communion. She stresses the equality between the two souls. The image of wings stretched to their utmost limit is used to describe the souls drawing nearer each other. |
| 4-9 | “what bitter,
silence.” | Here the poet contrasts the perfection of heaven and earth in the form of a question. She asks why as lovers the cannot be contented on earth. The purity of the deep silence they now share would be disrupted by the perfect music of the spheres that the angels in heaven would invariably produce. The silence the lovers share is too precious for such ‘ interruptions. There is clearly a reversal of order here, when true love is found on earth the perfection of the celestial sphere is diminished. |
| 9-12 | “Let us...
spirits.” | The woman speaking here chooses to stay on earth, amidst all imperfections. The quarrels of men drive the two lovers closer to each other. In this sense they are ‘isolated’ from the world. |

12-16 'and permit
...it." In this process the lovers find a place to love on earth. This space is all the more precious because it is threatened by inevitable death and dissolution. Instead of bringing up images of immortality that would counter the images of annihilation, Barrett Browning emphasizes the intensity of a relationship that is encircled by death and darkness.

30.5 COMPREHENSION EXERCISES

1. List the ways in which this sonnet differs from the traditional sonnet in form and in content.
2. Identify words which challenge the traditional sonnets celebration of immortality.
3. Why do you think Elizabeth Barrett Browning insist on the equality of the souls of the two lovers ?

UNIT 31 Reading Poetry by Women

Structure

- 31.0 Objectives
- 31.1 Introduction to Reading Women's Poetry
- 31.2 Sylvia Plath, 'The Disquieting Muses'
 - 31.2.1 Interpretation
 - 31.2.2 Analysis
- 31.3 Comprehension Exercises
- 31.4 Emily Dickinson, 'I Taste a Liquor Never Brewed'
 - 31.4.1 Interpretation
 - 31.4.2 Analysis
- 31.5 Comprehension Exercises
- 31.6 Kamala Das, 'An Introduction'
 - 31.6.1 Interpretation
 - 31.6.2 Analysis
- 31.7 Comprehension Exercises

31.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit deals with the question "how do we read poetry written by women?" and why women's writing has to be read differently. The Unit introduces you to three women poets : two American poets—Sylvia Plath, Emily Dickinson, and an Indian poet—Kamala Das. At the end of your study of this unit you will be able to :

recognize language, imagery and themes that often characterize women's writing.

describe the ways in which women represented themselves in poetry.

give a detailed analysis of the three poems.

31.1 INTRODUCTION TO READING WOMEN'S POETRY

Feminist literary criticism in the late 1960s and early 1970s focussed its attention on the representation of women in mainstream literature in certain stereotyped roles. Women were mothers, good submissive wives or bad dominating ones, seductresses, betrayers, prim spinsters or idealized figures

who inspired the male artist. The realization led to the search for a more complex woman's world which many feminist critics sought in women's writings. Their assumption that women write about their world in more *authentic* ways than male writers is not shared by present-day feminist critics who believe that women's writings are also shaped by ideologies they encounter in society. But the argument that women's writing has been ignored within the canon of mainstream literature and that critical estimates of women's writings are invariably prejudiced is still true. Poets like Emily Dickinson never received the critical acclaim that she so richly deserved during her own lifetime.

Patriarchal ideology, as some feminist critics argue, thought of the writer as one who in the image of the Divine Creator *fathers* his work—the pen in his hand is invariably seen as phallic. Women who wrote, could not therefore, both write and remain feminine without transgressing the norms set up by patriarchal authority. Therefore, the woman writer is confronted with a double burden. She has to challenge these myths of creativity and also work against the notion of the idealized female who is set up a figure who inspires and complements her male counterpart. The woman writer does this by creating in her work—a dark double as an image of her own anxiety and rage. Through such figures of mad *or* irrational women the woman writer can revise, assault and reconstruct the stereotyped images of women they have inherited from male literature. Sylvia Plath's poem is an interesting example of this process.

Over the last two decades, feminist criticism, has made it possible to locate themes and debates within women's writings and the ways in which, such writing can become the object of a disciplined investigation. Woman's writing should be read as one of the ways "in which the female authors negotiate patriarchal domination. The pick out established themes and question stereotypical notions about women's role. Yet, as the analysis of the three poems try to show, the opposition to ideologies of gender can be bound by notions of race and class in ways that are discomfiting. In Kamala Das's poem, for example, the questioning of patriarchal ideology is closely allied with her sense of individual freedom acquired from her upper-class education.

31.2 SYLVIA PLATH, THE DISQUIETING MUSES

Mother, mother, what illbred aunt
Or what disfigured and unsightly
Cousin did you so unwisely keep

Unasked to my christening, that she 4
 Sent these ladies in her stead
 With heads like darning-eggs to nod
 And nod and nod at foot and head
 And at the left side of my crib ? 8

Mother, who made to order stories
 Of Mixie Blackshort the heroic bear,
 Mother, whose witches always, always
 Got baked into gingerbread, I wonder 12

Whether you saw them, whether you said
 Words to rid me of those three ladies
 Nodding by night around my bed,
 Mouthless, eyeless, with stitched bald head. 16

In the hurricane, when father's twelve
 Study windows bellied in
 Like bubbles about to break, you fed
 My brother and me cookies and Ovaltine 20
 And helped the two of us to choir :
 "Thor is angry : boom, boom, boom!
 Thor is angry : we don't care !"
 But those ladies broke the pane. 24
 When on tiptoe the schoolgirls danced,
 Blinking flashlights like fireflies
 And singing the glowworm song, I could
 Not lift a foot in the twinkle-dress 28
 But heavy-footed stood aside
 In the shadow cast by my dismal-headed
 Godmothers, and you cried and cried :
 And the shadows stretched, the lights went out. 32
 Mother you sent me to piano lessons
 And praised my arabesques and trills
 Although each teacher found my touch
 Oddly wooden in spite of scales 36
 And the hours of practicing, my ear
 Tone-deaf and yes, unteachable.

I learned, I leaned, I learned elsewhere,
 From muses unhired by you, dear mother. 42
 I woke one day to see you, mother.
 Floating above me in bluest air
 On a green balloon bright with a million
 Flowers and bluebirds that never were 46
 Never, never, found anywhere.
 But the little planet bobbed away
 Like a soap bubble as you called : Come here ! 50
 And I faced my traveling companions.
 Day now, night now, at head, side, feet,
 They stand their vigil in gowns of stone,
 Faces blank as the day I was born,
 Their shadows long in the setting sun 54
 That never brightens or goes down.
 And this is the kingdom you bore me to,
 Mother, mother. But no frown of mine
 Will betray the company I keep. 58

Muses : Greek goddesses of the arts and learning, and sources of inspiration.

darning eggs : an egg-shaped piece of wood or other smooth hard material used to stretch and support material being darned,

Thor : The Norse god of war and thunder.

arabesque : in music, a passage or composition with fanciful ornamentation of the melody.

trills ; a quavering note.

31.2.1 Interpretation

Sylvia Plath's (1932-1963) life and poetry continue to be surrounded by controversy. Understanding her poetry requires some understanding of her short and troubled life. As a young adolescent she was anxious about not leading a typical woman's life. 'Spare me from cooking three meals a day—spare me from the relentless care of routine and rote...' she had written at the age of seventeen. Her words were prophetic because in 1960s—the period to which this poem belongs—she was struggling with a failed marriage and struggling to bring up two young children by herself in London. This led to her suicide which continues to arouse controversy. Many of Plath's poems are about herself. In this poem she attempts to look at the process of creativity and the nature of inspiration from the point of view of a woman writer.

As we have stated earlier, patriarchy grants a central prominence to the figure of the male writer. The muse who inspires a male writer is often an idealized woman-figure. In a society which sees the literary creativity of a woman as an aberration, the literary efforts of a woman writer is often seen as ravings of a madwoman. In this poem, Plath explores the ways in which she failed to conform to the expectations of society and is haunted by her muses who in contrast to the Greek goddesses who are supposed to have inspired poetry down the ages, are witch-like figures.

