POST GRADUATE DEGREE PROGRAMME (CBCS)

In ENGLISH

SEMESTER II

CORE COURSE V

ROMANTIC PERIOD IN ENGLISH LITERATURE

SELF LEARNING MATERIAL

DIRECTORATE OF OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING

UNIVERSITY OF KALYANI

KALYANI- 741235, WEST BENGAL

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Utmost care and precision have been ensured in the development of the SLMs, making them useful to the learners, besides avoiding errors as far as practicable. Further suggestions from the stakeholders in this would be welcome.

During the production-process of the SLMs, the team continuously received positive stimulations and feedback from Professor (Dr.) Sankar Kumar Ghosh, Hon'ble Vice- Chancellor, University of Kalyani, who kindly accorded directions, encouragements and suggestions, offered constructive criticism to develop it within proper requirements. We gracefully, acknowledge his inspiration and guidance.

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Their persistent and co-ordinated efforts have resulted in the compilation of comprehensive, learner-friendly, flexible texts that meet the curriculum requirements of the Post Graduate Programme through Distance Mode.

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Director
Directorate of Open and Distance Learning
University of Kalyani

COREL COURSE V

ROMANTIC PERIOD IN ENGLISH LITERATURE

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Core Course V

Romantic Period in English Literature

Block I

UNIT 1

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Unit 1 (a): Socio-Political, Theoretical Background of British Romanticism

The rise and development of the Romanticism in British literature has numerous interesting features. It is difficult to draw a dividing line and to attribute a final date as a beginning of a historical phenomenon like British Romanticism. The seed of romantic revival in British literature was nascent in the development of eighteenth century philosophical development of empiricism and its tremendous insistence on reason and logic. The eighteenth century British literature focused on reason and logic. The authors' unflinching loyalty to the tenets of classicism makes literature as an expression of well structured form and content where the unsaid stories of populace remain unrecorded. The spontaneous subjective expression of the poet does not get its proper expression in the eighteenth century literature of Britain. In the writings of Robert Burns, Chatterton, and William Blake the spark of romanticism has already caught the British imagination. Its culminating point is marked in the year 1798 where William Wordsworth published his famous "Preface" to *Lyrical Ballads*. The historians believed that the publication of *Lyrical Ballads* actually initiated the Romantic Movement in British literature. The involvement of Britain in several wars during this period and the worst living condition of the workers during the latter part of the romantic age had caused the socio-political situation of England not a stable one. Yet this age has witnessed an unprecedented development in the literary arena. As major characteristics of the Romantic Movement in British literature the romantic authors focus on subjectivity spontaneity and an inherent tendency to embrace the iconoclastic zeal in order to redefine and restructure as a rebel the moribund customs of the society. The romantic poets have experimented with both the form and content of the literature. As a corollary to that experiment literature focuses on the simplicity and rustic beauty of the reaper girl as it is reflected in "The Solitary Reaper" by Wordsworth. It is the celebration of individual free will and liberty that get expressed in British romantic literature. The mystery, enigma, and unexplored spheres of gothic tradition also influenced Romantic minds. As a result of that interest Gothicism also become a major aspect of British romantic literature. The romantic poet appears as a dynamic character sometimes he is a nightingale who sits in the darkness and illumines the solitude by his song; and often he is the prophet who "scatters his thoughts" from an extinguished hearth to usher in a rejuvenation in order to recreate the society.

UNIT 1 (b): (i): LIFE AND WORKS OF WILLIAM BLAKE

William Blake was born in London on November 28, 1757, to James, a hosier, and Catherine Blake. Two of his six siblings died in infancy. From early childhood, Blake spoke of having visions—at four he saw God "put his head to the window"; around age nine, while walking through the countryside, he saw a tree filled with angels, although his parents tried to discourage him from "lying," they did observe that he was different from his peers and did not force him to attend conventional school. He learned to read and write at home. At age ten, Blake expressed a wish to become a painter, so his parents sent him to drawing school. Two years later, Blake began writing poetry. When he turned fourteen, he apprenticed with an engraver because art school proved too costly. One of Blake's assignments as apprentice was to sketch the tombs at Westminster Abbey, exposing him to a variety of Gothic styles from which he would draw inspiration throughout his career. After his seven-year term ended, he studied briefly at the Royal Academy.

In 1782, he married an illiterate woman named Catherine Boucher. Blake taught her to read and to write, and also instructed her in draftsmanship. Later, she helped him print the illuminated poetry for which he is remembered today; the couple had no children. In 1784 he set up a print shop with a friend and former fellow apprentice, James Parker, but this venture failed after several years. For the remainder of his life, Blake made a meager living as an engraver and illustrator for books and magazines. In addition to his wife, Blake also began training his younger brother Robert in drawing, painting, and engraving. Robert fell ill during the winter of

1787 and succumbed, probably to consumption. As Robert died, Blake saw his brother's spirit rise up through the ceiling, "clapping its hands for joy." He believed that Robert's spirit continued to visit him and later claimed that in a dream Robert taught him the printing method that he used in *Songs of Innocence* and other "illuminated" works.

Blake's first printed work, *Poetical Sketches* (1783), is a collection of apprentice verse, mostly imitating classical models. The poems protest against war, tyranny, and King George III's treatment of the American colonies. He published his most popular collection, *Songs of Innocence*, in 1789 and followed it, in 1794, with *Songs of Experience*. Some readers interpret *Songs of Innocence* in a straightforward fashion, considering it primarily a children's book, but others have found hints at parody or critique in its seemingly naive and simple lyrics. Both books of *Songs* were printed in an illustrated format reminiscent of illuminated manuscripts. The text and illustrations were printed from copper plates, and each picture was finished by hand in watercolors.

Blake was a nonconformist who associated with some of the leading radical thinkers of his day, such as Thomas Paine and Mary Wollstonecraft. In defiance of 18th-century neoclassical conventions, he privileged imagination over reason in the creation of both his poetry and images, asserting that ideal forms should be constructed not from observations of nature but from inner visions. He declared in one poem, "I must create a system or be enslaved by another man's." Works such as "The French Revolution" (1791), "America, a Prophecy" (1793), "Visions of the Daughters of Albion" (1793), and "Europe, a Prophecy" (1794) express his opposition to the English monarchy, and to 18th-century political and social tyranny in general. Theological tyranny is the subject of *The Book of Urizen*(1794). In the prose work *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*(1790-93), he satirized oppressive authority in church and state, as well as the works of Emanuel Swedenborg, a Swedish philosopher whose ideas once attracted his interest.

In 1800 Blake moved to the seacoast town of Felpham, where he lived and worked until 1803 under the patronage of William Hayley. He taught himself Greek, Latin, Hebrew, and Italian, so that he could read classical works in their original language. In Felpham he experienced profound spiritual insights that prepared him for his mature work, the great visionary epics written and etched between about 1804 and 1820. *Milton* (1804-08), *Vala, or The Four Zoas* (1797; rewritten after 1800), and *Jerusalem* (1804-20) have neither traditional plot, characters, rhyme, nor meter. They envision a new and higher kind of innocence, the human spirit triumphant over reason.

Blake believed that his poetry could be read and understood by common people, but he was determined

not to sacrifice his vision in order to become popular. In 1808 he exhibited some of his watercolors at the Royal Academy, and in May of 1809 he exhibited his works at his brother James's house. Some of those who saw the exhibit praised Blake's artistry, but others thought the paintings "hideous" and more than a few called him insane. Blake's poetry was not well known by the general public, but he was mentioned in *A Biographical Dictionary of the Living Authors of Great Britain and Ireland*, published in 1816. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, who had been lent a copy of *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*, considered Blake a "man of Genius," and Wordsworth made his own copies of several songs. Charles Lamb sent a copy of "The Chimney Sweeper" from *Songs of Innocence* to James Montgomery for his *Chimney-Sweeper's Friend, and Climbing Boys' Album* (1824), and Robert Southey (who, like Wordsworth, considered Blake insane) attended Blake's exhibition and included the "Mad Song" from *Poetical Sketches* in his miscellany, *The Doctor*(1834-1837).

Blake's final years, spent in great poverty, were cheered by the admiring friendship of a group of younger artists who called themselves "the Ancients." In 1818 he met John Linnell, a young artist who helped him financially and also helped to create new interest in his work. It was Linnell who, in 1825, commissioned him to design illustrations for Dante's *Divine Comedy*, the cycle of drawings that Blake worked on until his death in 1827.

UNIT 1 (b): Scheme of *Innocence and Experience*

Since most of the poems included in the syllabus are from Blake's *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience* it is necessary here to discuss Blake's design to project the contrasting states of human life through these two books. The poems in the former book are complementary with certain poems in the latter book. Poems of same title recur in both books, clearly showing how Blake wants to underscore the change of feeling or emotion under different stages of human experience. Blake's anti-industrial bent of mind becomes obvious in some of them. The locale for the poems is *Songs of Innocence* is always the bank of a river, or lush green meadow and the characters are innocent. The characters still retain faith in religion and morality and are filled with tender human emotions. In drawing such a pastoral world Blake conjures pictures painted in Theocritus or Virgil. *Innocence* is a collection of dreamy, nostalgic past of idyllic and sylvan order.

When a nation travels towards modernity, from agrarian to industrial structure, the values of individuals and the society as a whole are bound to change. *Songs of Experience* deals with these changes. While innocence hinders one from seeing the truth in all its complexity, experience reveals the process of repression. Although Blake condemns the bleakness of the stage of experience and the several vices attendant upon it, he cannot help admitting that such a stage is inevitable in human life. Experience completes the journey from ignorance to knowledge, necessary to counter and combat the ills of society.

In reading the *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience* the decorations and illustrations used at the border become very important. The trees and boughs that accompany the *Songs of Innocence* are leafy and thriving, entwined in natural grace. But they are dry and dying in *Experience*, suggesting decay and desiccated order of life and civilization.

Songs of Innocence and *Songs of Experience* embody two contrasting states of mind, two contradictory states of human life and civilization. In the scheme of *Innocence* and *Experience* Blake expresses the values of pre industrial and post industrial society. In spite of his condemnation Blake does not totally reject the stage of experience. It is inevitable and necessary.

UNIT 2 (a): A STUDY OF THE SELECT POEMS OF WILLIAM BLAKE

'The Little Black Boy'

Text of the Poem:

My mother bore me in the southern wild,
And I am black, but O! my soul is white;
White as an angel is the English child: But I
am black as if bereav'd of light.

My mother taught me underneath a tree And
sitting down before the heat of day, She
took me on her lap and kissed me, And
pointing to the east began to say.

Look on the rising sun: there God does live And
gives his light, and gives his heat away.
And flowers and trees and beasts and men receive
Comfort in morning joy in the noonday.

And we are put on earth a little space, That
we may learn to bear the beams of love, And these
black bodies and this sun-burnt face
Is but a cloud, and like a shady grove.

For when our souls have learn'd the heat to bear The
cloud will vanish we shall hear his voice. Saying:
come out from the grove my love & care, And round
my golden tent like lambs rejoice.

Thus did my mother say and kissed me, And
thus I say to little English boy.
When I from black and he from white cloud free, And
round the tent of God like lambs we joy:

Ill shade him from the heat till he can bear, To
lean in joy upon our fathers knee.
And then I'll stand and stroke his silver hair, And
be like him and he will then love me.

Analysis:

'The Little Black Boy'' is a poem by William Blake included in *Songs of Innocence* in 1789. It was published during a time when slavery was still legal and the campaign for the abolition of slavery was still young.The poem has been considered "One of the most uncomfortable of Blake lyrics" which "deals with issues of racism and slavery. The black race suffers in order to teach the white world wisdom, but the black child deplores his own color since it seems to prevent the world realizing his purity of soul." The black child like the Chimney Sweeper teaches that life is something to escape from; it is then a tragic vision but the poem remains in Innocence because there is belief in the happiness and redemption available once the body is cast off. The poem is a poem of transition, a poem of doubt in the heart of the poet as he explores prejudices and racial issues. It is a search poem, which leads us very close to the issues raised in Experience.

My mother bore me in the southern wild,
And I am black, but O! my soul is white;
White as an angel is the English child: But I
am black as if bereav'd of light.

The poem, *The Little Black Boy* by William Blake, begins with narration made by the little black boy himself. The boy tells the readers that his mother gave birth to him in the southern forest of Africa. So, he is black but his only skin of the body is black while his soul is white. His spirit (soul) is as white as an

angel in the white English child. However, he is black-skinned as if it is bereft of light. The sense is that bereft of hope the black physical body seems condemned to suffer.

My mother taught me underneath a tree
And sitting down before the heat of day,
She took me on her lap and kissed me, And
pointing to the east began to say.

The second stanza of the poem continues the narration of the black boy. In these four lines, the little black boy tells the readers that his mother brought him up and taught him not in the shade of a sheltering home or hut but in the shade of a tree in the face of the heat of the sun. Seating herself down facing the heat of day, the mother made her black son sit on her lap and kissed him lovingly. Then pointing with her finger to the direction of the east, the mother started speaking to the black in the following manner.

Look on the rising sun: there God does live And
gives his light, and gives his heat away.
And flowers and trees and beasts and men receive
Comfort in morning joy in the noonday.

The third stanza of four lines contains the statement of the black mother to her black son. The mother directs the attention of her black boy to look at the rising sun and tells him that God does live there. From there the sun provides light and heat to the creatures of the world. All flowers, trees, beasts and human beings receive from the sun comfort in the morning and happiness at noon. 'The Sun, Sol, is the mirror image of Los, Blake's creative faculty who leads man back to the divine.'

And we are put on earth a little space, That
we may learn to bear the beams of love, And these
black bodies and this sun-burnt face
Is but a cloud, and like a shady grove.

The mother continues speaking to her little black boy in these four lines of the fourth stanza wherein she tells her son and readers overhear her that human beings are provided a little space in order to learn to bar the big rays of love. They become worthy of God's love and illumination. She says that the black bodies and sun-tanned faces are like cloud and like shady groves for them.

For when our souls have learn'd the heat to bear The
cloud will vanish we shall hear his voice. Saying:
come out from the grove my love & care,
And round my golden tent like lambs rejoice.

In the next four lines of the fifth stanza, the mother continues speaking to her little black boy. She tells the black boy that when the bodies of the blacks, like the mother and the son, become accustomed to tolerate the heat of the sun, their souls will be free of the cloud, and they will be able to hear divine voice asking them to come out of the grove to the divine care and love, to move about happily round the golden tent (Tabemacles of the Lord) like happy lambs. Here in this stanza, the body is seen as a garment of the soul to be worn on earth. Once the child is spiritually prepared to face the brilliance of heaven this material protection is no longer necessary.

Thus did my mother say and kissed me, And
thus I say to little English boy.
When I from black and he from white cloud free, And
round the tent of God like lambs we joy:

The next four lines of *The Little Black Boy* by William Blake form the sixth stanza. In these lines, the little black boy resumes speaking and tells the readers that his mother after speaking to him in the earlier stanzas kissed him. And now the little black boy starts saying to little English (white) boy in the following way. He says that when the black boy and the white boy become free from black skin and

white skin, they, like lambs (flocks), will play round the tent of God merrily. “The black boy renders selfless services to the white child for the he has grown through suffering. The white child is frailer spiritually for he has been protected from suffering and experience.”

I’ll shade him from the heat till he can bear, To
lean in joy upon our fathers knee.
And then I’ll stand and stroke his silver hair, And
be like him and he will then love me.

In the last four lines of the poem, the narrator is the little black boy himself. The black boy feels that although his body is black and inferior, his soul, his spiritual self is as fine as white child’s. The poet says that the black boy will shade the white boy from the beams of God’s love. And that acts as a body or garment to the white child’s soul or body. As the black boy has endured greater suffering on earth, he will help the white boy learn to bear the beams of God’s love. After the white boy learns to bear the beams of love, then touching the white boy will become possible. Under the influence of God’s love, they will be perhaps equal and similar. Then in this position of apparent equality, the white boy will instantly love the black boy.

The Garden of Love

Text of the Poem:

I went to the Garden of Love, And
saw what I never had seen:
A Chapel was built in the midst,
Where I used to play on the green.

And the gates of this Chapel were shut,
And Thou shalt not. writ over the door; So
I turn'd to the Garden of Love,
That so many sweet flowers bore.

And I saw it was filled with graves, And
tomb-stones where flowers should be:
And Priests in black gowns, were walking their rounds, And
binding with briars, my joys & desires.

Analysis:

The poem, *The Garden of Love* by William Blake, is the antithesis to The Echoing Green of Innocence, as it uses the same setting and rhythm to stress the ugly contrast. Blake firmly believed that love cannot be sanctified by religion. The negative commandments of the Old Testament, ‘Thou Shall Not’ could not enshrine the most positive creative force on earth. For Blake, sexuality and instinct is holy, the world of institutionalized religion turns this instinct into imprisonment and engenders hypocrisy. Those rules, which forbid the celebration of the body, kill life itself. Here, in this poem, the poet rebels against the idea of original sin. Man was expelled for consuming the fruit of knowledge and, cast out of Eden, was shamed by sexuality. In the poem, the poet subverts orthodoxy and the patriarchal authority figures of the nobody and God and his Priests. The Dissenting tradition to which Blake’s family belonged believed in “inner light” and “the kingdom within”. Moral laws without any rationale are not to be obeyed. In ‘The Garden Love’, interfering priesthood and the powers of prohibition blight innocent affections.

The Church of Experience like the King and State rely on such powers to ensure obedience. A contemporary reference linked with the poem is that of the Marriage Act of 1753, passed by Lord Hardwicke. These Acts stipulated that all marriages had to be solemnized according to the rules of the Church of England in the Parish Church of one of the parties in the presence of a clergyman and two witnesses.

With the loss of rural society and extended families in villages this legislation was perhaps necessary, especially in urban centers. However, for Blake this was equal to curbing individual freedom. For him, each prohibition created repression, therefore in *The Garden of Love*, we see a bleak, unproductive landscape of unfulfilled yearning where sterile resentment, fear, guilt and joylessness replace the open freedom of innocence.

The twelve lines of the William Blake's poem *The Garden of Love* belong to the state of Experience that characterizes the present day world. Experience stands in total contrast to the state of Innocence.

The poet revisited the Garden of Love, open green piece of land where he used to play with boys and girls together. He was dismayed to see there what he had never seen earlier. He found that in the green open place, a Chapel (church) had been erected in the middle of the place were boys and girls together used to play. Institutionalized religion thus destroyed the Garden of Love. In the world of Experience, the harmony between man and nature no longer existed. Earlier the Garden of Love seemed to be in state of idyllic beauty, but the present day scenario of the place is one of utter sadness and gloom.

In the second stanza, the poet gives further description of the place of his revisit. The gates of the Chapel were closed. And the closed door had got written on it 'Thou Shalt Not.' So, the visitor (the poet) turned his attention to the place of the Garden of Love where it used to bloom a number of flowers but found them missing. In fact, the very idea of chapel and the negative "Thou Shalt Not" suggests the concept of private property, which is the source of all inequality and helplessness in society. The gate is closed to the passerby and on it is inscribed the warning 'Thou Shalt Not'. The warning is emblematic of the classic dictum of the Old Testament God- Jehovah who is seen as a prohibitive and a vindictive tyrant.

The lines of the third stanza depict he adverse changes that have enveloped the Garden of Love during the present time. The Garden portrays an aura of total unease and misery. At present, the garden seems to be filled with graves and tombstones which are images of death, and so horrendous and undesirable. Even the priests wrapped in black gowns forebode an ill-omen and an act of mourning and despair. The priests depict a total official manner devoid of any compassion or even forgiveness. This seems to be the basic factor that binds the narrator's desires and joy.

It could be that earlier, the Garden presented the state of innocence where an environment of gaiety and mirth prevailed and everybody could enter the place without any discrimination whatsoever. But now it seems that the Garden has been lent or sold out to a private individual who exerts the sole authority and hence, the others are devoid of any joyous moment. The present day scene looks quite dismal where even such a simple resort as the garden is unable to escape the evils of industrialization and subsequent phenomenon of private ownership.

SYMBOLISM IN THE POETRY OF WILLIAM BLAKE

Blake is a highly symbolic poet and his poetry is rich in symbols and allusions. Almost each and every other word in his poems is symbolic. A symbol is an object which stands for something else as dove symbolizes peace. Similarly, Blake's tiger symbolizes creative energy; Shelley's wind symbolizes inspiration; Ted Hughes's Hawk symbolizes terrible destructiveness at the heart of nature. Blake's symbols usually have a wide range of meaning and more obvious. Few critics would now wish to call Blake a symbolist poet, since his handling of symbols is markedly different from that of the French symbolistes', but the world inhabited by his mythical figures is defined through quasi-allegorical images of complex significance, and such images are no less important in his lyrical poetry. The use of symbols is one of the most striking features of Blake's poetry.

There is hardly any poem in the "Songs of Innocence and of Experience" which does not possess a symbolic or allegorical meaning, besides its apparent or surface meaning. If these poems are written in the simplest possible language, that fact does not deprive them of a depth of meaning. The language of these poems is like that of the Bible—at once simple and profound as the following lines read:

"O Rose, thou art sick!"

When Blake talks of the sick rose, he is really telling us how mysterious evil attacks the soul. Flower-symbolism is of particular importance in Songs of Innocence and Experience, being connected with the Fall by the motif of the garden; and its traditional links with sexuality inform the text of 'The Blossom' and the design for 'Infant Joy', which are taken up in Experience by the plate for 'The Sick Rose'. 'Ah! Sun-Flower' is a more symbolic text, and has evoked a greater variety of responses. Declaring this to be one of 'Blake's supreme poems', we can interpret the flower as a man who 'is bound to the flesh' but 'yearns after the liberty of Eternity". Harper claims that it describes the aspiration of all 'natural things' to 'the sun's eternality'. Identifying the speaker as 'Blake himself. Blake travels from flower-symbolism to animal symbols as in the 'Tyger':

"Did he smile his work to see

Did he who made the Lamb make thee!"

If the lamb symbolizes innocence and gentleness, the tiger is to Blake a symbol of the violent and terrifying forces within the individual man. The lamb, innocent and pretty, seems the work of a kindly Creator. The splendid but terrifying tiger makes us realize that God's purposes are not so easily understood, and that is why the question arises "Did he who made the Lamb make thee?" At the same time, the tiger is symbolic of the Creator's masterly skill which enabled Him to frame the "fearful symmetry" of the tiger. But the lion described in the poem Night (in the "Songs of Innocence") offers an interesting contrary to the tiger of the "Songs of Experience". Both the beasts seem dreadful, but the lion, like the beast of the fairy tale, can be magically transformed into a good and gentle creature: the tiger cannot. In the world of Experience the violent and destructive elements in Creation must be faced and accepted, and even admired. The tiger is also symbolic of the Energy and the Imagination of man, as opposed to the Reason. Blake was a great believer in natural impulses and hated all restraints. Consequently he condemns all those who exercise restraints upon others. He states in Holy Thursday II:

"And their ways are fill'd with thorns It
is eternal winter there"
The eternal winter are symbolic of total destruction of the country and the perpetual devastation and 'Grey-headed beadles' in 'Holy Thursday I' are symbolic of authority and it is they exploit children for their own material interests. In the poem London, oppression and tyranny are symbolised by the king (who is responsible for the soldier's blood being shed), social institutions like (loveless) marriage, and '"he mind-forged manacles". Even further, personal and social relationships have been symbolised as:

"In the morning glad I see

My foe outstretched beneath the tree"

A Poison Tree is another allegory. The tree here represents repressed wrath; the water represents fear; the apple is symbolic of the fruit of the deceit which results from repression. This deceit gives rise to the speaker's action in laying a death-trap for his enemy. The deeper meaning of the poem is that aggressive feelings, if suppressed, almost certainly destroy personal relationships. On the surface, however, the poem is a simple, ordinary story. Thus symbolism is crucial to understanding Blake as poet of earlier romanticism. What can be more symbolic than the following lines from, 'Auguries of Innocence'?

"To see a world in a grain of sand, And
a heaven in a wild flower,
Hold infinity in the palm of your hand, And
eternity in an hour"
Thus, Blake's poetry is charged with symbols. He has depicted nature and human nature; animals and plants as simple but profound symbols of powerful forces; "contrary states of the human soul" – for example, good and evil, or innocence and experience throughout his poetry. What is different in Blake is that he is not modeling after any symbols but his own. The symbols always have an inner relatedness that leads us from the outer world to the inner man. The symbols live in the ordered existence of his vision; the vision itself is entirely personal, in theme and in the logic that sustains it. Blake is difficult not because

he invented symbols of his own; he created his symbols to show that the existence of any natural object and the value man's mind places on it were one and the same. He was fighting the acceptance of reality in the light of science as much as he was fighting the suppression of human nature by ethical dogmas. He fought on two fronts, and shifted his arms from one to the other without letting us know—more exactly, he did not let himself know. He created for himself a personality, in life and in art, that was the image of the thing he sought.

In short, it is established that William Blake is a highly symbolic and even allegorical poet. His use of symbolism is unique and cinematic. It paints a lively and pulsating picture of dynamic life before us. Especially, the symbolic use of

'Sun-flower' gets so much stamped on the mind of the reader that it is difficult to forget it. He mentions a tiger it becomes a symbol of God's power in creation, his lamb turns out to be a symbol of suffering innocence and Jesus Christ and his tree is symbolic of anger and desire to

triumph over enemies; the dark side of human nature. Symbolism is the main trait of William Blake as a dramatist as a poet and this has been well-crystallized in his legendary work, 'The Songs of Innocence and Experience'.