31.2.2 Analysis

Lines

1-4	“Mother... christening.”	The poet is referring here to the fairy tale about <i>Sleeping Beauty</i> which the young princess is cast into a deep sleep by a spiteful fairy who was not invited to her christening ceremony.
4-8	“that she ...crib ?”	The poet feels that there must have been a similar exclusion at her own christening ceremony. The spite of that excluded relative manifests itself in the ghostly female figures that surround her bed at night.
9-12	“Mother... ginger bread,”	There is an allusion here to another fairy tale—that of <i>Hansel and Gretel</i> who finally baked the murderous witch who lived in a gingerbread house.
12-16	“I wonder bald head.”	The young girl asks what her mother did to protect her from these terrorizing presences. Note the way in which Plath reverses the way in which the figure of the Muses are represented in mainstream literature. The nine muses of Greek mythology are figures who inspire the arts. The three female presences scare the girl. They are quite grotesque in appearance—‘mouthless’ and ‘eyeless’.
17-23	“In the hurricane...care”	The poem refers to an incident in childhood when the mother helps her and her brother overcome their fears of thunder by making them comfortable with food and drink and teaching them to chant a song about the Norse god of thunder.
24	“But those... pane.”	The witch-like figures that terrify the girl-child prove to be the more powerful than Thor himself. They succeeded in breaking the window panes and coming

- into haunt her nevertheless. No superstitious chant seem effective against these creatures.
- 25-32 “When on...
went out.” This refers to an early attempt on the part of the mother to teach her daughter the -essential social graces. The girl is given ballet lessons and finds herself incapable of the graceful steps her other class-mates execute. It is as if she is held in the shadow of her evil god-mothers. Her mother can only weep at her daughter’s inability to fit in.
- 33-38 “Mother, you...
unteachable.” The mother also sends the girl for piano lessons. This is also considered to be an essential skill for an upper-class young girl. In spite of her mother’s encouragement and hours of practice, the girl is found to possess no musical talent.
- 39-40 “I learned...
dear mother.” The girl confesses to learning from these witch-like figures. The influence of these figures goes unnoticed by her mother.
- 41-48 “I woke...
companions” The girl experiences the death of her mother. As the figure of her mother beckons her she turns to face her witch-like companions. The moment of the death of the mother signals also the moment of her own maturity.
- 49-56 “Day now,
... I keep.” The figures keep her company all the time. However, she has come to feel more comfortable in their presence. Outwardly, however, she shows no signs of being in the presence of these tormenting presences. Plath here is hinting at the ways in which the emotional upheaval within her poetic imagination has to be hidden from the world if she has to follow the kind of training in womanhood that her mother put her through.

31.3 COMPREHENSION EXERCISES

1. Identify words and phrases which describe the Muses.
2. What effect do such descriptions have ?
3. Explain in your own words the phrase *my ear/Tone-deaf and yes, unteachable*. What does it mean in the poem ?
4. Explain the last line of the poem. Why is it significant ?

31.4 EMILY DICKINSON, 'I TASTE A LIQUOR NEVER BREWED—'

I taste a liquor never brewed—
From Tankards scooped in Pearl—
Not all the Frankfort Berries
Yield such an Alcohol ! 4

Inebriate of Air—am I—
And Debauchee of Dew—
Reeling—thro endless summer days—
From inns of Molten Blue— 8

When "Landlords" turn the drunken Bee
Out of the Foxgloves's door—
When Butterflies—renounce their "drams"—
I shall but drink the more ! 12

Till Seraphs swing their snowy Hats—
And Saints—to windows run—
To see the little Tippler
From Manzanilla come ! 16

Debauchee : A person who excessively indulges in sensual pleasures.

drains : a small drink of whisky or other spirits.

Seraphs : an angelic being, regarded within Christian tradition as belonging to the highest order of the celestial hierarchy, associated with light, ardour and purity.

Manzanilla : a very dry Spanish sherry. Here referring to the place from where this type of sherry comes.

31.4.1 Interpretation

Emily Dickinson (1830-1886) was born in Amherst, Massachusetts. Like all settlements in that area, Amherst had a dominant Puritan past where the Calvinistic tradition ran deep and where the need to focus upon self-improvement and the soul's affections were perceived as basic. Emily Dickinson's grandfather, the founder of Amherst College—a centre for education and looked upon as the bastion of puritan faith. Emily Dickinson, however, perceived quite early in her life that the nature of her own

enthusiasm was not evangelical and chose to be guided by her own mind and spirit. Her—own spiritual struggle expressed itself in her poetry often in a voice that was not viewed as ‘normal’ by her own contemporaries. Feminist scholarship that has focused on Dickinson look at her poems as being strategic reactions to her biographical, psychological and cultural situation. They argue that her identity as a poet and her life as a woman are interlinked and the study of language or imagery alone would be inadequate tools with which to understand her poetry.

The poem included here reveals Dickinson’s intense relationship with nature. It consists of four quatrains on common metre with alternate lines rhyming. The rhyming lines are quite unusual—illustrating Dickinson’s indifference to exact rhyme. Dickinson is not unusual in insisting that nature can only be experienced through the senses—the Romantics too had insisted on something similar. But Dickinson’s appreciation of nature comes not by tracing affinities between Nature and the Self as many Romantics sought to do but by projecting her bodily sensations on to the natural world. The dominant metaphor here is that of intoxication—which defies puritanical norms within which she grew up.

31.4.2 Analysis

Lines

- | | | |
|-------|-----------------------------|--|
| 1-4 | “I taste...
an Alcohol!” | The poem opens by celebrating the sense of taste. The experience here of tasting an intoxicating liquor. The reference to cup from which she tastes this (“Tankard scooped in Pearl”) alerts us to the elaborate metaphor she is using. The pearly dew-drops are probably her cup, the sights of nature, her alcohol. This alcohol is not man-made or squeezed out of berries. |
| 5-8 | “Inebriate
...Blue | She is intoxicated by the air and indulges in the sensual pleasure of looking at the dew-drops. Her senses stagger bee-like through the haze of blue flowers (‘Molten Blue’). |
| 9-12 | “When...
the more!” | When summer ends the flowers (Foxgloves) like authoritarian landlords refuse entry to the bee that is drunk with nectar. The butterfly, so accustomed to drinking nectar will refuse his small drink (‘dram’), she shall fill her senses with more. |
| 13-16 | “Till...
come!” | She shall fill her senses with the colours and scents of the natural world till the Seraphim, who belong to the |

highest order of angels and the saints of heaven peep out to look at her state of intoxication. She presents herself as one who is' drunk and no longer in her senses ('little Tippler'). This sight would draw the attention of the entire celestial order. Note how she constantly describes her experience of the beauty of nature in terms of an excessive imbibing of alcohol—something forbidden within patriarchal norms to women and more specifically forbidden within Puritan society.

31.5 COMPREHENSION EXERCISES

1. How is Emily Dickinson's treatment of nature different from traditional nature poetry ?
2. What is the connection between being in a drunken state and filling one's senses with the natural world ?
3. Identify words and phrases that have to do with alcohol.
4. What effect does Plath's use of the metaphor of inebriation have on the poem ?

31.6 KAMALA DAS, AN INTRODUCTION

I don't know politics but I know the names
 Of those in power, and can repeat them like
 Days of week, of names of months, beginning with
 Nehru. I am an Indian, very brown, born in
 Malabar, I speak three languages, write in 5
 Two, dream in one. Don't write in English, they said,
 English is not your mother-tongue. Why not leave
 Me alone, critics, friends, visiting cousins,
 Everyone of you ? Why not let me speak in
 Any language I like ? The language I speak 10
 Becomes mine, its distortions, its queernesses
 All mine, mine alone. It is half English, half
 Indian, funny perhaps, but it is honest,
 It is as human as I am human, don't
 You see ? It voices my joys, my longings, my 15
 Hopes, and it is useful to me as cawing
 Is to crows or roaring is to lions, it