BLAKE AND SOCIAL ILLS

Unlike prose or drama, English poetry had maintained a certain sort of distanced elitism from social concerns until William Blake started associating the genre with social reformation. As a radicalist, Blake was to inspire the second generation Romantic poets like Shelley and Keats. From the second half of the 18^{th} century European nations were becoming highly industrialized supported by colonial enterprises. England of all nations held in a domineering position in industrialization and colonization. However both had given rise to severe social ills within the nation. High industrialization resulting in the growth of capitalism contributed to the unequal growth of wealth, child labor and racial discrimination. His poems from *Songs of Experience* contain severe criticism aimed at these social ills. That Blake is a poet of anti-industrial values is clearly signaled in poems like 'The Chimney Sweepers'. It shows how the factory system ij England had repressed the physical and emotional growth of children by employing them as chimney sweepers. In the stage of innocence society kept its eyes fully shut to these evils, thereby encouraging and justifying them.

In another poem 'The Little Black Boy' the poet speaks of racial binary which is largely an attribute of colonialism. In both these poems social ills like child labour, racial discrimination and slave trade are endorsed by religion. Both Tom Dacre and the little black boy are finally made blind to the process of exploitation. Rather they give their consent to the process of exploitation for some unspecified future hope which is illusory. Blake's criticism of religion is more direct in 'The Garden of Love'. There black robed priests have turned the garden of flowers into a space of death.

Changes in social conditions have brought about changes in the nature of man as found in the poem 'A Poison Tree'. Man in the stage of innocence lived in pristine happiness amidst society and nature. The sense of harmony and concern for others are no more prevailing in the stage of experience.

SUGGESTED READING

An Introduction to the Study of Blake: Max Plowman Frank Cass and Co Ltd., 1967.

William Blake: Martin K Nurmi, Hutchinson University Library, 1978.

Blake's Apocalypse: A Study in His Poetic Argument: Harold Bloom. Itha Co., 1970.

Romantic Imagination: Mauricd Bowra. Oxford, 1953.

William Blake, Nicholas Marsh. Palgrave, 1953.

ASSIGNMENT

1. How do Blake's poems included in your syllabus incorporate revolutionary zeal.
2. Blake is the first radical poet to have so much zeal for society,-Comment.
3. Comment on the symbolism of Blake,

Unit 3:

Poetry of William Wordsworth

Content Structure

Unit 3 (a): Introduction to the Poetry of William Wordsworth

Unit 3 (b): Study of the Select Poems of William Wordsworth:

'London 1802'
'The World is Too Much With Us'

UNIT 3 (a): INTRODUCTION TO THE POETRY OF WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

The 2nd child of John Wordsworth and Ann Cookson, William Wordsworth was born on 7 April 1770 at Cockermouth, Cumberland, which lies within the picturesque Lake District situated in north-western England. When William Wordsworth was only 8 years old, he lost his mother. Following this loss, the poet was sent to to Hawkshead Grammar School in Lancashire by his father. During the same time, William's sister Dorothy (with whom the poet was to have an intimate relation lifelong) was sent to live with relatives, due to which brother and sister could not meet each other for nine long years. In 1787, Wordswoth began attending St John's College Cambridge, from where he received his B.A. Degree in 1791. During his stay at the aforementioned college, Wordsworth began his writing career by publishing small pieces of poetry in *The European Magazine*. During the holidays Wordsworth went on walking tours across the Lake District, the Swiss Alps and many other parts of Europe renowned for their scenic beauty.

In November 1791, Wordsworth visited Revolutionary France and became enchanted with the Republican movement. He fell in love with a French woman, Annette Vallon, who in 1792 gave birth to their daughter Caroline. Financial problems and Britain's tense relations with France forced him to return to England alone in 1792. But during the Reign of Terror that followed, Wordsworth was thoroughly disenchanted and disillusioned with the turn that the French Revolution had taken. Besides, the outbreak of armed hostilities between Britain and France prevented him from seeing Annette and his daughter for some years. In 1802, when he visited France once again following the Treaty of Amiens, his marriage to Mary Hutchinson was imminent. He met his daughter with Annette Villon, Caroline and later (during Caroline's marriage in 1816) he settled £30 a year.

Though his friendship with Coleridge is well-documented, the two poets fell out in 1810, probably over the issue of Coleridge's opium addiction. But in the late 1820s, they reconciled.

Wordsworth married Mary Hutchinson in 1802 and the couple had five children. Wordsworth was a staunch believer in the principles of the Church of England. In 1838, Wordsworth received an honorary doctorate in Civil Law from the University of Durham and the following year he was awarded the same honorary degree by the University of Oxford, when John Keble praised him as the "poet of humanity". Following the death of Robert Southey in 1843, Wordsworth was made Poet Laureate. William Wordsworth died at home at Rydal Mount from an aggravated case of pleurisy on 23 April 1850 and was buried at St. Oswald's Church, Grasmere.

Works

Wordsworth's first collection of poems *An Evening Walk* was published in 1793. It was around the same time that he composed *Descriptive Sketches*. Receiving 900 pounds from Raisley Calvert as legacy helped immensely in his pursuit to become a poet. In the same year he met and befriended Samuel Taylor Coleridge.

William and Dorothy Wordsworth were staying at Alfoxton House, Somerset, during this time while Coleridge was staying at Nether Stowey a few miles away. Physical as well as artistic proximity between the two poets led to a collaborative project they titled *Lyrical Ballads* (1798). This work is generally hailed as the manifesto of the British Romantic Movement. A second edition with an elaborate Preface was published in 1800.

Wordsworth composed only 1 play, titled *The Borderers*, which was composed during the period 1795-1797. However, it failed to impress the audiences. In 1798, William Wordsworth travelled to Germany with his sister Dorothy and S.T. Coleridge. However, he became homesick and returned soon to stay with Dorothy at Goslar. During 1798-99, he composed 'The Lucy Poems', which would later be published in his collection *The Prelude*. Upon Coleridge's return he proposed that the Wordsworths accompany him for a tour across the Lake District. The Wordsworth siblings accepted the proposal and set up home at Grasmere, where another contemporary renowned poet- Robert Southey, was also staying. The three poets-Robert Southey, William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, came to be known as 'The Lake Poets'. Many poems written by Wordsworth during this period deal with themes such as the trauma of death and separation, with the enduring pain it leaves behind.

For a long time Wordsworth had envisioned composing a tripartite poem with autobiographical themes. In 1798-99, he started composing it, initially referring to it as the 'poem to Coleridge'. According to his original plan, it would serve as the appendix to his larger work titled *The Recluse*. He completed the first part of it by 1805, referring to it as the first version of *The Prelude*. But he refused to publish it until the entire work could be completed. The philosophical basis of Wordsworth's longer work *The Prelude* as also his shorter poems such as 'Lines Written a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey' was German Romanticism brought to him by Samuel Taylor Coleridge. But recent research shows that Wordsworth was also considerably influenced by world-traveller John-Walking Stewart's materialist treatise *The Apocalypse of Nature*. In 1807, Wordsworth's *Poems in Two Volumes* was published, which contained his famous work 'Ode: Intimations of Immorality from Recollections of Early Childhood'.

In 1814, Wordsworth published *The Excursion* as the second part of his work *The Recluse*. In a 'Prospectus' attached to this work, Wordsworth elaborated the structure and intention of the whole work, focusing on the intimate relation between nature and the human mind. *Laodamia*-Wordsworth's narrative poem based on the Trojan War was published in the year 1815. Composed in 1807-08, Wordsworth's *The White Doe of Rylstone; or the Fate of the Nortons* was a long narrative poem published in 1815. It was set during the Rising of the North in 1569. *The Prelude* was published posthumously in 1850.

William Wordsworth's Poetics

The literary scenario in the second half of the eighteenth century overturns most of the neoclassic poetics held sacrosanct for much of its first half. William Wordsworth, beginning his poetic career in the last decade of the eighteenth century, imbibed these attitudes. More importantly, the French revolution which he witnessed as a young man of 20 sparked his literary imagination with the idea of liberation-from unjust bondage, worn-out conventions and literary creed established by the likes of Dryden and Pope a century ago.

As his *The Prelude* reveals, Wordsworth forsook the "crowded solitude" of London society, resolving to go to France. There, he saw "the Revolutionary Power / Toss like a ship at anchor, rocked by storms," and witnessed how the "silent zephyrs sported with the dust / Of the Bastille". He describes the time as "an hour / Of universal ferment," and himself as a "patriot" whose heart was given over to the French people. Interestingly his upbringing had taught him to disdain feudal "wealth and titles" in favor of republican ideals such as "talents, worth, and prosperous industry". Initially Wordsworth held the Revolution as an expression of "nature's certain course". This devotion to nature he maintained till the end of his days. In his autobiographical masterpiece he equates political events with nature, which represents a fundamental unity. While the feudal society rested, according to Wordsworth, on the power of royal courts and "voluptuous life," dissociated from "the natural inlets of just sentiment, / From lowly sympathy and chastening truth", it was his desire to see:

"…the earth
Unthwarted in her wish to recompense
The meek, the lowly, the patient child of toil, . . .
And finally, as sum and crown of all,
Should see the people having a strong hand
In framing their own laws; whence better days
To all mankind."

Wordsworth even names the violent outbursts against prevailing power as "Nature's rebellion against monstrous law", citing reasons that "nothing hath a natural right to last / But equity and reason". But witnessing the turn of events following the revolution in France Wordsworth wrote: "oppressors in their turn," changing "a war of self-defence / For one of conquest, losing sight of all / Which they had struggled for".

Despairing of moral questions, and losing his faith in the authority of abstract reason alone, he describes himself as turning to the realm of "abstract science" where reason might operate undisturbed by the world of space and time, matter, and "human will and power" (XI, 328–332). Guided by nature, he returns to his "true self," his fundamental identity as a poet, open "To those sweet counsels between head and heart / Whence grew that genuine knowledge, fraught with peace."

The most elemental factor in Wordsworth's return to nature was imagination. Earlier in the *Prelude,* he had referred to imagination as an "awful Power" that reveals with a flash the "invisible world". In the conclusion of the poem, he says that imagination is "but another name for absolute power / And clearest insight, amplitude of mind, / And Reason in her most exalted mood". This faculty has been his "feeding source," and it is a power which enables one to engage in "spiritual Love," whereby one can transcend the dictates of custom, the pressures of conventional opinion, and the narrowness of concerns that are confined to the present. Imagination, in its capacity as "right reason," orients our sensibility to the things that are truly universal and permanent; by implication, a "wrong" use of reason, abstracted entirely from things of the sense, would either impel us to impose false schemes upon the world of sense, or to be at the mercy of the world of sense, taking this alone as reality, and understanding its own function as ordering this reality which is already given, already presented to our senses.

Notwithstanding the fact that Wordsworth's *Preface* is often held up as one of the seminal manifestos of Romanticism, it is clear that the poetic ideal he is espousing here is a classical one: poetry does not so much express private emotions and the particulars of a given situation as the universal truths underlying these. Wordsworth insists that the poet "converses with general nature," and directs his attention to the knowledge and sympathies shared by all human beings. The passions and feelings that are produced in the poet "are the general passions and thoughts and feelings of men". Also classical is Wordsworth's insistence on poetry as a "rational" art and his claim that the poet excites "rational sympathy." Wordsworth's comments on the nature of poetic composition reinforce this view of poetry as a conscious and controlled activity. Wordsworth's view of poetry as a meditated craft is elaborated in Wordsworth's other renowned comment in the *Preface* concerning poetic composition. After repeating his original statement that "poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings," he adds that poetry:

> "takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity: the emotion is contemplated till, by a species of re-action, the tranquillity gradually disappears, and an emotion, kindred to that which was before the subject of contemplation, is gradually produced, and does itself actually exist in the mind. In this mood successful composition generally begins."

So the poetic process begins with emotion that is *remembered* and subjected to thought; in this initial state, the emotion *is* thought. The word "tranquillity" implies a certain distance from, and perhaps a certain contextualization of, the original emotion: the disappearing of this tranquillity is the process whereby the thought reverts to emotion; the original emotion which is represented by the current thought is once again *felt*, is brought to life again as a feeling, extricated from its current context, a context which allowed it to be contemplated dispassionately. To put it another way, we leave behind the current emotion as mediated by thought and retrospection, returning to it in its immediate state. In this sense, poetic composition *begins* in feeling, but this feeling will be subsequently modified again by thought.

While Wordsworth accepts Aristotle's definition of poetry, then, as expressing universal truths, and while he sees poetry as an activity controlled by thought, he enlists these classical views in the service of a more Romantic aesthetic purpose. The poet's essential focus is not on the external world, or supposedly "objective" events and actions, but on the *connection* between the inner world of human nature and the world of external nature. Archetypally Romantic is his view that these two worlds are created by mutual interaction. He also diverges from Aristotle and other classical thinkers in his views of the purpose of poetry. This purpose, he says, is to give "immediate pleasure".

‘London, 1802’

‘London, 1802’ is a poem by the English Romantic poet William Wordsworth, where the poet castigates the English people as stagnant and selfish, and eulogises seventeenth-century poet John Milton. Composed in 1802, ‘London, 1802’ was published for the first time in *Poems, in Two Volumes* (1807).

‘London, 1802’

Text of the Poem:

Milton! thou shouldst be living at this hour:
England hath need of thee: she is a fen
Of stagnant waters: altar, sword, and pen,
Fireside, the heroic wealth of hall and bower,
Have forfeited their ancient English dower
Of inward happiness. We are selfish men;
Oh! raise us up, return to us again;
And give us manners, virtue, freedom, power.
Thy soul was like a Star, and dwelt apart:
Thou hadst a voice whose sound was like the sea:
Pure as the naked heavens, majestic, free,
So didst thou travel on life's common way,
In cheerful godliness; and yet thy heart
The lowliest duties on herself did lay.

The unnamed speaker of the poem begins by apostrophizing Milton, claiming that he should have been alive at the specified hour of composition of this poem. The speaker believes that the moral standards of England have debilitated considerably and only someone as upright as the seventeenth century poet and writer John Milton would have found it possible to pull the country and its people back on the path of greatness. It is to be noted that Wordsworth focuses on recalling the righteousness of Milton as an abstract quality separated from Milton the poet. Wordsworth characterizes the England of his time as being a “fen” or marshland marked by stagnancy in every sphere, forbidding the freedom of thought and expression in theology (symbolized by ‘Altar’), righteous and heroic lifestyle (symbolized by ‘Sword’), scholarship (symbolized by ‘Pen’) and the sphere of home and family (symbolized by the use of ‘Fireside’). This image of the marshland used by Wordsworth also accrues the additional suggestions of lethargy, decay and putrefaction, which might be set right only by the presence of someone possessed with the astuteness of John Milton.

Wordsworth makes the readers visualize an immemorial past when the English nation brimmed with activity, enlivened by the spirit of enquiry and selflessness. The desire to participate in questions of national significance transcending petty, individual concerns of selfishness is considered a laudable quality which Englishmen of the past (none more so than Milton) embodied. Being thus buoyed by a holistic outlook towards life, integrating one and all, Wordsworth considers ancient Englishmen as being blessed with ‘inward happiness’ besides material wealth. To this picture of a pristine past, the present of Milton’s day stands as a stark contrast where selfishness and moral laxity of individuals has culminated in desertion of inward happiness, though material wealth continues to accrue. This breeds an unhealthy atmosphere where corruption starts creeping in. The longer this prevails, the lower does the morale of the populace plummet.

It is from this nadir of national zeal that Wordsworth begins invoking the spirit of Milton in a dramatic gesture. In Wordsworth’s eyes Milton is the only figure capable of hoisting his country back to its now-lost position of prominence and honour. It is interesting to note the qualities which Wordsworth expects Milton to reawaken- “manners, virtue, freedom, power”. Milton was a Puritan at heart and defended his choice through several prose tracts. His poetic career likewise embodies the manifold aspects of classicism, to which he stuck with steadfastness. Coming a few decades after the Elizabethan poets, Milton’s poetry offers an antidote to the overflow of emotions by channelizing them along orderly ways, maintaining decorum as emphasized by the writers of classical antiquity. It is interesting how Wordsworth designates the soul of Milton as a ‘star’-a guiding light in the darkness, made visible by its own charismatic luminousness. Moreover, in the history of

English literature the poetry of John Milton marks the most significant achievement in the seventeenth century. The turn towards Classical impulse that embodies his poetic vocation and technique were to become the guiding lights for the Neoclassic or Augustan period that followed. While critics in the 20th century and later differ from the oversimplistic view that the Metaphysicals merely indulged in tortuous conceits, to Wordsworth writing at the beginning of the 19th century, the true flowering of British poetry came with the efforts of John Milton. Wordsworth claims that Milton was a person who "lived apart"-wilfully detaching himself from the mainstream of 17th century poetry to meditate on the transcendental epics that he would compose only later in his career. Not only did Milton detach himself from the hubbub of life around to concentrate on accomplishing that in which he had firm conviction, his seriousness in pursuit of his dream set him apart from the rest. Even in the early poem *Lycidas* elegizing the death of budding fellow poet Edward King, Milton differentiates between his precocious self and his friends, whom he refers to as 'rural ditties'. In the present poem Wordsworth makes use of synaesthesia, likening the profundity of Milton's vocation to the incomparable depth of the sea. This profundity was heightened all the more due to the purity of Milton's will to create works of art worthy of standing the test of time; coupled with this was the strong desire to voice his views considered revolutionary in his day in a tone that was no short of 'majestic' in its clarity and magnanimity.

Wordsworth's poem is a sonnet. The last six lines of a sonnet are collectively known as the sestet. The first three lines of the sestet of 'London 1802' stress upon the uniqueness of the life and vocation of eighteenth century English poet John Milton. However, the final three lines of the sestet as well as of the poem emphasize that in spite of his uniqueness Milton ultimately had to "travel on life's common way". He journeyed down the common path, but he did so with devout good cheer and with a willingness to accept the "lowliest duties." The poem's final words stress Milton's free acceptance of obligations; unlike contemporary England, which has "forfeited" its heritage, Milton's heart "The lowliest duties on herself did lay". The poem ends with an active verb that also stresses submission and service; it concludes by stressing the paradox of freely chosen obligations. Although most of the poem exalts Milton's loftiness, the final lines point out a humility that seems common in one sense but quite uncommon in another. Milton, in his "cheerful godliness," experienced the kind of "inward happiness" that Wordsworth's contemporaries are now bereft of. But simultaneously his willingness to accept "The lowliest duties" did not come into conflict with 'real happiness'. It also reveals him to have been distinct from the "selfish men" Wordsworth's sonnet indicts. In these ways and others, details from the sestet recall and answer details from the octave, giving the poem the very kind of comprehensive, complex unity that Wordsworth admires in Milton himself.

Historical Context

This sonnet and a few others were composed by William Wordsworth in the aftermath of a journey he made to France in 1802. There he had visited his illegitimate infant daughter and the girl's mother (Annette Vallon), with whom he had had an affair during an earlier stay in that country. At one point of time Wordsworth had been sympathetic to, and inspired by, the aims of the French Revolution of 1789, but by 1802 the democratic fervor that had unleashed that revolt had produced years of turmoil and violence that had resulted in the rise of Napoleon Bonaparte. England had been at war with France in the period preceding Wordsworth's visit, and it was clear that future war was likely. This poem was written during a time of intense domestic and international crisis. France, which had once symbolized for Wordsworth the best hope for freedom, had now become an aggressive dictatorship, with Napoleon bent on foreign conquest. England was an obstacle to his designs, and although (from the perspective of Wordsworth and other progressives) its political system was far from ideal, the English nation was now increasingly associated with liberty in opposition to Napoleonic tyranny. Wordsworth could easily have written a tritely patriotic poem, extolling the glories of Britain. Instead he chose to offer a poem that attempts to summon English allegiance to what he considered the best aspects of the nation's political heritage. In particular, he uses the poem to celebrate one of the greatest republican figures of the English past. Milton had been a vigorous supporter and defender of the English Revolution-a revolt against perceived political tyranny that had resulted in the execution of King Charles I. Milton spent many years in tireless service to the newly established Commonwealth; these are probably the "lowliest duties" Wordsworth mentions near the end of his sonnet. Although eventually the republican cause was defeated when the English chose to restore the monarchy, Milton never renounced his republican views or his disdain for tyranny. Little wonder, then, that Wordsworth found him an inspiring example in 1802. Milton, the one-time revolutionary now becomes, for the increasingly conservative Wordsworth, the symbol of the best English political traditions, including traditions of liberty dating back at least as far as the Magna Carta. Although the poem may

seem to offer highly general praise of Milton, when the poem is read in light of its immediate historical context (as its title invites us to read it), its highly charged political dimensions become obvious.

Biographical Context

Wordsworth, one of the major poets of the Romantic period, is generally believed to have ushered in a new mode of writing in reaction against the predominant neo-classicism of the eighteenth century, with Coleridge. Wordsworth and Coleridge championed poetry that was intended to be simpler, less artificial, more "natural," more colloquial, and more attuned to the expression of common emotions. At first these innovations met with considerable resistance, but eventually Wordsworth became a respected and much-loved writer, and in the final years of his life he was even appointed the official Poet Laureate of England. Although Wordsworth remarked that at one point he had considered the sonnet form "egregiously absurd", he changed his mind when his sister Dorothy re-acquainted him with some of Milton's sonnets by reading them to him in May of 1802. Eventually he composed more than 500 poems using this form. Wordsworth admired the "dignified simplicity" and "majestic harmony" (Moorman 565) of Milton's poems, and the experience of hearing the works inspired his own outburst of sonnet-writing that year. These sonnets of 1802 contain some of the most explicit political commentary Wordsworth had offered in some time, although the poems are not as propagandistic as they could have been. Wordsworth himself later called attention to the "simplicity of style" and "grandeur of moral sentiment" he had sought to achieve in these works (Hall 71), and certainly "London, 1802" seems to exemplify those traits. The sonnets of 1802 are part of the poet's general movement away from the intense lyricism of his early career; they signal instead his growing status as a public poet (he would eventually be named England's official Poet Laureate) as well as his movement towards a more conservative cultural and political stance. Wordsworth married in 1802, and in various other ways he began, more and more, to submit to the various public and social "duties" he mentions in the sonnet praising Milton. In that poem and in others he began to associate the ideal of liberty with the ideal of order, and he began to think, increasingly, that England best represented the union of those ideals, especially in its conflict with a France that seemed, in its allegiance to Napoleon, to have betrayed the promise of the Revolution Wordsworth had once admired.

The World Is Too Much with Us

The world is too much with us; late and soon,
Getting and spending we lay waste our powers;
Little we see in Nature that is ours;
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!
This Sea that bares her bosom to the moon,
The winds that will be howling at all hours,
And are up-gathered now like sleeping flowers,
For this, for everything, we are out of tune;
It moves us not. --Great God! I'd rather be
A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn;
So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,
Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn;
Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea;
Or hear old Triton blow his wreathèd horn.

The poem ‘The World is Too Much With Us’ was composed by William Wordsworth in the year 1802. It was published for the first time in *Poems, in Two Volumes* (1807).

The picture of contemporary society that Wordsworth offers in the poem is a determinist one. The terms "late” and “soon" in juxtaposition occurring in the opening verse show how the past and future together constitute Wordsworth’s vision of human history. The author is aware of the potential inherent in humanity. However, what he sees all around himself is the mentality of "getting and spending", which corrupts by infusing unchecked materialism. Wordsworth coins a vividly apt oxymoron- "sordid boon" in order to point out the ills of consumerism we have "given our hearts" to. Though apparently it reflects the progress of mankind, simultaneously it reveals how narrow-mindedness has taken control over our finer natures. The detrimental effect this attitude has on society as well as the environment, will proceed unchecked and relentless like the "winds that will be howling at all hours", unless people take active steps to counter it.

Wordsworth at this point opines that "the world" in its entirety is so overwhelming that we human beings, with all our limitations, cannot manage to appreciate it. Besides, people are so concerned about money that they use up all their time and energy in futile endeavours. Most people are interested only in the accumulation of material goods, so they see nothing in Nature that they can "own", and have sold their souls.
Unlike the rest of society, Wordsworth does not look upon nature as a commodity. The verse "Little we see in Nature that is ours", shows that coexistence is the relationship envisioned. We should ideally be able to appreciate beautiful natural occurrences like the moon shining over the ocean and the blowing of strong winds, but lived experience shows the poet-narrator that humans are tuned in a key different from Nature.
The expression "little we see in Nature that is ours" exemplifies how man has foregone whatever empathy it may have had for nature. At present human society is obsessed with materialism and other worldly objects. Wordsworth's Romanticism is best observable in his cherishing of nature in these lines. He clearly points out how man, in his increased opposition to nature, is laying the path for his own doom. The vulnerable description of nature foreshadows the inevitable catastrophe. Echoing the conventional feminine personification of Nature, Wordsworth uses the expression "This Sea that bares her bosom to the moon"- portraying the vision of a feminine creature opening herself to the heavens above. The phrase "sleeping flowers" might also describe how nature is being exploited and trampled incessantly.

The verse "I, standing on this pleasant lea, have glimpses that would make me less forlorn", divulges the poet-narrator's perception of himself in society. One clearly understands that he is a visionary, a romantic to the core, in touch with nature unlike his philistine contemporaries. The speaker says that he would rather be a pagan, paying tributes to a heathen deity. The idea is that under such a pre-modern dispensation, when he gazes out on the ocean (as he's doing now), he would feel one with the vastness of nature. If he were a pagan, he would have glimpses of the great green meadows that would make him less dejected. He'd see wild mythological gods like Proteus, who can take many shapes, and Triton, who can soothe the howling sea waves.