Is human speech, the speech of the mind that
 Is aware. Not the deaf, blind speech 20
 Of trees in storm or of monsoon clouds or of rain or the
 Incoherent mutterings of the blazing
 Funeral pyre. I was child, and later they
 Told me I grew, for I became tall, my limbs
 Swelled and one or two places sprouted hair. When
 I asked for love, not knowing what else to ask 25
 For, he drew a youth of sixteen into the
 Bedroom and closed the door. He did not beat me
 But my sad woman-body felt so beaten.
 The weight of my breasts and womb crushed me. I shrank
 Pitifully. Then...I wore a shirt and my 30
 Brother's trousers, cut my hair short and ignored
 My womanliness. Dress in saris, be a girl,
 Be wife, they said. Be embroiderer, be cook,
 Be a quareller with servants. Fit in. Oh,
 Belong, cried the categorizers. Don't sit 35
 On walls or peep in through our lace-draped window.
 Be Amy, or be Kamala. Or better
 Still, be Madhavikutty. It is time to
 Choose a name, a role. Don't play pretending games. 40
 Don't pJay at schizophrenia or be a
 Nympho. Don't cry embarrassingly loud when
 Jiited in love... I met a man, loved him. Call
 Him not by any name, he is every, man 45
 Who wants a woman, just as I am every
 Woman who seeks love. In him...the hungry haste
 Of river, in me...the oceans tireless
 Waiting. Who are you, I ask each and everyone.
 The answer is, it is I. Anywhere and
 Everywhere, I see the one who calls himself 50
 I; in this world, he is tightly packed like the
 Sword in its sheath. It is I who drink lonely
 Drinks at twelve, midnight, in hotels of strange towns,
 It is I who laugh, it is I who make love
 And then feei shame, it is I who lie dying 55.
 With a rattle in my throat. I am sinner,

I am saint. I am beloved and the
Betrayed. I have not joys which are not yours, no
Aches which are no yours. I too call myself I.

59

nympho : informal way of referring to a **nymphomaniac**, i.e., a woman who has an excessive desire for sex. This is usually used in a derogatory manner.

schizophrenia : a mental illness in which a person is unable to link his or her thoughts and feelings to real life, suffers from delusions and withdraws increasingly from social relationship into a life of the imagination.

31.6.1 Interpretation

This is a poem by Kamala Das (b. 1934), an Indian poet and a novelist writing in English and Malayalam. In this poem she brings together the concerns of power and politics of men in the world and in the family. She reflects on the ways in which as a woman her domain is perceived as lying outside the world of politicians and yet, at the same time, dominated by notions of what is appropriate for an Indian and for a woman. As an Indian she is asked to reject English, the language of the former colonizers, as it would be an appropriate nationalist gesture. Writing in her 'mother-tongue' would, such critics tell her, enable her to express herself in a more authentic manner. The poet questions this and asserts her right to write in a language of her choice. This poem also demonstrates the woman poet's resistance to patriarchal demands to conform to standards of womanly demeanour and behaviour. The poem ends with a plea for the right to be a person and love in the midst all the conflicting forces that characterize modern life. Note, however, that Das is clearly speaking from the privileged position of an upper-class, educated woman.

31.6.2 Analysis

Lines

- | | | |
|-----|-------------------------------|---|
| 1. | "I don't know politics" | A woman is speaking here. She is an outsider to the world of politics which is usually the domain of men. |
| 2-4 | "repeat.....
Nehru" | the verb used here 'repeat' refers to a mechanical retention of names. As a woman she must learn these names by rote beginning with one of the founding fathers of the Indian Nation State—Nehru. |
| 5-6 | "I speak...
dream in one." | English, Malayalam and Bengali are the three languages is referred to here. Kamala Das writes |

- in English and also in Malayalam under a pseudonym 'Madhavikutty'. The language of her dreams refers to language used in the realm of intimacy and affections, perhaps her mother-tongue—Malayalam.
- 6-7 "Don't write in English..." Here the poet mentions those who criticize her for using English since it is the language of the former colonizers. The mother-tongue, in Das's case, Malayalam, is seen as being a 'purer' or more truthful medium in which to write about her Indian experiences.
- 7-10 "Why not... mine alone". Here Kamala Das asserts her right to choose her language because language is a flexible medium. As a poet she twists and turns it and moulds language for her own purposes. The meaning she gives it her own.
- 10-18 "It is half ...lions," Indian English is a peculiar hybrid of English and Indian words. Das claims here that the language she chooses is laughed at for not being pure English but a strange mixture of two languages. Yet this is as sincere ('honest') a medium as any. She claims that this language is capable of giving expression to her innermost self ('joys', 'longings', 'hopes'). At the same time it is something she naturally possesses. She uses two similes from the natural world to emphasize this : 'cawing of crows', 'roaring of lions'. Mark how she juxtapositions the harsh sound of the crows cawing which is repulsive with the magnificence of the lion's roar.
- By implication, a woman's speech may be harsh and unacceptable to society (like the crow's cawing) and can at the same time possess the majesty of the king of beasts.
- 18-20 "It is human ...Is aware," Plea to recognize the voice of the poet whatever his/her language, as primarily human. This voice is seen as one which is responding to its immediate surroundings (like the crow and the lion in the previous lines), 'here' i.e., responding to an Indian

- reality and not to something 'there', i.e., elsewhere, abroad. This language is also the reflection of a mind that possesses all its faculties of seeing and hearing and is self-aware.
- 20-23 "Not the deaf
...pyre." The voice of the woman poet is not unenlightened. The poet here referring to the frequently used argument that a women is 'deaf and 'blind' and her language can only be derived from something else. She does this by evoling the noise made by trees during a storm, or the thundering of the monsoon clouds or the rains and the crackling of the fire in a funeral pyre. All these sounds are enabled by certain conditions. Das claims here that her speech is different because it is not derivative, it is self-conscious and aware.
- 23-25 "I was child
25-31 "When I asked
...Pitifully." Referring to the onset of puberty. The desire for love is expressed by the woman. But what she gets in return traumatizes her. There is an element of surprise in the voice of the woman protagonist of the poem since she notes 'He did not beat me'. Even so, the physical act of love-making is in itself violent and frightening since within a patriarchal society the emphasis is on sexual gratification of the male partner. The sexual identity of the woman weighs on her like a heavy burden.
- 31-33 "Then my
womanliness." She dresses in a man's clothes to turn away from the oppressive cultural meanings that are attached to her sexual identity as a woman. By imitating man's ways she hopes to escape the gaze of society which seeks to categorize her and subjugate her as a woman who can be sexually used.
- 33-35 "Dress in saris
...servants." The voice of society exhorts here to fit into the stereotypes of womanliness by dressing in a particular way ('saris'), to be a wife, and to engage in domestic tasks—cooking, embroidering, ordering and organizing servants.
- 35-37 "Fit in...
certain..." Gender operates in society by confining women to fit into roles. A woman who does not fit into such pre-

- windows.” set social roles is seen as a threat. The exasperation of society at a woman who does unwomanly things (‘sit on’walls or peep through our lacedraped windows’) is expressed here.
- 38-43 “Be Amy.,
in love.” Once more the choice in names echoes the earlier choice in language (see 1.6 ff). She should be Amy and write in English or be Madhavikutty and write in Malayalam. The second is a better choice for an Indian woman. The anxiety of society with somebody who claims a split personality (‘schizophrenia’) or openly expresses sexual desire (‘nympho’) surfaces with respect to women who refuse to be contained within a set role—in this case, Indian woman and good woman. Only a good Indian woman would know how to control the commotion within her when she is betrayed in love.
- 43-46 “I met a man.,
seeks love.” The poet expresses the completeness she finds in loving a man. The sense of fulfilment she finds in loving him enables her to move beyond individual identities. She becomes like Everywoman and he, Everyman.
- 46-48 “In him...
Waiting” A further elaboration 11 43-46. The frankly sexual overtones of the imagery should not be ignored here. The river emptying itself into the waiting ocean evokes the consummation of the sexual act.
- 48-56 “Who are you
...my throat.” The last section lines move beyond the sexual identity towards a more generalized individual identity. The poet asserts the right to claim this identity which is neither male nor female. Even though the sense of self can hardly be separated from the body it inhabits (‘tightly packed like the sword in its sheath’). This sense of self includes the positive as well as the negative emotions (feeling lonely, enjoying the act of lovemaking and yet feeling guilty afterwards). Finally the T is annihilated when a person dies.
- 56-59 “I am sinner
...myself I” Continuing and elaborating the earlier theme, the poem looks at the complex nature of the self. In these last lines Kamala Das reminds her readers that it is unfair to expect women to conform to a stereotypical

role since a woman is also a human being whose sense of self contains both positive and negative elements. By implication, a woman is not merely a woman she is an individual too.

31.7 COMPREHENSION EXERCISES

1. This poem is also about the dilemma faced by an Indian writer in English. Can you identify lines in which this theme is referred to ?
2. Identify words and phrases which have to do with socially acceptable roles for women. Are there also words and phrases that refer to socially unacceptable roles for women ?
3. Why does the poet express her disappointment in her first experience of love ?
4. The poem moves from the problems faced by an individual woman to a more general sense of deprivation that women suffer in patriarchal society. Discuss with reference to the text.

UNIT 32 Colonialism, Imperialism and Poetry

Structure

- 32.0 Objectives**
- 32.1 Study Guide**
- 32.2 The Colonial Encounter**
 - 32.2.1 Theoretical Accounts of Difference and Their Implication**
 - 32.2.2 Colonialism and Discourses of Power**
- 32.3 Comprehension Exercises**
- 32.4 Rudyard Kipling, 'The White Man's Burden'.**
 - 32.4.1 Interpretation**
 - 32.4.2 Analysis**
- 32.5 Comprehension Exercises**

32.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit deals with the question “how are colonialism and literature linked?” and what are the ways in which we understand those links and apply them interpreting poetry. The Unit also gives a brief description of different ways of understanding the colonial encounter. At the end of your study of this unit you will be able to :

- recognize how the colonial encounter has shaped the way in which colonized people are represented in literature.
- describe the ways power operates in poetry of the empire.
- read a poem with an understanding of how colonialism and its forces work within it.
- describe why racial difference is such a compelling theme in literature.

32.1 STUDY GUIDE

The comprehension exercises given at the end of each analysis will help you to discern how the colonial ideology works, what the relationship between the self and the ‘other’ is, how the colonial encounter and the types of knowledge it gave birth to has to do with power and how all these manifest themselves in the literary text. In the next Unit you will learn how the assumptions behind colonial descriptions came to be challenged in the poetry produced by decolonized nations. Each poem included and analyzed in the

Unit will help you comprehend the patterns of words, images etc. and add to your in-depth understanding of reading poetry. The meanings of difficult words appear at the end of each poem.

32.2 THE COLONIAL ENCOUNTER

For a long time, the role played by colonialism in shaping the literature of imperialist powers was not given the importance it deserved. However, literary theory of the last two decades has emphasized the ways in which the colonial encounter has been crucial to the formation of particular patterns of thought and language that have images of cultural and racial difference at its centre. In the following sections we shall look at some of the critical theories that clarified the relationship between colonialism and literature.

It is important to remember that colonial encounter was preceded by a different kind of encounter between Western and non-Western countries and that it was followed by yet another type-of encounter between non-Western peoples and Europeans and Americans. We can identify three major moments in history when the West encountered coloured people. Firstly, the sixteenth century contact between European traders and the West African kingdoms that became the source of black slaves for almost three centuries. Secondly, the European colonization of Africa, India and other countries. And finally, the post-World War II migrations from the Third World countries into Europe and North America. The effects of all three encounters still remain. The outcome of the first encounter manifested itself in slavery and its repercussions are still felt in post-slave societies of the New World. The aftermath of the second encounter is still visible in the African states, in the Caribbean islands and in India. The final encounter still continues and its effects are felt in the racist attitudes towards coloured people that prevails in the West. All three fateful encounters have manifested themselves in literature. There have been several theoretical accounts that have helped us understand such manifestations. We offer below a brief account of some of these theories.

32.2.1 Theoretical Accounts of Difference and Their Implication

The question we wish to begin with is this : “how do we understand the ways in which encounters between cultures and peoples significantly different from each other are represented ?” Questions of difference have become very important to cultural theory in recent years. Different disciplines have approached the question in different ways.

The first two accounts of difference have come from the study of language. We have already seen how Ferdinand de Saussure's account of the difference has had important implications for Feminist criticism. Saussure's argument that difference is **essential to meaning** has also provided an useful tool with which to understand the encounter between white Europeans and non-European black people, Saussure would say that **Black** means **black** not because there is some essence of **blackness** but because we can contrast it with its opposite—**white**. **Black/White** then, are a part of a binary unit. Taking this a step further, Jacques Derrida would argue that there can be no neutral binary categories and that one pole usually dominates over the other. The relation of power between the two poles of a binary term can thus be represented as : **White/black, Colonizer/colonized** etc. We will see later, how these binaries function in literary texts to create stereotypes about black races that have to be governed by white races.

Mikhail Bakhtin, another theoretician of language would see meaning within a language system quite differently. For him meaning is sustained in dialogue between two or more speakers. Meaning arises out of the give and take between the speakers. The 'other' is essential to meaning because the words I use are also someone else's they become mine only when take them over for my own purposes. Meaning, therefore, has to be always **negotiated**. Using this theoretical account we can say that, therefore, we cannot understand what it meant to be British in nineteenth century Britain unless we understand what the British thought of their prize colonies like Jamaica or India, and what Jamaicans and Indians thought of them.

The third kind of explanation of difference is anthropological. Anthropologists like Claude Levi Strauss argue that every culture creates a classificatory system within which every item is assigned a place. This assignment of place confers meaning on things. For example, Claude Levi Strauss shows how cultures categorize types of food according to how they are eaten—whether they are eaten raw or cooked. Most stable cultures would try to keep things in their appointed place and stigmatize or expel anything that cannot be categorized and therefore appears abnormal or impure. This would partly explain why white Europeans treated black people as sub-human savages. Taking this same account of difference further, other anthropologists would argue that stable cultures feel most threatened when things turn up in the wrong place. Therefore, a person of mixed descent—neither black nor white would be stigmatized by white society.

32.2.2 Colonialism and Discourses of Power

We have already dealt with the significance of discourse analysis to feminist literary criticism. In recent years, discourse analysis has proved to be a fruitful method with which to study fiction and other forms of prose writings produced during the colonial period. This method is also useful to analyze underlying assumptions in poetry. But first, let us remind ourselves of the basic features of a discourse. A **discourse** is a particular way of representing a particular type of knowledge. This knowledge is produced as much through language as through social practice. Therefore, all social practices have a discursive aspect. Taking this idea from Michel Foucault, theoreticians of colonialism would argue that the discourse about the relationship between Britain and any of its colonies, say, India was deeply implicated in practice—i.e., how the British behaved towards Indians.

A discourse is always internally coherent—i.e., its different parts hold together and make sense. This coherence, however, does not depend on a single individual—a discourse can be produced and sustained by many individuals and institutions. When we read Kipling's poem, 'The White Man's Burden' we will see that the idea that the white man is superior to the 'natives' is not just Kipling's idea—it drew from the Enlightenment notion that the white man was more civilized than the 'natives' and therefore, justified in colonizing them.

Moreover, it is important to remember that the encounter between Europe and the people of the New World was not an encounter between equals. The Europeans stood in a position of power vis-a-vis those it colonized. Discourse analysis enables us to understand how literary descriptions of colonized involve such contestations of power. It helps us understand what the Europeans saw, how they saw it and what they did not see.

Finally, Europe brought its own conceptual categories—i.e., its language, images and ideas—to the New World in order to describe it. In other words they were attempting to fit this world into an already existing conceptual framework. The descriptions of the East that the West offers, is thus, never a simple matter of the West describing the East. The East had to fit into their pre-conceived notions. When looking at Oriental cultures Europeans were struck by the absence of governance and civil society. The social structures they encountered among the Caribs in the West Indies, the Hottentots in Africa and the Hindus in India did not fit the norm that was applied to European society and therefore these fell outside the western category of

'civil society'. Oriental societies were thus peculiar, uncivilized, primitive and its people, 'savage' and almost 'beast-like'.

Both Foucault's idea of a discourse and the different theories of difference have played a significant role in developing what is called postcolonial theory. Of these, the most significant has been Edward Said's path-breaking work, *Orientalism* (1978). Said demonstrates how Europe's descriptions of other societies were significant not for their own sake but for the ways in which such descriptions contrasted with Europe's own self-descriptions and thus provided a vehicle for reflecting on Europe's own refinement and progress. Postcolonial theories have helped us see how ideas of empire, race and civilization operate in a field of power in literature. Such theories, therefore, have been useful both for understanding literature produced within empire and literature produced by those who were formerly colonized.