Suggested Reading

1. *William Wordsworth in Context*-Andrew Bennett, Cambridge University Press.
2. *William Wordsworth's Poetry: A Reader's Guide*-Daniel Robinson, Continuum International Publishing.
3. *Wordsworth, Commodification and Social Concern*-David Simpson, Cambridge University Press.
4. *The Cambridge Introduction to William Wordsworth*-Emma Mason, Cambridge University Press.
5. *Romantic Ecology: Wordsworth and the Environmental Tradition*-Jonathan Bate, Routledge Publishing House.
6. 'Cognition and Representation in Wordsworth's London'-Mark J. Bruhn.
7. 'Wordsworth's Sentimental Naturalism: Theme and Image in "The World Is Too Much With Us'- Arnold B. Fox and Martin Kallich
8. 'This Pleasant Lea": Waning Vision in "The World Is Too Much with Us'-Edward Proffitt
9. 'A New Reading of "The World Is Too Much with Us"-Karl Kroeber
10. 'Glimpses" in Wordsworth's "The World is Too Much With Us"-Karl Ketterer

Assignment

1. Why does Wordsworth invoke Milton in 'London, 1802'?
2. Wordsworth's romantic apostrophization of Milton- the epitome of classicism, creates a curious convergence of opposites at the heart of the poem.-Discuss.
3. How does Wordsworth's use of imagery enhance the romantic appeal in the poem 'London 1802'.
4. Comment on Wordsworth's indictment of the ethos of materialism prompted among citizens by the Industrial Revolution in 'The World is Too Much With Us'.
5. Write an essay on Wordsworth's Romantic attitude towards Paganism in 'The World is Too Much With Us'

Romantic Period in English Literature

Block I

Unit 4

The Poetry of Percy Bysshe Shelley

Content Structure

Unit 4(a): Introduction to the poetry of P. B. Shelley

Objectives

This unit deals with the poetry of Percy Bysshe Shelley. He was one of the major Romantic Poets of Nineteenth Century Romantic Movement in British Poetry. His revolutionary ideals as a Romntic poet, major concerns in his poetry and his tragically short life – all these are major aspects, rather key ideas to read Shelleyan poetic endeavour. The introduction to Shelley, as a poet and characteristics of his poetry will help the learners to get an insight into the close reading of the two poems, namely 'The Cloud', and 'Indian Serenade', which are in the syllabus.

Unit 4: Introducing Percy Bysshe Shelley and His Poetry

Percy Bysshe Shelley was born on 4 August, 1792 in Horsham, Sussex. His father was a member of Parliament. He attended the University of Oxford, but he continued his study at Oxford University only for a year. His radical thought and contradictory political views since his student life made him an outcast. Shelley married Harriet Westbrook when he was only nineteen years old, but eventually his intense emotional attachment with Mary Godwin made the marriage a futile one. After the suicide of his first wife, he married Mary Godwin, daughter of the radical thinker of the age William Godwin. After marriage both of them travelled extensively. They went to Italy. The natural beauty and peaceful life at Italy and Florence influenced Shelleyan thoughts. Some of his finest poems have taken their origin during this time. On 8 July, 1822, just a month before his thirtieth birthday he was drowned in a sudden storm on the Gulf of Spezia while returning

from Leghorn to Lerici in his boat. In 1811 Shelley published a pamphlet titled "The Necessity of Atheism" which propagates anti-religious thoughts and immediately it caused his expulsion from the Oxford University. The burning rage against society and accepted religious belief which reflected in "The Necessity of Atheism" reverberate in all the works of Shelley in his later life. With time, the spark of revolution which was nascent in his early pamphlet has taken shape of an angry rebel. The traces of such anger and protest in order to rejuvenate the moribund custom of the dead society can be discerned in his 1813 publication titled "*Queen Mab*". It is a visionary, long poem based on revolutionary ideals. Later he reworked it and renamed as *The Daemon of the World. Alastor or The Spirit of Solitude*, *The Revolt of Islam* are long poems on the Shelleyan revolutionary ideals. In 1821 Shelley composed a lyrical drama titled Prometheus Unbound where the character of Prometheus becomes the symbolic representation of revolutionary spirit. The character of Prometheus according to mythology is a rebel, who steals fire from heaven for the benefit of humanity. And as a punishment for his wrong deed he was punished by Zeus. Zeus nailed him to a mountain in the Caucasus and sent an eagle to devour his immortal liver, which constantly replenished itself. Based on this mythology of Prometheus, Shelley composed his lyrical drama *Prometheus Unbound*. It becomes one of his masterpieces. In Shelley's imagination Prometheus becomes the symbol of liberty, freedom and revolutionary zeal. Another remarkable creation of Shelley is *The Masque of Anarchy*. It is a political poem. He penned it in 1819 as a reaction to Peterloo massacre. Shelley's other remarkable poems are "Ode to the West Wind", "To a Skylark", "Ozymandias", "Music, When Soft Voices Die". In 1821 Shelley composed the elegy *Adonais* to bemoan the death of John Keats. In 1822 Shelley was composing the long poem *The Triumph of Life*. His sudden death makes it an unfinished poem.

Shelley's poetry breathes an ethereal aroma of lyricism. The lyrical aspect in Shelley's poetry is merged with idealism. Shelley is well known as a revolutionary rather than an indolent romantic. Shelley believes, a poet is someone who never sits in an ivory tower and thus keeps a detachment from the reality. Shelleyan perception of a poet is someone who writes out of his lived experiences and his pen is the means of expressing personal despondency and dissatisfaction about the injustices of the world. Shelleyan poetry articulates the deepest desire of a rebel who wants to reform the dead customs and defunct society in order to create a society free from corruption and injustices. For articulating his zeal for reforming the world Shelley employs series of images and symbols. He is more a metaphor, symbolism and essence of revolution than a biographical entity. He is quintessentially a visionary poet and a propagandist of Atheism. His revolutionary fervor has been radiated in these well known poems like 'The Cloud', 'Ode to the West Wind', and *The Revolt of Islam*. In his major poems like 'Ode to the West Wind', 'To a Skylark', 'The Cloud' and 'Ozymandias' Shelley employs a major symbol in each of these poems and it is the rich meanings proliferating from his symbols that provide the quintessence of his visions. Each time he attributes on a natural object the symbolic meaning of his prophetic vision. For example, in the "Ode to the West Wind' it is the west wind which is a personified version of the universal spirit. It is deathless and powerful. It simultaneously destroys and preserves. It has a dual role to play. The west wind destroys the old, dead, objects of nature in order to usher in rebirth or rejuvenation. Shelley goes on to such an imaginative vision that in his vision the west wind becomes a symbolic representation of a rebel in human society. Shelley is speaking out eloquently with exquisite flow the principles of destruction, preservation and the revolutionary ideas in 'Ode to the West Wind'. In 'The Cloud' the deathless universal spirit is being represented through the metaphor of cloud, which just like west wind is deathless. It has a changing nature, but it never dies. In 'To a Skylark' the bird Skylark becomes the metaphor of eternity and beauty which can transcend the destructive power of time. The bird's song brings in the troubled earth the nectar of happiness and beauty. Here Shelley reiterates the eternal quest of a man who craves for immortality. In Shelleyan vision, the Skylark becomes the embodiment of eternity and immortality. The bird's song enchants the entire world. Like a poet, the bird spreads its message of eternity through its song, while it remains invisible. The bird's song like a spark of happiness catches every human being's troubled self. Thus, it spreads the nectar of beauty and happiness in the world. Shelley employs various metrical patterns in his poetic endeavour to suit the purpose of his message in his craft.

Unit 4 (b)

Content Structure

'The Cloud'

Text of the poem:

I bring fresh showers for the thirsting flowers,
From the seas and the streams;
I bear light shade for the leaves when laid
In their noonday dreams.
From my wings are shaken the dews that waken
The sweet buds every one,
When rocked to rest on their mother's breast,
As she dances about the sun.
I wield the flail of the lashing hail,
And whiten the green plains under,
And then again I dissolve it in rain,
And laugh as I pass in thunder.

I sift the snow on the mountains below,
And their great pines groan aghast;
And all the night 'tis my pillow white,
While I sleep in the arms of the blast.
Sublime on the towers of my skiey bowers,
Lightning my pilot sits;
In a cavern under is fettered the thunder,
It struggles and howls at fits;
Over earth and ocean, with gentle motion,
This pilot is guiding me,
Lured by the love of the genii that move
In the depths of the purple sea;
Over the rills, and the crags, and the hills,
Over the lakes and the plains,
Wherever he dream, under mountain or stream,
The Spirit he loves remains;
And I all the while bask in Heaven's blue smile,
Whilst he is dissolving in rains.

The sanguine Sunrise, with his meteor eyes,
And his burning plumes outspread,
Leaps on the back of my sailing rack,
When the morning star shines dead;
As on the jag of a mountain crag,
Which an earthquake rocks and swings,
An eagle alit one moment may sit
In the light of its golden wings.
And when Sunset may breathe, from the lit sea beneath,
Its ardours of rest and of love,
And the crimson pall of eve may fall
From the depth of Heaven above,
With wings folded I rest, on mine aëry nest,
As still as a brooding dove.

That orbèd maiden with white fire laden,
Whom mortals call the Moon,
Glides glimmering o'er my fleece-like floor,
By the midnight breezes strewn;
And wherever the beat of her unseen feet,
Which only the angels hear,
May have broken the woof of my tent's thin roof,

The stars peep behind her and peer;
And I laugh to see them whirl and flee,
Like a swarm of golden bees,
When I widen the rent in my wind-built tent,
Till calm the rivers, lakes, and seas,
Like strips of the sky fallen through me on high,
Are each paved with the moon and these.

I bind the Sun's throne with a burning zone,
And the Moon's with a girdle of pearl;
The volcanoes are dim, and the stars reel and swim,
When the whirlwinds my banner unfurl.
From cape to cape, with a bridge-like shape,
Over a torrent sea,
Sunbeam-proof, I hang like a roof,
The mountains its columns be.
The triumphal arch through which I march
With hurricane, fire, and snow,
When the Powers of the air are chained to my chair,
Is the million-coloured bow;
The sphere-fire above its soft colours wove,
While the moist Earth was laughing below.

I am the daughter of Earth and Water,
And the nursling of the Sky;
I pass through the pores of the ocean and shores;
I change, but I cannot die.
For after the rain when with never a stain
The pavilion of Heaven is bare,
And the winds and sunbeams with their convex gleams
Build up the blue dome of air,
I silently laugh at my own cenotaph,
And out of the caverns of rain,
Like a child from the womb, like a ghost from the tomb,
I arise and unbuild it again.

Analysis of the poem: Shelley composed the poem in 1820. The Cloud' is a major 1820 poem written by Percy Bysshe Shelley. 'The Cloud' was written during late 1819 or early 1820, and submitted for publication on 12 July 1820. The work was published in the 1820 collection *Prometheus Unbound: A Lyrical Drama, in Four Acts, With Other Poems* by Charles and James Ollier in London in August 1820. The work was proof-read by John Gisborne. There were multiple drafts of the poem. The poem consists of six stanzas in anapestic or antidactylus meter, a foot with two unaccented syllables followed by an accented syllable. The poem in first stanza describes the activities of the cloud. It brings fresh showers for thirsty flower, It provides shade for the leaves. It showers down upon the buds. The cloud brings hail that covers the green land with a snowy coat. In the second stanza various activities of the cloud is described. It disturbs the snow on the mountain tops thus allowing pine trees to grow. At night, the cloud makes a pillow with snow and sleeps in the arms of the storm. The lightening guides the cloud over water and land, as it is attracted by its love for the genii. The cloud in its journey enjoys the smile of the blue sky. The third stanza catalogues the cloud's relationship with the sun. The cloud says that the red coloured sun, with its large eyes and burning feathers embraces the cloud. With the sunset the cloud rests like a dove, sitting in its nest with a folded wings. In the fourth stanza the cloud describes its relationship with the moon. At night, the moon guides the cloud over the soft, silken floor of cloud. In the next stanza the cloud describes the way in which he restricts the moon and the sun. It restricts the sun's throne with a bright circle. It spreads its canopy over the sea and thus protects it from excessive sun ray. In the concluding stanza the cloud describes its origin. It is the daughter of Earth and water. He passes through the

pores of ocean and sea. It change but it cannot die. It creates rain and falls down on earth in the form of rain drops. And from the sea the deep moistures form the shape of cloud. The unending process of creation and reformation and destruction go on in nature. The cloud is powerful elemental force of nature which remains unaffected in this continuous procedure of creation and destruction. Just like the west wind or the skylark, in this poem "The Cloud" , the cloud is shelleyan metaphor for the rejuvenative spirit of nature. It is the universal spirit which is deathless and powerful. It has a dual role to play. It sustains the earth by creating rain and nourishing plants. It protects the water sources by covering them below its canopy, so that their moisture cannot be evaporated by the sun beam. It creates snowy cover in the mountain region to keep natural balance. Simultaneously, it performs the role of a destroyer. In the lightening it smiles like a almighty emperor. It creates deep chasm in the sky with the fire of lightening. It is the harbinger of storm. It brings fresh rain to rejuvenate the thirty earth with lush vegetation. "I change, but I cannot die" this phrase in the concluding stanza of the poem is a very powerful assertation. It is indicative of the nature of the cloud. It is an elemental force. It may undergo through the evolutionary process of flux and mutability, but it cannot die. It can metamorphose into some other element, but its spirit is immortal.