32.3 COMPREHENSION EXERCISES

1. How can we link the colonial encounter with literature ?
2. Take any two accounts of difference and list the ways in which they help us understand racial and cultural difference.
3. What methods of analysis can be applied to texts to understand the play of power in colonized societies ?
4. When colonizing powers describe the societies they have colonized they basically provide a negative self-description. Would you agree ?

32.4 RUDYARD KIPLING, 'THE WHITE MAN'S BURDEN'

(The United States and the Philippines Islands)

Take up the White Man's burden—
Send forth the best ye breed—
Go bind your sons in exile
To serve your captives' need; 4
To wait in heavy harness
On fluttered folk and wild—
Your new-caught sullen peoples,
Half devil and half child. 8

Take up the White Man's burden—
In patience to abide,

12 To veil the threat of terror
 And check the show of pride;
 By open speech and simple,
 And hundred times made plain,
 16 To seek another's profit,
 And work another's gain.

 Take up the White Man's burden—
 The savage wars of peace—
 Fill full the mouth of Famine
 20 And bid the sickness cease;
 And when your goal is nearest
 The end for others sought,
 Watch sloth and heathen Folly
 24 Bring all your hopes to nought.

 Take up to White Man's burden—
 No coward rule of kings,
 But toil of serf and sweeper—
 28 The tale of common things.
 The ports ye shall not enter,
 The roads ye shall not tread,
 Go make them with your living,
 32 And mark them with your dead!

 Take up the White Man's burden—
 And reap his old reward :
 The blame of those ye better,
 36 The hate of those ye guard—
 The cry of hosts ye humour
 (Ah slowly!) toward the light :—
 Why brought ye us from bondage,
 40 Our beloved Egyptian night ?

 Take up the White Man's burden—
 Ye dare not stoop to less
 Nor call too loud on Freedom
 44 To cloak your weariness;
 By all ye cry or whisper,

By a]] ye leave or do,
The silent sullen peoples
Shall weigh your Gods and you. 48

Take up the White Man's burden—
Have done with childish days—
The lightly proffered laurel,
The easy, ungrudged praise. 52

Comes now, to search your manhood
Through all the thankless years,
Cold-edged with dear-bought wisdom
The judgement of your peers ! 56

32.4.1 Interpretation

Rudyard Kipling (1856-1936) was born in British India, in Bombay. Most of his poems show him to be enthusiastically applauding the British imperial 'adventure' in India. The poem we have chosen, is addressed to the American imperial mission in the Philippines. The context of the poem is, therefore, clearly not about British imperialism at all. However, what is being affirmed here is the superiority of the West over other cultures. Note that it is western supremacy that is being talked about here— the specific country being talked about is not of great significance within that larger context. We should also remember that within the colonial discourses, the West from where the White Man comes, functions as a concept rather than a geographical location. Therefore, even if Kipling is speaking about the American imperial mission, he addresses Americans as White Men who bear a burden similar to the British imperialists. The White Man has a duty towards those whom he governs—he has to work for their benefit and feel frustrated when his good intentions to 'civilize' them, fail. The assumption that operates within the poem is that the White Man is superior to the Black man and is therefore, 'naturally' entitled to enslave him. The poem poses the problem as the burden placed on the shoulders of the White Man. By focussing on this noble mission, Kipling deliberately shifts the focus away from the violence of colonialism.

32.4.2 Analysis

Lines

1-8 'Take... half child. "Kipling introduces the notion of the White Man's burden. He appeals to the imperial power to send

her best sons to govern the colonized people. The post sees this as the sacred duty of the White Man. Note that the words and phrases which describe the colonized people: 'fluttered folk', 'wild', 'new-caught', 'sullen', 'Half devil', 'half child' etc. all refer to savage-like qualities. Such people are irrational, unsteady, uncivilized, animal-like ('wild') and bad-tempered ('sullen'). They are incapable of exercising the full responsibilities of adulthood (half child) and also incarnations of evil ('half devil').

- 9-16 "Take, gain." Here Kipling emphasizes the noble task that the colonizer is faced with. Note his stress on the colonizers selfless labour for somebody else's gain. Note also how he underscores the gentle ways in which the savage people have to be governed—not through terror, impatience or pride but through patience and simple speech, Kipling focusses away from the exploitation and the brutal acts of punishment that characterize any colonial regime.
- 17-24 "Take... to nought." Kipling once again itemizes the many tasks before the colonizer. He must work towards eliminating wars, famines and sickness among those he governs. When he has nearly achieved that goal, he should not become complacent because the laziness and foolishness of the natives ('Sloth and heathen Folly') will undo the good work that the colonizer has undertaken. Kipling uses the stereotype of the lazy and foolish native and articulates the frustrations of the White Man.
- 25-32 "Take... your dead." The life of the White Man in his colonies is indeed a hard one. The empire has an austerity about it which is different from the garishness displayed by kings. The colonizer has the difficult task of building roads, ports etc. What Kipling does not mention here is that colonizers inevitably harnessed the labour of their captive natives for such tasks.
- 33-40 "Take...night?" It is the White Man's lot to suffer the hatred, the ingratitude and the accusations that are inevitably

- heaped on him by those whose lot he seeks to better. The Egyptian slaves are depicted as preferring their state of bondage and ignorance to progress ushered in by the colonizer.
- 41-48 "Take... you."
The calling of a White Man is noble one and the colonizer therefore and should not stoop to a lesser task. Nor should he ask to be freed on grounds of being tired. He should work ceaselessly towards his goal because otherwise the colonize will sit in judgement on him and his Gods. Kipling hints here that there is a moral purpose behind colonizing the natives.
- 49-56 "Take...your peers."
The colonizer is exhorted to give up his immature ways ('childish days') and assert his full-grown manliness- Note that this is a fairly common metaphor in a colonial literature. The colonized people were often depicted as lacking in judgement and incapable of taking on responsibility—like children. The colonizer, by contrast, was the mature and capable adult. The colonizer is being invited to asset his masculinity here because if he does not, he shall be judged by his compatriots. It becomes clear that this is one imperial power talking to another.

32.5 COMPREHENSION EXERCISES

1. What sort of stereotype of the colonized people does Kipling offer in the first stanza ?
2. Make a list of the things that Kipling calls the White Man's burden.
3. What do the responsibilities of the White Man towards the colonized people imply ?
4. How would the imperialist prove their manhood ? What is their manhood contrasted with ?

UNIT 33 Reading Postcolonial Poetry

Structure

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- 33.1 Introduction to the Reading of Postcolonial Poetry
- 33.2 Dennis Brutus, 'Cold'
 - 33.2.1 Interpretation
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- 33.3 Comprehension Exercises
- 33.4 Dennis Scott, 'Epitaph'
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- 33.6 Louise Bennett, 'Colonization in Reverse'
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- 33.8 Nissim Ezekiel, 'Background, casually'
 - 33.8.1 Interpretation
 - 33.8.2 Analysis
- 33.9 Comprehension Exercises

33.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit deals with the question "how do we read poetry written by people who are or were colonized?" and whether such writings are marked by distinctive themes, and images. The Unit introduces you to three post-colonial poets ; one African poet—Dennis Brutus, two Caribbean poets—Dennis Scott and Louise Bennett and an Indian poet—Nissim Ezekiel. You might also want to compare these poems with those by Wole Soyinka and Slinger Francisco in the Unit dealing with Modern Poetry. At the end of your study of this unit you will be able to :

- recognize language, imagery and themes that often characterize post-colonial writing.
- describe the ways in which post-colonial writers represent themselves in poetry.
- give a detailed analysis of the five poems.

33.1 INTRODUCTION TO READING OF POST-COLONIAL POETRY

In Unit 32 we have seen the ways in which literary theory of the last two decades has emphasized the centrality of the colonial encounter in shaping particular patterns of thought and language that have images of cultural and racial difference at its centre. We have also closely analyzed a well-known poem by Rudyard Kipling in order to understand the ways in which the moral and physical superiority of the West affirms its right to rule over the 'inferior' races it has colonized. In this unit, we shall study the ways in which the colonized resisted imperialist ideology. For our present purposes, we shall take postcolonial poetry to mean poetry which challenges colonial notions and is produced by those who were colonized. Postcolonialism, therefore, should not be understood merely as a historical label which denotes something that necessarily comes after colonialism.

The resistance to imperialist ideology manifests itself in certain specific themes. Language, history and identity are some of the key concerns of most postcolonial writers. Let us take them up one by one. In most colonized countries, the language of the colonizer was established as the official language. Among the 'native' population, the elite were educated in this language so that they could occupy subordinate positions within the colonial administration. The language of the colonized was disparaged and ridiculed. Most nationalist movements, therefore, began with agitations over the use of the mother-tongue. In the case of colonies which depended on slave labour, such as the West Indies, the situation was slightly more complex, British English became the standard the educated had to aspire to, while dialect was denigrated. This produced a range of poetry and we have included two very different varieties of Jamaican poetry here. The dialect in Louise Bennett's poem questions the basis of the superiority of the English in a comic way. In India, the problem is slightly different in nature. It is illustrated in the dilemmas faced by an Indian poet like Nissim Ezekiel who writes in English.

Imperialist ideology often described the colonized as 'people without history'. The philosophy of the Enlightenment saw Europe as having arrived at the pinnacle of civilization. One of the ingredients that had consolidated Europe's self-understanding was its ability to make sense of its past. It was to Europe's credit that it also had an archive of verifiable historical facts that affirmed its past achievements. When European colonizers looked for 'history' in its colonies like India or Nigeria, it failed to find it. Nor were they able

to locate a similar archive. They, therefore, concluded that these nations lacked history and hence were backward countries that required civilizing. Postcolonial writing often disputes this view by reconstructing their own past from legends and myths and alternative sources of history. Some writers also challenge the colonizer to a confrontation with history by recalling the violence he has perpetrated on the colonized people. We have noted in our reading of Kipling, how the violence of colonialism was often erased out of texts produced by the colonizer. The poem by Dennis Scott recollects the permanent presence of slaves hanged to death within any narrative about the Caribbean Islands.

Finally, as we have noted in the previous section, the colonizing powers often identified the colonized people as 'half child, half beast'. What often operated in such writings is the notion of a Caliban-like creature who has to be controlled by a Prospero-like figure. African and Caribbean writers have often used the Caliban-Prospero relationship to depict the relationship between the colonizer/exploiter and the colonized/ exploited. Although, these particular figures do not appear in the poems we have chosen we shall find that the politics of identity plays a specific role in most post-colonial writing. In the poem by Dennis Brutus we shall find the ways in which the freedom-fighters are reduced in the speech of the racist prison official to disgusting creatures deserving only death. The types of negotiations an Indian poet like Nissim Ezekiel has to undertake in order to assert his identity are quite different. He must come to terms with his Jewishness and affirm his Indian-ness and he can only write in English which was the colonizer's language. Postcolonial criticism has made it possible to locate themes and debates within the postcolonial literature and have indicated for us the ways in which such writing can become the object of a methodical investigation.

33.2 DENNIS BRUTUS, 'COLD'

the clammy cement
sucks our naked feet

a rheumy yellow bulb
lights a damp grey wall

the stubbled grass
wet with three o'clock dew
is black with glittery edges;

5

we sit on the concrete,
stuff with our fingers
the sugarless pap 10
into our mouths
then labour erect

form lines;

steel ourselves into fortitude
or accept an image of ourselves 15
numb with resigned acceptance;

the grizzled senior warden comments :
"Things like these
I have no time for;

they are worse than rats;
you can only shoot them." 20

Overhead
the large frosty glitter of the stars
the Southern Cross flowering low;
the chains on our ankles
and wrists 25
that pair us together
jangle
glitter.

we begin to move 30
awkwardly.

Colesberg : en route to Robben Island

rheumy : watery **grizzled** : having grey hair.

Southern Cross : the constellation Crux, visible in the southern hemisphere.

33.2.1 Interpretation

Dennis Brutus was born in Harare in 1924. He is a South African poet and was an anti-apartheid activist. In \ 961, Brutus was banned by the South African government from taking part in political activities and arrested in

1963. He served a eighteen months' hard-labour sentence on Robben Island, the gaol for black political prisoners. The poem we have chosen was written on the way to Robben Island. Brutus' poetry is the poetry of direct, plain statement and demonstrates his mastery over rhythm. He describes the cold, damp atmosphere of the prison and the hardships of serving sentence. He seems to imply that his imprisonment is not just physical, in the large context of apartheid, it is also symbolic. At the symbolic level, the black prisoner is denied his identity as a human being and reduced to a mere rat—a pest who must be killed. This is articulated by the racist prison warden who sees these men as no more than disgusting rats who should be shot dead. The last couple of lines in the poem express the temporary joy of seeing the stars. But the peace and harmony of the natural world evoke by contrast, the unfree, shackled men forced to move awkwardly. Note the way in which the poet constantly contrasts open spaces with the closed space of the prison.

33.2.2 Analysis

Lines

- | | | |
|-------|----------------------------|---|
| 1-7 | “the clammy
...edges.” | Brutus evokes the cold, dampness of the prison floor, almost assigning it a life of its own which enables it to further sap the prisoners of their strength. The low-voltage bulb casts a sickly light. Note how the use of (<i>he</i> adjective 'rheumy' once again invokes dampness. The light-bulb and the grass are both described in human terms. Rheum is associated with eyes and stubble with a man's unshaven chin. The dew (invoking wetness again) indicates the passage of time. |
| 8-16 | “we sit...
acceptance.” | the prisoners force themselves to eat the tasteless gruel that is served. The prisoners are also forced to accept their captivity with a sense of resignation. Between these two acts of submission—the first physical, the second, spiritual—the prisoners stand up long queues and work. Note the way in which the lines : 'then labour erect; / form lines' are separated from the cluster of lines describing resignation, |
| 17-21 | “thc...shoot
them.” | the prison warden who is obviously serving an Apartheid regime, echoes the racist attitude of the |

regime. He refers to the prisoners as 'things'—and thus dehumanizes them. Moreover, the image of the rat is deliberately used to reduce the human prisoners to the status worse than that of a Jowly animal. The back prisoners are only fit for killing.

22-24	“Overhead low,”	The poet suddenly evokes the open-ness of the sky, the beauty of the starry night. The peace and harmony of nature are offered as a contrast to the next few lines.
25-31	“the chain ...awkwardly.”	The chains on the hands and feet of the prisoners shine and rattle they are made to move towards their destination in Robben Island.

33.3 COMPREHENSION EXERCISES

1. How does the poet use language to convey the experience of being imprisoned ?
2. Comment on the poet’s use of irony when he quotes the comments of the prison warden.
3. Why do **you** think the poem is called ‘Cold’ ?

33.4 DENNIS SCOTT, ‘EPITAPH’

The hanged him on a clement morning, swung between the falling sunlight and the women’s breathing, like a black apostrophe to pain.	3
All morning while the children hushed their hopscotch joy and the cane kept growing he hung there sweet and low.	6
At least that’s how they tell it. It was long ago and what can we recall of a dead slave, or two	9
except that when we punctuate our island tale the swing like sighs across the brutal sentences, and anger pauses till they pass away.	12

33.4.1 Interpretation

Dennis Scott (1939-1991) was a Jamaican playwright and poet. In this poem, the poet poignantly juxtaposes a violent act in the colonial past with present-day attempts to make sense of the past. As in most poetry produced by decolonized nations, in Caribbean poetry too, history is an important theme. The poem tries to address a predicament shared by post-slave societies. Slavery, the poet seems to be saying was a doubly violent act : it killed both spiritually and physically. The death by hanging of a slave had interrupted the morning activities of a slave community a long time ago. Even now, the hanged bodies cast visible shadows over the story of the island. For the poet there is no escape from history—the fact of slavery—even though it belongs to the past—does not disappear with time, the image of the hanging slave recalls the whole story of the brutalization of black people by dominant white races. The poet seems to be saying that the violence in the past haunts the present Like other postcolonial countries, the political reality of post-independence Jamaica was grim. There was strife between multiple factions even as there was a scramble for power among the agricultural, commercial and intellectual elite. The tendency of poets to confront the violence of their world and link it to the brutality of their pasts became fairly common one.