"I silently
laugh at my own cenotaph,
And out of the caverns of rain,
Like a child from the womb, like a ghost from the tomb,
I arise and unbuild it again."

In this section of the poem, the cloud complacently claims to be amazed seeing his enormous power. Like a monarch who is pleased seeing his vast kingdom, the cloud cherishes his sovereignity among all natural objects. Therefore, his 'laugh' seeing his own cenotaph is a gesture of complacency in his part. The last two lines of this section Shelley employs series of extended similes in order to find suitable imagery to describe the invisible but powerful nature of the cloud. In this section Shelley compares the cloud to an unborn child and a ghost. The unborn child and the ghost images are powerful enough to establish a point of similarity with the cloud. Like a ghost in a tomb, the cloud remains invisible, but his existence is felt through its actions. Like an unborn child also, the cloud remains hidden in the sphere of sky, but its existence cannot be denied. In Shelleyan prophetic vision, the cloud becomes an extended metaphor for a rebel and the mind of the artist. Shelleyan emphasis on the invisible aspect of the cloud's entity and the powerful actions which validate its existence on the universe compel one to think of James Joyce's definite of an artist, who remains invisible like a God in his creation. His existence is being revealed through his created works. Thus, like a mind of the artist, the cloud remains invisible but its existence is revealed through its works. The cloud is also symbolic of a revolutionary. Just like a rebel, it is powerful enough to enchant the entire world by its zeal for rebirth. The rebel remains invisible, but it is his visions and words that spread the fire from one corner of the world to another. Like the cloud, the rebel is performing a dual role. It perishes the defunct custom of the dead society. Simultaneously, it spreads the message of rebirth in the entire world. He needs to destruct the old habits and conventions in order to build a new society based on the principles of equality and justice. The cloud is the embodiment of revolutionary spirit, which can change its form but it never dies. In human world if you look at the revolutionary principle and the history of revolt, you will see over time the leaders die, but their messages and spirits never die. Their revolutionary fervor has mesmerized innumerable disciples of those leaders. And after the death of one leader, it is the disciples who go on with the dream of their chiefs to materialize their visions of establishing a society based on justice and equality. Through the metaphor of the cloud, Shelley goes on proclaiming the necessity of destruction in order to recreate and rebuild something new. The poem ends with typical optimism of a revolutionary mind who tolerates dark winter in an obdurate manner with the promise that someday the spring would come. The deathlessness or immortality of the cloud itself is an affirmation of the Shelleyan hope that if winter comes, the spring cannot be far behind. The poem is composed in anapaestic metre. In the stanzas there are variations of trimetre and tetrameter. The poem with its powerful symbols and imagery, its concern with the motif of rebirth and regeneration, and its wonderful lyricism ultimately becomes one of the masterpieces of Shelleyan genius.

Unit 4 (b)

The Indian Serenade

Text of the Poem:

I arise from dreams of thee
In the first sweet sleep of night,
When the winds are breathing low,
And the stars are shining bright:
I arise from dreams of thee,
And a spirit in my feet
Hath led me—who knows how?
To thy chamber window, Sweet!

The wandering airs they faint
On the dark, the silent stream—
The Champak odours fail
Like sweet thoughts in a dream;
The Nightingale's complaint,
It dies upon her heart;—
As I must on thine,
Oh, belovèd as thou art!

Oh lift me from the grass!
I die! I faint! I fail!
Let thy love in kisses rain
On my lips and eyelids pale.
My cheek is cold and white, alas!
My heart beats loud and fast;—
Oh! press it to thine own again,
Where it will break at last.

Analysis of the poem: Shelley is well known for articulating his revolutionary zeal. In his perception, poetry is not only an expression of an impassionate plea for liberty and reformation. Sometimes, to him, poetry is equally a means of expression the gratitude of having a mortal birth; because this mortal existence provides him opportunity to fall in love with the variegated beauty of the created, natural world. And sometimes, as a mortal, his elation becomes unsurpassable when he feels his passion for the lady love. Indeed, it is the divine magic of love which he savours through his visionary zeal like the nectar of heaven. Shelley's 'The Indian Serenade' is one such example where Shelley articulates his happiness to experience the nectar of love as he is passionately in love with his lady love. This sixteen line poem 'The Indian Serenade' is actually a love lyric. Here the poetic persona passionately outpours his heart and effusively celebrates his feeling of being in love with his lady love. This poem is about celebration of love. Here love is being valorized as a panacea for the ailments of an unjust and dead world. The poem 'The Indian Serenade' has few alternative titles, such as: 'Song Written for an Indian Air' or 'Lines to an Indian Air'. The poem is divided into three stanzas. The first stanza expresses the lover's feeling. He awakes up in the night after having sweet slumber of the lady love. The atmospheric stillness is reflective of the poet's serenity and composure. After waking up from his sleep he is led by some spirit towards the window of a chamber where his beloved rests. The second stanza deals with his observation and description of the place near the beloved's window. The sweet breeze sooths the lover's heart. The fragrance of Champak flower is wafting in the air. The fragrant air makes the darkness embalmed. The fragrance of Champak is being compared to sweet thoughts in a dream. Shelley uses the metaphor of nightingale who sings but its melody dies within its heart. The poet metaphorically compares himself to a nightingale and his love for the beloved is nightingale's song. Therefore, he suggests the idea of union of both the male lover and the lady love. Just like the merger of nightingale and nightingale's melody are united in a perfect harmony. In this context, it is worthwhile to remember, Shelley in his prose "Defence of Poetry" calls the poet a nightingale who sits in the darkness and sings to his heart's content. It is his song which makes the world enchanted. The third and concluding stanza of the poem has reached in a tonal crescendo. Near the window of the beloved, the male lover falls on the ground. He desperately calls his beloved to come and lift him from the ground. Like a love lorn, fatigued soul the poet wants his lady love to shower upon him kisses in his eyelids and lips. He wants the lady love to adore him with all the intensity, so that the loud heart beats of

both the lovers merge together in perfect harmony. The poem ultimately becomes an impassionate plea on part of a male lover to his lady love for loving him. Love like a magic spell binds their souls together. The concluding section of the poem, where the poetic persona craves for the physical intimacy of the lady love is a sensuous description. Shelleyan description of the section echoes Keats' perception of sensuousness. The sensuousness that is being conveyed through the phrases like "Champak odor" and beloved's kisses like the rain and the longing on part of the poet to get united with the beloved – all these make the poem lyrical and romantic. In this poem Shelley's expression of sensuousness reinforces his passion and enchantment for the beloved.

Assignments

1. Write a note on the symbolic implication of the cloud in the poem 'The Cloud'.
2. Write a critical analysis on the poem 'The Cloud'.
3. 'The Indian Serenade' is a love lyric- justify the validity of the statement.
4. Critically appreciate the lyric 'The Indian Serenade'.

Suggested Readings:

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Poetry of John Keats
Unit 5

Course Content:

Unit 5 (a): Introduction to the Poetry of John Keats

Unit 5 (b): Study of the Select Poems of John Keats: "The Bright Star" and "To Autumn"
Suggested Readings
Assignments

Unit 5 (a)
Introduction to the Poetry of John Keats

John Keats till date remains one of the most curious younger Romantic poets in British literature so far. His unsurpassable talent his quest for beauty and endless strive to find truth and an imagination fired with sensuous charm – all are hallmarks of Keatsean style and poetic endeavour. Keats was born on 31 October 1795 at Moorgate London. His father is Thomas Keats, a hostler at the stables attached to the swan and Hoop inn. His Mother is Frances Jennings. Keats was the elder of the four surviving children in the family. His siblings are George, Thomas, and Frances or Fanny. The meager income of his father caused young Keats to get accustomed to the sufferings and financial difficulties at a tender age. The financial difficulty hampers his education as well. His parents simply lack that amount of money to admit him in the reputed schools in London. They admitted him at John Clarke's school at Enfield. The liberal atmosphere at the school nourished the mind of young Keats but his education was hampered by the sudden death of his father Thomas Keats. The four siblings were sent to Keats' maternal grandmother Alice Jennings. Keats' mother died when the poet was only fourteen years old. Her sudden death left four siblings of Keats in the custody of his maternal grandmother Alice Jennings. During that time Keats showed his interest in the study of medicine. His training in the medicine and surgery somehow assured his maternal grandmother of Keats' prosperous life in the future. In the year1816 Keats got his apothecary license. This time he felt that his professional responsibilities caused interruption in his passion for literature. This year ultimately he left his plan of pursuing medicine and he firmly stated his desire to be a poet. Keats' all masterpieces get published after his death. Therefore, during his lifetime he never achieved the fame which was due to him. Keats' remarkable works are his odes: "Ode to Nightingale" , "Ode to Autumn" , "Ode to Psyche" , "Ode on a Grecian Urn" , "Ode to Melancholy" . Apart from the remarkable odes he penned "La Belle Dame Sans Merci", *Lamia, Isabella*, "The Eve of St. Agnes" *Hyperion, Fall of Hyperion*. Keats' health gradually deteriorates due to tuberculosis. H died at the age of twenty five only. On 23 February, 1821 Keats died in Rome.

Keats' Poetic Theory: Major Aspects in his Poetry

One of the major aspects in Keats' poetry is the emphasis on sensuousness. He writes in his letter to George, his brother "…For a life full of sensuousness rather than thoughts." This statement Keats made only to reinforce his love for sensuousness. He never mentions that any thought- provoking ideal would not be included in his poetry. Recent scholarship on Keats has discovered and established the fact that Keats is not only a sensuous poet or indolent romantic poet but also his poetry harmonizes the sensuousness and thought in a finely balanced way. Thus Keatsean poetic endeavour is a combination of both thought and sensuousness. Eminent Critic F.R. Leavis in *Revaluation* in 1947 writes that Keats is not a mere aesthete. His lifelong suffering and personal tragedies carried Keats' mind through and beyond any mere voluptuousness into a tragic wisdom. It is based on his own experiences. It is inclusive of all human suffering and agony that he observes in the mortal world. In Keats' perception man is unique. He participates in two worlds: he lives in the world of nature but perceives and develops significance beyond nature, which nature itself could never do. In fact, the major theme in Keats' work is the defeat of man at the hands of nature on one hand, but the human triumph

over nature through art on the "other". Another problematic aspect in Keats' poetry is his concept of beauty. The relationship between truth and beauty in Keatsean understanding is complex. Critics like Matthew Arnold, Robert Bridges , Mrs. Owen, and Colvin contemplates on this problematic aspect of beauty in Keats' poetry. The critics raise the question what is Keats' understanding of beauty? Is it purely physical by nature? If so then the entire poetic endeavour of Keats would be based on a narrow vision and such interpretation of beauty in Keatsean poetry would shrink the value of his art. This reading would establish the poet Keats as an indolent romantic who sits in the ivory tower and remaining detached from the sorrows and agonies of humanity. But a close reading of Keatsean understanding of beauty would reveal that beauty is not of physical nature to Keats. It is eternal quality which he seeks in all the natural objects. Beauty to Keats is something related to the intellect and spirit and it is grounded in the lived realities of the mortal self. For example when the poet was "half in love with easeful Death" in "Ode to Nightingale" his quest for beauty and truth both get merged. This perception of beauty is not physical by nature. It is the perception of happiness and bliss which beautifies the agonized mortal self of the poet who is battered down by his personal tragedy in life. Indeed the Nightngale's song in this ode is the symbol of beauty. Interestingly this source of beauty also becomes the source of truth. Both beauty and truth are inextricably coalesced in the concept of eternity. Matthew Arnold points out in Keats' poetry the yearning for beauty is another way a yearning for truth. It is not the passion of a sensuous poet but also it is suggestive of spiritual and intellectual passion of the poet. Middleton Murry is another critic of Keats and he believes that Keats is a poet of intellect. Murry in his *Essays in Keats: New and Old* in 1939 writes that the sensuousness and aesthetic mind of a dreamer both mingled in Keats' poetry. Murry has spoken most extensively and more eloquently for Keats as a poet of rare intellectual endowment and achievement. Murry in his book mentioned that in the Spring of 1819 Keats' speculation comes to a focus. Therefore his heart and mind were finally in harmony, both instruments to the oneness of his poetic personality in its grappling with realities, both willing to bow before life in acceptance. It is this self-abnegation even in opposition to personal desire that Keats' mind reaches near the understanding of William Blake's philosophy of self-annihilation.

Unit 5 (b)

"The Bright Star"

Text of the Poem:

"Bright star, would I were stedfast as thou art"

Bright star, would I were stedfast as thou art—
Not in lone splendour hung aloft the night
And watching, with eternal lids apart,
Like nature's patient, sleepless Eremite,
The moving waters at their priest like task
Of pure ablution round earth's human shores,
Or gazing on the new soft-fallen mask
Of snow upon the mountains and the moors—
No—yet still stedfast, still unchangeable,
Pillow'd upon my fair love's ripening breast,
To feel for ever its soft fall and swell,
Awake for ever in a sweet unrest,
Still, still to hear her tender-taken breath,
And so live ever—or else swoon to death.