33.4.2 Analysis

Lines

- 1-3 “The hanged ...pain.” The poem opens with the image of a hanging. We are not told yet, who has been hanged. We only know it is a black man. (‘black apostrophe to pain’)- Note the use of irony in the opening line—the day is ‘clement’—literally, it is mild, but evoking the qualities of compassion and mercy. Such qualities have not affected oppressors who have passed the harsh sentence of hanging. The hanged man swings between the fading light and the hushed breathing of the women.
- 4-6 “All morning ...and low.” The body kept hanging there, its presence forces the children to silence their shouts of joy as they played hopscotch. The cane on the plantation keeps growing silently. Note the economy of Scott’s lines—he is able to sketch the stunned atmosphere in a few words. The shock

	is felt not only by the children but also by the natural world. By referring to the cane the poet presents the workplace of the slave—the sugarcane plantation.
7-8 “At least ... tell it.”	This short sentence indicates to us that what the poet was talking about in the previous lines is part of a legend about the past.
8-13 “It was ...away.”	We learn that this violent incident took place long ago. Memory does not grant too elaborate a space for dead slaves; yet these slaves haunt every story that is told about the island. Whenever the speaker pauses in his narration, the memory of the slaves sway across the sentence like a heartbreaking sigh. Feelings of wrath and indignation are temporarily suspended till the sigh of the slave has transpired. The poem begins with shock and ends with feelings of deep, unfathomable sadness.

33.5 COMPREHENSION EXERCISES

1. What is the purpose of invoking the ‘clement’ morning ? In what way does it ‘ invoke the cruel colonizer ?
2. List the words and phrases that convey the feeling of shock at this brutai act.
3. The poem moves from shock to sadness in an attempt to make sense of history. Discuss with reference to the last few lines.

33.6 LOUISE BENNETT, ‘COLONIZATION IN REVERSE’

What a joyful news, Miss Mattie:
 Ah feel like me heart gwine burs—
 Jamaica people colonizin
 Englan in reverse. 4

By de hundred, by de tousan,
 From country an from town,
 By de ship-load, by de plane-load,
 Jamaica is Englan boun. 8

Dem a pour out a Jamaica;

Everybody future plan
Is fi get a big-time job
An settle in de motherlan. 12

What is islan! What a people!
Man an woman, ole and young
Jussa pack dem bag and baggage
And tun history upside dung! 16

Some people doan like travel,
But fi whow their loyalty
Dem all open up cheap-fare
To-Englan agency; 20

An week by week dem shippin off
Dem countryman like fire
Fi immigrate an populate
Do seat a de Empire. 24

Oonoo se how life is funny,
Oonoo see de tunabout ?
Jamaica live fi box bread
Out a English people's mout. 28

For when dem catch a England
And start play dem different role
Some will settle down to work
An some will settle fi de dole. 32

Jane seh the dole is not too bad
Because dey paying she
Two pounds a week fi seek a iob
Dat suit her dignity. 36

Me seh Jane will never fine work
At de rate how she dah look
For all day she stay pon Aunt Fan couch
An read love-story book. 40

What a devilment a Englan!

Dem face war an brave de worse;
 But ah wonderin how dem gwine stan
 Colonizin in reverse. 44

gwine : going **burs** : burst **tousan** : thousand **boun** : bound **fi** : to **jussa** :
 just **dung** : down **doan** : don't **oonoo** : all of you **tunabout** : turnabout
dole : payment made by the state to unemployed people.
devilment : wildly playful behaviour that often causes trouble. **ah** : I

33.6.1 Interpretation

Louise Bennett was born in 1911 in Kingston, Jamaica. She is the pioneering figure of the century in the oral tradition of Caribbean poetry. At first sight, this poem may appear difficult, but if you read it aloud you will find that she is using an easy to understand spoken dialect. Note how the language of her poetry is very different from that of the other Jamaican poet whose poem you have just read. Bennett's choice of the dialect—which originally came out of slavery as a mixture of several languages—is deliberate. While her poems enjoyed a great deal of popularity, her use of the vernacular and the spoken form of Jamaican English was seen as having little literary value for a long time. It was not until the 1960s that her poetry came to be recognized as 'literature'. Louise Bennett is known to perform her poems—i.e., enact them publicly. Her skills as a comic poet are highly esteemed. In the 1950s Jamaicans began to immigrate in large numbers to Britain. In this poem, Louise Bennett takes an ironic look at the way in which a formerly colonized people will now take over the seat of the former British empire. The victims of imperial exploitation will be just like the former colonizers—some will work while others will lead a parasitic existence. This, Bennett suggests humourously, will make it possible for the formerly colonized to England, the raillery implies that this is actually an impossible task for a powerless people.

33.6.2 Analysis

Lines

1-8	“What a ...boun”	One speaker is addressing another one called Miss Mattie. She obviously feels overjoyed at the news about so many Jamaicans immigrating to Britain. II 5-8 presents rather comically a picture of Jamaicans flooding England.
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- 9-16 "Dem a ...dung!" The people pouring out of Jamaica hope to find jobs that will bring them a lot of money so that they can settle in England. Bennett deliberately uses the colonial term 'motherlan' (motherland) for England here for ironical effect. She implies that people who find the prospect of immigrating to England attractive think of it as their 'original' home in the earlier, colonial sense. These people, she humourously suggests, probably intend to turn the history of colonization on its head.
- 17-24 "Some -de Empire." Even those who dislike travelling have professed their loyalty to the cause of colonization in the reverse. As a gesture of encouragement they have opened up Travel Agencies which ship off large numbers of Jamaicans to England. Bennett comically presents a picture of black people populating the heart of the white empire. Bennett is presenting a comic view of a world where the periphery has moved to the centre.
- 25-32 "Oonoo se ...de dole." Everyone should observe the reversed situation ('tunabout') and see how comical the whole situation is. When the British colonized islands in the West Indies they exploited the people and kept the profits for themselves. Now the Jamaicans too will have the opportunity to 'exploit' the English and snatch away food from their mouths. Bennett suggests ironically, that in England, the Jamaicans will not play the role of servants or slaves as they did in the colony. Some of them will find employment and others will be lazy and live off the state.
- 33-40 "Jane seh ...book." Bennett mentions the case of Jane who is one such lazy girl. The government has been paying her the sum of two pounds a week so that she can find a suitable job. Note that Bennett satirically refers to the dignity of labour. In practice the. concept of the dignity of labour in England, prevents Jane from seeking employment as a menial which in a slave-owning colony would be acceptable by the former colonizers. But also provides her with the excuse of not seeking any job. She takes this opportunity to lazily read novel after novel.

41-44 “What ...reverse.” The reckless attitude of many of the black immigrants will cause a lot of trouble for England. As a country that was the most powerful empire, Britain has braved many wars and economic depression too. But the poet cunningly wonders how it will deal with a reverse colonization.

33.7 COMPREHENSION EXERCISES

1. What do the immigrants hope for ?
 2. How will the immigrants turn history upside down ?
 3. In 1. 18 to whom will the travel agents show loyalty to ?
 4. Comment on the word populate (L. 23).
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33.8 NISSIM EZEKIEL, ‘BACKGROUND, CASUALLY’

1

A poet-rascal-clown was born,
 The frightened child who would not eat
 Or sleep, a boy of meagre of bone.
 He never learnt to fly a kite,
 His borrowed top refused to spin. 5

I went to Roman Catholic School,
 A mugging Jew among the wolves.
 They told me I had killed the Christ,
 That year I won the scripture prize.
 A Muslim sportsman boxed my ear. 10

I grew in terror of the strong
 But undernourished Hindu lads,

Their prepositions always wrong,
 Repelled me by passivity.
 One noisy day I used a knife. 15

At home on Friday nights, the prayers
 Were said. My morals had declined.
 I heard of Yoga and of Zen.
 Could I, perhaps, be rabbi-saint ?
 The more I searched, the less I found. 20

Twenty-two : time to go abroad.
First, the decision, then a friend
To pay the fare. Philosophy,
Poverty and Poetry, three
Companions shared my basement room. 25

2

The London seasons passed me by.
I lay in bed two years alone,
And then a Woman came to tell
My willing ears I was the Son
Of man. I knew that I had failed 30

In everything, a bitter thought,
So in an English cargo-ship
Taking French guns and mortar-shells
To Indo-China, scrubbed the decks,
And learned to laugh again at home. 35

How to feel it home, was the point.
Some reading had been done, but what
Had I observed, except my own
Exasperation ? All Hindus are
Like that, my father used to say. 40

When someone talked to loudly, or
Knocked at the door like the Devil.
They hawked and spat. They sprawled around.
I prepared for the worst. Married,
Changed jobs, and saw myself a fool. 45

The song of my experience sung,
I knew that all was yet to sing.
My ancestors, among the castes,
Were aliens crushing seed for bread
(The hooded bullock made his rounds). 50

3

One among them fought and taught,
A Major bearing British arms.