Analysis of the Poem:

"The Bright Star" is a sonnet written by Keats. The exact composition date of the sonnet cannot be determined as keats' critics differ largely in the opinions about the composition date of the sonnet. It is believed by critics like Andrew Motion and Robert Gittings that the sonnet had been composed between 1818-1819. The sonnet was officially published in 1838 in the *Plymouth and Devonport Weekly Journal.* It is declared by Keats' scholars like Colvin and Gittings that immediately after the informal engagement with Fanny Brawne Keats had composed the sonnet as a poetical expression of his love for Fanny Brawne. In the fourteen line length of the sonnet Keats articulates the typical sensuousness of a love-lorn, indolent, romantic soul and an earnest desire to crave for a life full of sensuousness rather than of thought. Keats at the outset of the poem addresses the bright star. He appreciates the loyalty of the star who keeps his vigil on the changing earth. The star from the sky keeps on watching the changing natural beauty, the snowy valley, and the mountain tops, but, it

remains detached from the eventful world of humans where love flourishes and life is filled with the fragrance of joy and companionship. From the sestet onwards there is a tonal shift in the sonnet. Throughout the octave the sonneteer goes on praising the steadfast quality of the star. But from the beginning of the sestet he goes on proclaiming that he would love to possess the steadfast quality of the star. But as a romantic love-lorn self he cannot be able to retain the objectivity and detachment from the life and living world. There is a change of tone of the sonneteer when he expresses his desire to be as steadfast as the bright star. But he wants to remain loyal only in declaration of his love to his beloved. His loyalty would be the soothing balm that would heal all his agonies. His love-lorn soul thus would be able to heal by the soothing company of his beloved. Being pillowed upon his fair love's "ripening breast" he wants to savour the beauty of life. The phrase "fair love's ripening breast" is very connotative. The word "ripening" implies a sense of continuity. The word "ripening" stands in stark contrast with the word "ripe" which is emblematic of end state of an object. The ripening breast of the fair love is a kind of imagination of the poet lover who goes on feeling this heavenly blessing of being loved. His intensity of passion and love for his beloved make him imagine the bosom of the beloved as ripening. Michael Bakhtin is a Russian theorist who propounds the concept of "grotesque body". According to Bakhtinian theory the grotesque body is a type of body which always undergoes through the procedure of alteration and mutability. A grotesque body is an unfinished body where always the growth and development go on. According to the perspective of feminist theory a female body is a grotesque one, whereas, a male body is a static body. In a female body the process of alteration continuously go on. In the phases of infancy, adolescence, adulthood, and motherhood a female body undergoes through the radical process of alteration. Keatsean assertion and perception of "ripening breast" of his fair love can be read as a kind of acknowledgement on part of the romantic poet to express his wonder and his sense of surprise realizing the beauty and mystery of the female body. Indeed this adoration of the female body is also implicitly associated with the Freudian principles of Eros. Precisely, the Eros can be defined as "life principle or love principle". According to psychoanalytic reading Eros is something which sustains life. The sonnet is operating on several binaries. The schism between objectivity and subjectivity is clearly evident. The objectivity of the star signals the indifference and detachment from the human world; contrarily, the personal involvement of the poet as a love-lorn soul and his utmost desire to remain loyal to his love all these bear testimony to the poet's subjectivism. The poem focuses on the aspects on flux, mutability, and eternity. The concluding part of the sonnet deals with Keatsean perception of life and love. To the sensuous poet like Keats life and love both exist in a symbiotic relationship. Life is being sustained by love and love is also sustaining life. Therefore, love in Keatsean perception becomes a panacea for all the hurdles of life. Interestingly this sonnet is not marked by any sense of conflict which is a hallmark of Keatsean style.

Ode to Autumn

Text of the Poem:

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-eves run;
To bend with apples the moss'd cottage-trees,
And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;
To swell the gourd, 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,
Drows'd with the fume of poppies, while thy hook
Spares the next swath and all its twined flowers:
And sometimes like a gleaner thou dost keep

Steady thy laden head across a brook;
Or by a cyder-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 sallows, borne aloft
Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies;
And full-grown lambs loud bleat from hilly bourn;
Hedge-crickets sing; and now with treble soft
The red-breast whistles from a garden-croft;
And gathering swallows twitter in the skies.

Analysis of the Poem

"Ode to Autumn" is being considered by scholars as one of the last poems written by Keats. Keats has composed the ode in 1819. It is one of the great odes which Keats has penned in 1819. In this ode Keats piles images on Autumn to represent it as one of the remarkable seasons of nature. In the first stanza the poet is describing Autumn as a season of fruitfulness. The three stanzas of the ode deal with three different aspects of the season Autumn: its fruitfulness, labour, and ultimate decline. With the progression of the narrative in the poem the autumn is being represented as someone who ripens fruits, creates music, and enhances the beauty and charm of the nature. The first stanza exposes the beauty of autumn in its ripeness. The second stanza concentrates on the harvest and its amplitude that make the autumn the most promising season of the nature. Its abundance of harvest makes it appear as a season of mellowed beauty. The third stanza goes on describing the post harvest beauty of the autumn when autumn is being represented in her post harvest serenity and beauty. "Ode to Autumn" is one of the subtle poems written by Keats. Quite interestingly critics have spoken about others odes on Keats; but about "Ode to Autumn" very few critical writings can be traced. Keatsean description of sensuousness is very explicit in the second stanza where the mellow beauty of Autumn is being imagined as a fatigue of the woman after sensual satisfaction. Here the Autumn is being described as the "close bosom friend of the maturing sun". The association of autumn and the maturing sun cause the ripeness of fruits and the fulfillment of the harvest. The creativity and immediately after the creation or harvest the fatigue of the creator are being implied in this context. Observing this many critics have considered the entire ode as a metaphorical way of expressing the creative process of art. The entire poem is a perfect combination of imagery and symbolism which give the sense of rhythm and musicality which are an inevitable part of the creative process. Like many other Keatsean odes the "Ode to Autumn" is clearly based on conflicts. The schism between maturity and death; beauty and its erosion; time and mutability also constitute major concerns in the ode. Scholars have noted a number of literary influences on 'To Autumn',

from Virgil's *Georgics*, to Edmund Spenser's "Mutability Cantos", to the language of Thomas Chatterton, to Samuel Taylor Coleridge's "Frost at Midnight", to an essay on autumn by Leigh Hunt, which Keats had recently read. 'To Autumn' is thematically connected to other odes that Keats wrote in 1819. For example, in his "Ode to Melancholy" a major theme is the acceptance of the process of life. When this theme appears later in 'To Autumn', however, it is with a difference. This time the figure of the poet disappears, and there is no exhortation of an imaginary reader. There are no open conflicts, and "dramatic debate, protest, and qualification are absent".In process there is a harmony between the finality of death and hints of renewal of life in the cycle of the seasons, paralleled by the renewal of a single day.Critics have tended to emphasize different aspects of the process. Some have focused on renewal; Walter Jackson Bate points to the theme of each stanza including "its contrary" idea, here death implying, though only indirectly, the renewal of life. Also, noted by both Bate and Jennifer Wagner, the structure of the verse reinforces the sense of something to come; the placing of the couplet before the end of each stanza

creates a feeling of suspension, highlighting the theme of continuation.Others, like Harold Bloom, have emphasized the "exhausted landscape", the completion, the finality of death, although "Winter descends here as a man might hope to die, with a natural sweetness". If death in itself is final, here it comes with a lightness, a softness, also pointing to "an acceptance of process beyond the possibility of grief." The progress of growth is no longer necessary; maturation is complete, and life and death are in harmony. The rich description of the cycle of the seasons enables the reader to feel a belonging "to something larger than the self", as James O'Rourke expresses it, but the cycle comes to an end each year, analogous to the ending of single life. O'Rourke suggests that something of a fear of that ending is subtly implied at the end

of the poem, although, unlike the other great odes, in this poem the person of the poet is entirely submerged, so there is at most a faint hint of Keats's own possible fear. According to Helen Vendler, 'To Autumn' may be seen as an allegory of artistic creation. As the farmer processes the fruits of the soil into what sustains the human body, so the artist processes the experience of life into a symbolic structure that may sustain the human spirit. This process involves an element of self-sacrifice by the artist, analogous to the living grain's being sacrificed for human consumption. In 'To Autumn', as a result of this process, the "rhythms" of the harvesting "artist-goddess" "permeate the whole world until all visual, tactile, and kinetic presence is transubstantiated into Apollonian music for the ear," the sounds of the poem itself. In a 1979 essay, Jerome McGann argued that while the poem was indirectly influenced by historical events, Keats had deliberately ignored the political landscape of 1819. Countering this view, Andrew Bennett, Nicholas Roe and others focused on what they believed were political allusions actually present in the poem, Roe arguing for a direct connection to the Peterloo Massacre of 1819. Later, Paul Fry argued against McGann's stance when he pointed out, "It scarcely seems pertinent to say that 'To Autumn' is therefore an evasion of social violence when it is so clearly an encounter with death itself [...] it is not a politically encoded escape from history reflecting the coerced betrayal [...] of its author's radicalism. McGann thinks to rescue Keats from the imputation of political naïveté by saying that he was a radical browbeaten into quietism"

More recently, in 2012, a specific probable location of the cornfield that inspired Keats was discussed in an article by Richard Marggraf Turley, Jayne Archer and Howard Thomas, which draws upon new archival evidence. Traditionally, the water-meadows south of Winchester, along which Keats took daily leisurely walks, were assumed to have provided the sights and sounds of his ode. Marggraf Turley, Archer and Thomas argue that the ode was more directly inspired by Keats's visit to St Giles's Hill—site of a new cornfield—at the eastern extremity of the market city. The land, previously a copse, had recently been turned over to food production to take advantage of high bread prices. This new topography, the authors argue, enables us to see hitherto unsuspected dimensions to Keats's engagement with contemporary politics in particular as they pertained to the management of food production and supply, wages and productivity.

In his 1999 study of the effect on British literature of the diseases and climates of the colonies, Alan Bewell read "the landscape of 'To Autumn'" as "a kind of biomedical allegory of the coming into being of English climatic space out of its dangerous geographical alternatives." Britain's colonial reach over the previous century and a half had exposed the mother country to foreign diseases and awareness of the dangers of extreme tropical climates. Keats, with medical training, having suffered chronic illness himself, and influenced like his contemporaries by "colonial medical discourse", was deeply aware of this threat.

According to Bewell, the landscape of 'To Autumn' presents the temperate climate of rural England as a healthful alternative to disease-ridden foreign environmentsThough the "clammy" aspect of "fever", the excessive ripeness associated with tropical climates, intrude into the poem, these elements, less prominent than in Keats's earlier poetry, are counterbalanced by the dry, crisp autumnal air of rural England. In presenting the particularly English elements of this environment, Keats was also influenced by contemporary poet and essayist Leigh Hunt, who had recently written of the arrival of autumn with its "migration of birds", "finished harvest", "cyder [...] making" and migration of "the swallows", as well as by English landscape painting[1] and the "pure" English idiom of the poetry of Thomas Chatterton.

In 'To Autumn', Bewell argues, Keats was at once voicing "a very personal expression of desire for health" and constructing a "myth of a national environment". This "political" element in the poem, Bewell points out, has also been suggested by Geoffrey Hartman, who expounded a view of 'To Autumn'

as "an ideological poem whose form expresses a national idea".

Thomas McFarland, on the other hand, in 2000 cautioned against overemphasizing the "political, social, or historical readings" of the poem, which distract from its "consummate surface and bloom". Most important about ‘To Autumn’ is its concentration of imagery and allusion in its evocation of nature, conveying an "interpenetration of livingness and dyingness as contained in the very nature of autumn".

Suggested Readings

Colvin, Sidney (1970). *John Keats: His Life and Poetry, His Friends, Critics, and After- Fame*. New York: Octagon Books.

Coote, Stephen (1995). *John Keats. A Life*. London: Hodder & Stoughton.

De Almeida, Hermione (1991). *Romantic Medicine and John Keats*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Gittings, Robert (1954). *John Keats: The Living Year. 21 September 1818 to 21 September 1819*. London: Heinemann.

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Goslee, Nancy (1985). *Uriel's Eye: Miltonic Stationing and Statuary in Blake, Keats and Shelley*. University of Alabama Press.

Hewlett, Dorothy (3rd rev. ed. 1970). *A life of John Keats*. London: Hutchinson.

Hirsch, Edward (Ed.) (2001). *Complete Poems and Selected Letters of John Keats*. Random House Publishing.

Houghton, Richard (Ed.) (2008). *The Life and Letters of John Keats*. Read Books.

Assignments

1. Critically analyze the sonnet "The Bright Star".
2. Write a note on the major aspects of Keats' poetry.
3. What are the major concerns of "to Autumn"?
4. Write a short note on the poetic theory of John Keats.