He told my father sad stories
Of the Boer War. I dreamed that
Fierce men had bound my feet and hands. 55

The later dreams were all of words.
I did not know that words betray
But let the poems come, and lost
That grip on things the worldly prize.
I would not suffer that again. 60

I look about me now, and try
To formulate a plainer view :
The wise survive and serve—to play
The fool, to cash in on
The inner and the outer storms. 65

The Indian landscape sears my eyes.
I have become a part of it
To be observed by foreigners.
They say that I am singular.
Their letters overstate the case. 70

I have made my commitments now.
This is one : to stay where I am,
As others choose to give themselves
In some remote and backward place.
My backward place is where I am.

mugging : the act of attacking and robbing. The word is used as an adjective here.

rabbi : a Jewish scholar who interprets Jewish Law.

33.8.1 Interpretation

Nissim Ezekiel was born in Bombay in 1924. He is one of the most distinguished Indian poets writing in English. In this poem he tries to understand the complex nature of his inheritance. An Indian of Jewish origins, Ezekiel has always felt a 'natural outsider' in India. The poem, autobiographical in nature, looks at the ways in which his feelings of being an outsider are reinforced at home and abroad. However, when probing into

his own background, Ezekiel examines how different layers of history have got deeply embedded in his own Indian-ness. In the end, he claims his roots by choosing to remain in India.

One of the key themes of all postcolonial writing has been identity. The politics of identity has charged all anti-colonial struggles with the formerly colonized peoples asserting their right to self-determination and language. In a multi-lingual country like India, the nationalist and post-independent phase saw a spirited defence of literature written in the Indian languages. This was a reaction against the imposition of English education by the colonial state. During the colonial period, the establishment of English as the official language, went hand in hand with disparaging statements about the lack of literary merit in literature that was written in the Indian Languages. In the nationalist period, English became naturally identified as the colonizer's language.

Response to the works of poets like Nissim Ezekiel who writes in English has been ambiguous in India, It is only in the last decade or so that sufficient attention has been focussed on Indian English and its unique vocabulary and syntax. This has brought with it the recognition that English is not just the colonizer's language but its long life in India has Indianized it to a large extent. Elsewhere, Ezekiel explores the possibilities of Indian English. In the poem we have chosen, he has evolved as an Indian.

33.8.2 Analysis

Lines

- 1-5 "A poet... to spin." Ezekiel refers to the three key aspects of himself : the "poet, and rascal and the clown. The three attributes actually bring together three basic instincts that shape human character: the creative, the destructive and the absurd. He then goes on to describe himself as a timid and under-weight child who never learnt the usual things a boy learn to do.
- 6-15 "I went ...a knife He is misfit at school on account of being a Jew in a Roman Catholic school. Since the Jews were responsible for the killing of Christ, he is seen as representative of that race. Yet, the irony of the situation is, that he won the prize for Bible Studies that year, Even this honour

does not enable him to fit in because a Muslim student beats him up. Ezekiel is recounting the plight faced by someone who belongs to a minority community. He is persecuted not only by those who belong to other minority communities but also by Hindus who are part of the majority in India. The strong Hindu boys may have been weak in English grammar but terrorized him all the same. One day, he resorts to violence, ('used a knife') This act renders him a rascal.

- 16-20 "at home ...I found" The Jewish ritual of saying prayers on Friday nights continued but the boy found himself alienated. His status as outsider in the outside world had compelled him to sacrifice his morals. He attempted to find solace in the Hindu and Buddhist system of training the body and spirit ('Yoga¹ and 'Zen') and wondered if he could claim a combined identity—rabbi-saint. But he is disappointed because his searches do not lead him to anything substantial.
- 21-30 "Twenty-two ...failed" Like most middle-class English-educated Indians he aspires to go to for higher studies abroad—but does not have the means. He finds a friend who sponsors his trip and undertakes his studies in the UK. This aspiration is inherited from the colonial past. Students doing the PPE degree course at Oxford read Philosophy, Politics and Economics. Note the ironical twist Ezekiel gives the subject—he calls the subjects— Philosophy, Poverty and Poetry. He is referring here to the hardships of studying in the UK. The two years of his studies in London leave him very lonely. When he finds the love of a woman he discovers to his despair that she identifies him with Christ the Saviour. This throws him back on his earlier crisis in identity and he feels a failure.
- 31-39 "In Exasperation?" Unable to face the bitterness of his identity-crisis, he returns to India in a cargo-ship. He works hard on board and begins once more to feel carefree. But he discovers that the larger problem of finding his roots ('How to feel

at home, was the point.')

remained. His studies had only stimulated his indignation.

- 39-43 "All Hindus ...around." His observations about himself remind him of the ways in which his father would label the Hindus. Since they were very different from the Jews they were stereotyped as uncivilized and uncultured by his father. Ezekiel is implying through these lines that community identities invariably operate around stereotypical notions of difference. A Jewish person would stereotype Hindus in a way that would highlight only the bad qualities and thus claim a superior position for himself.
- 44-50 "I prepared ...rounds.)" This recognition makes him prepare for the most trouble some circumstances. He married, sought a different employment. Both these acts portrayed his stupidity because in a way he was succumbing to external pressures that would take him away from his calling as a poet. But he accepted these changes as inevitable. He refers here to William Blake's *Songs of Experience* (1794) in which Blake, the Romantic poet speaks of oppression of conventional wisdom. Invoking an English literary text is often a typical trait of the postcolonial writer. Here, Ezekiel uses the reference to indicate that he knew that his self-recognition was incomplete. He was yet to establish the links between his own identity and his ancestors. Here refers here to the Bene Israel tradition which states that their ancestors took to oil-pressing soon after their arrival in India. The image of blind-folded bullock encircling the oil-mill fulfills the double purpose of invoking his ancestors as well the calling up the notion of mechanical drudgery.
- 51-55 "One and hands." Ezekiel refers to the ways in which colonialism affected the occupation of his ancestors. One of his ancestors was a part of the colonial army and had fought in the Anglo-Boer Wars between the British and the colonial forces and the Republic of Transvaal between 1899-1902. The irony of the colonial situation is that the imperial powers enlist the help of one colony to crush the rebellion of

- another. This recognition manifests itself in the nightmare of the poet in which he finds himself helpless. ('Fierce men had bound my feet and hands.')
- 56-65 "The later ...storms." Ezekiel refers to the making of his poetic self. He dreams of words and is hardly conscious of the ways in which words can deceive. His preoccupation with words comes at a cost—he loses his hold on reality and suffers. He would not choose to suffer in his manner again. His present state of maturity makes him come to quite a different conclusion. Ezekiel brings together two opposite categories—the wise man and the fool. It is only those who have gained wisdom who realize that it is best to play the fool. It is only in this way one can survive inner and outer situations of conflict. ('The inner and the outer storms.')
- 66-70 "The Indian ...case." Ezekiel finds the Indian literary scenario unbearable in harshness and yet admits that he is undeniably a part of it. His foreign admirers regard him with admiration. In fact, they find him unique, but Ezekiel is distrustful of such exaggerated praise.
- 71-75 "I have ...I am." Ultimately, the identity of the poet is an identity he chooses. Ezekiel commits himself to India in the same way poets in exile often adopt underdeveloped and backward places as* their own. Thus implying that he is constrained by his circumstances to live in his own place as an exile. Ezekiel here, articulates the dilemma of the Indian writer in English. As an Indian of Jewish descent he has access to no other language but English, yet ironically, it is his use of English that deny him access to an authentic Indian-ness.

33.9 COMPREHENSION EXERCISES

1. Explain the line : 'A mugging Jew among the wolves'.
2. In what ways does the poet show his awareness of the prejudices that run in Indian society.
3. What are the different ways in which colonialism affected the making the poet ?
4. Why does the poet distrust the praise of foreigners ?

Notes



Notes