Block II: Romantic Drama-
Remorse
By
Samuel Taylor Coleridge

CONTENT STRUCTURE

~~**Unit 6 (a): British Drama in the Romantic Period**~~
Unit 6 (b): A Brief Introduction to S.T. Coleridge
Unit 7 (a): Publication History of *Remorse*
Unit 7 (b): Coleridge, Spinoza and *Remorse*
Unit 8 (a): Summary of the play *Remorse*
Unit 8 (b): The Title of the Play.

Unit 6 (a): British Drama in the Romantic Period

English Romanticism, it is generally admitted, produced novels, essays and poems that rank among the highest products of English literature. Yet in one branch of creative literature, the drama, it failed signally. The drama has seldom passed through a more barren period than that in which the brilliant Romantic writers of the early nineteenth century won their reputations. The general student of literature, if he reflects on this condition at all, generally explains it to his own satisfaction by saying that the age was interested chiefly in poetry and that the poets did not care to write drama. This explains nothing, however, for there is no reason why a lyric poet cannot also be a dramatist, as in the case of many of the Elizabethans. Moreover, the romantic poets were not indifferent to drama. Almost without exception they attempted to write it and failed. Somewhere within themselves or within the general spirit of the age there were conditions that inhibited this brilliant group of English writers from achieving the dramatic success which they desired and which might superficially be expected of them.

Anyone considering this situation from a purely theatrical point of view might be inclined to account for it solely on the ground of technical deficiencies. Undoubtedly many of the plays in question did have conspicuous structural weaknesses, as Dr. W. S. McNeill has shown by detailed analyses in his History of the English Drama from 1788-1S32. Technical craftsmanship was somewhat beneath the study of a Romantic genius. In writing Otho the Great, for instance, Keats merely supplied the poetry for the speeches as his friend Brown sketched them out, a plan which required and demonstrated no more technical knowledge of drama on Keats's part than did the writing of The Eve of Saint Agnes. The best of the Romantic dramas, Shelley's The Cenci, may be taken as fairly typical in its structural weaknesses. This play has been subjected to detailed analysis in three doctoral theses, to practical examination by several theatrical producers who considered staging it, and to actual test by the Shelley Society's production of the play in 1886. The conclusions have varied somewhat in detail, but have practically agreed in general import: the play has been found to be over-motivated in minor parts, insufficiently motivated in the character of Count Cenci, disjected by Cenci's death, and almost devoid of progression except for the scenes centering about Cenci's death and Beatrice's trial. As Shelley's clear-headed friend, Peacock, remarked, "it is unquestionably not a work for the modern Eng lish stage", and this would be true even if there were no other faults than structural ones. Yet the structural inadequacy of this and many other plays is far from affording a satisfactory explanation of the general failure of the Romantic writers as dramatists. Structural defects are often an accidental rather than a fundamental cause of failure in the drama. Often they are due to initial ignorance and are overcome by practical experience. Moreover, the theatre of the early nineteenth century frequently accepted plays that were structurally weak. The Romantic writers were not all as ignorant of the stage as Shelley. Some of them had excellent opportunities for acquiring the technique of the stage, had it been in them to do so. Charles Lamb knew the stage through constant attendance and wrote dramatic criti cism. Byron was an even more regular playgoer and during 1815 was one of the three directors of the Drury Lane Theatre. Probably the inspiration and the impatience of restraint which characterized the Romantic writers made it especially easy for them to slight the exacting technical requirements of the stage. The question is one of temperament rather than of accidental ignorance. Even so, there were two Romantic poets, Coleridge and Byron, who had sufficient technique to attain the stage and hold it for considerable runs. Technical incompetence is, at best, therefore, only a very partial explanation of the failure of the Romantic dramatists, because it is neither an insuperable handicap nor was it common to all the writers in question.

Neither can a common explanation be found in lack of interest due either to the debasement of the stage and its audience or to the prevalence of non-dramatic types in the literature of the period. A good play might fail to achieve popular success as a result of these conditions. These conditions might also account for an

author's unwillingness to write for the stage, but they cannot account for ineptitude and inadequacy in the plays that were written. Dr. McNeill quotes several writers, including Scott and Byron, in strong condemnation of contemporary audiences and concludes that this partly explains the failure of the great literary figures of the day to become interested in the drama. This lack of interest, however, is more easily assumed than demonstrated. If writing drama is any proof of interest in the drama, the best poets and essayists of the day were almost unanimously interested. Wordsworth and Southey each wrote one drama; Coleridge wrote three; Scott, five and one dramatic sketch; Keats, one and a fragment; Godwin, two; Byron, seven and a fragment; Shelley, four and several fragments; and Bed does, Lamb, Landor and Proctor also wrote dramas or dramatic sketches. Not a few of these writers essayed the stage. Wordsworth tried to get The Borderers accepted and failed; Shelley had the same experience with The Cenci, and Coleridge's Osorio was at first rejected but was later staged with considerable success as Remorse. Scott's The House of Aspen was refused. Godwin and Lamb succeeded in getting plays accepted only to see them promptly damned. Keats's play was declined, but Proctor achieved a stage success with Mirandola. Byron pro tested that his plays were not written to be acted, but most of them reached the stage and were acted with some success. Plainly the Romantic writers were not uninterested in drama; they were merely, as a group, unsuccessful with it.

Unit 6 (b): An Introduction to S.T. Coleridge

Samuel Taylor Coleridge is the premier poet-critic of modern English tradition, distinguished for the scope and influence of his thinking about literature as much as for his innovative verse. Active in the wake of the French Revolution as a dissenting pamphleteer and lay preacher, he inspired a brilliant generation of writers and attracted the patronage of progressive men of the rising middle class. As William Wordsworth's collaborator and constant companion in the formative period of their careers as poets, Coleridge participated in the sea change in English verse associated with *Lyrical Ballads*(1798). His poems of this period, speculative, meditative, and strangely oracular, put off early readers but survived the doubts of Wordsworth and Robert Southey to become recognized classics of the romantic idiom.

Coleridge renounced poetic vocation in his thirtieth year and set out to define and defend the art as a practicing critic. His promotion of Wordsworth's verse, a landmark of English literary response, proceeded in tandem with a general investigation of epistemology and metaphysics. Coleridge was preeminently responsible for importing the new German critical philosophy of Immanuel Kant and Friedrich von Schelling; his associated discussion of imagination remains a fixture of institutional criticism while his occasional notations on language proved seminal for the foundation and development of Cambridge English in the 1920s. In his distinction between culture and civilization Coleridge supplied means for a critique of the utilitarian state, which has been continued in our own time. And in his late theological writing he provided principles for reform in the Church of England. Coleridge's various and imposing achievement, a cornerstone of modern English culture, remains an incomparable source of informed reflection on the brave new world whose birth pangs he attended.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge was born on October 21, 1772 in the remote Devon village of Ottery St. Mary, the tenth and youngest child of Ann Bowdon Coleridge and John Coleridge, a school-master and vicar whom he was said to resemble physically as well as mentally. In vivid letters recounting his early years he describes himself as "a genuine Sans culotte, my veins uncontaminated with one drop of Gentility." The childhood of isolation and self-absorption which Coleridge describes in these letters has more to do, on his own telling, with his position in the family. Feelings of anomie, unworthiness, and incapacity persisted throughout a life of often compulsive dependency on others.

A reader seemingly by instinct, Coleridge grew up surrounded by books at school, at home, and in his aunt's shop. The dreamy child's imagination was nourished by his father's tales of the planets and stars and enlarged by constant reading. Through this, "my mind had been habituated *to the Vast*—& I never regarded *my senses* in any way as the criteria of my belief. I regulated all my creeds by my conceptions not by my *sight*—even at that age." Romances and fairy tales instilled in him a feeling of "the Great" and "the Whole." It was a lesson he never forgot. Experience he always regarded as a matter of whole and integrated response, not of particular sensations. Resolving conflicted feelings into whole response occupies much of his best verse, and his developed philosophical synthesis represents a comparable effort of resolution.

A year after the death of his father in 1781 Coleridge was sent to Christ's Hospital, the London grammar school where he would pass his adolescence training in Hebrew, Latin, and Greek, at which he excelled, and in English composition. His basic literary values were formed here under the tutelage of the Reverend James Bowyer, a larger-than-life figure who balanced classical models with native English examples drawn from Shakespeare and Milton. While Wordsworth was imitating Thomas Gray at Hawkshead Grammar

School, Coleridge was steeping in this long tradition of distinguished writing, learning to compose on Bowyer's principles. These included an insistence on sound sense and clear reference in phrase, metaphor, and image: literary embroidery was discouraged. So were conventional similes and stale poetic diction. Coleridge's later development as a poet may be characterized as an effort to arrive at a natural voice which eschewed such devices. Critical of the rhetorical excesses of the poetry of sensibility which prevailed at the time, he would join forces with Wordsworth in promoting "natural thoughts with natural diction" (*Biographia Literaria*, chapter 1).

Charles Lamb's evocative portrait of "Christ's Hospital Five and Thirty Years Ago" (1820) suggests what a hothouse environment the school was at the time. The student population included boys who went on to important careers in letters, church, and state. Even in such company Coleridge stood out unmistakably: "Come back into memory, like as thou wert in the day-spring of thy fancies, with hope like a fiery column before thee—the dark pillar not yet turned—Samuel Taylor Coleridge—Logician, Metaphysician, Bard!—How have I seen the casual passer through the Cloisters stand still, intranced with admiration (while he weighed the disproportion between the *speech* and the *garb* of the young Mirandula), to hear thee unfold, in thy deep and sweet intonations, the mysteries of Jamblichus, or Plotinus (for even in those years thou waxedst not pale at such philosophic draughts), or reciting Homer in his Greek, or Pindar—while the walls of the old Grey Friars re-echoed to the accents of the *inspired charity-boy*!" The opening notes of awe and eventual disappointment are characteristic, but the portrait of the artist as a young prodigy is more disturbing than Lamb admits. The vatic voice was already alive to its social possibilities, the sole resource of an isolated personality.

At Christ's Hospital, Coleridge acquired an exalted idea of poetry to match this waxing voice. From Bowyer he would learn that "Poetry, even that of the loftiest and, seemingly, that of the wildest odes, had a logic of its own, as severe as that of science." The comparison of poetry and science was an important one, leading to his mature definition of the art as a form of composition whose immediate aim was pleasure while science was concerned first of all with truth. Yet poetry arrived at truth in its own way, and that way was "more difficult, because more subtle, more complex, and dependent on more, and more fugitive causes." The logic of science was derived from pure reason; the logic of poetry depended on human understanding, which was anything but pure. Understanding belonged to the world of sensation, generalization, and language, and through it poetry was committed to ordinary human experience. Hence its tangled condition. The words of the common tongue kept the poet in touch with this common world.

Poetry as living speech, poetry as act of attention: the commitments of Christ's Hospital encouraged fresh judgment on the state of the art, and on what rang true now. Pope's couplets had begun to sound contrived while the more masculine energies of Shakespeare and Milton were welling up in the imagination of a generation of young writers. In the sonnets of the Reverend William Lisle Bowles, the schoolboy Coleridge found a contemporary model whose voice struck him as "tender" yet "manly," at once "natural and real." These words are Coleridge's own, and they describe his aspirations at least as much as they do Bowles's fulsome versifications. Long after the model had lost its grip on him, he would credit Bowles with drawing him out of a metaphysical daze, restoring him to "the love of nature, and the sense of beauty in forms and sounds." To the poet in his first flush, Bowles represented the modern possibilities of "the more sustained and elevated style" in English verse.

At Jesus College, Cambridge, where Coleridge matriculated in October 1791, he composed a mass of occasional poetry. Full of the rhetorical machinery of the middling verse of the period, and often cloying in sentiment, these early poems have little in common with the work of 1795 and after, on which his reputation would be founded. They do not even show him developing in the direction of his mature voice. Some of the phrasing of this college phase bears witness to the force of Milton's example on the student's impressionable ear. The backward ambience of Cambridge in the 1790s seems to have retarded Coleridge's muse, setting him to composing an arid (and ungrammatical) prize poem in Greek (in summer 1792), while driving him to escape from "bog and desolation." Reports of his college life suggest that he was absorbing not only Greek texts but English political pamphlets at this interesting moment. Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790) had met the rising sympathy for events in France with questions about the legitimacy and future of the state. Coleridge is said by a Cambridge contemporary to have consumed Burke's various productions on first publication, reciting them from memory to company at supper. His sympathies were broadly liberal—critical of William Pitt's government and the slave trade, yet wary of the situation in France. He was active in defense of William Frend, a Unitarian and Fellow of Jesus College who was expelled for publishing a pamphlet advocating *Peace and Union* (1793). This episode marks the beginning of a convergence between politics and poetry in Coleridge's career which is characteristic and important. For he was never a disinterested observer. His poetry participated in ongoing reactions to events at home and abroad, and he recognized its

vocation in this public setting.

On the basis of seemingly contradictory responses, Coleridge has sometimes been depicted as a turncoat who betrayed his original revolutionary sympathies. His poems suggest, and his lay sermons of the period confirm, that his allegiance was always to an ideal of freedom, not to democratic insurgency. The quality of his ambivalence did not prevent his speaking out in situations which damaged his reputation among Burke's party, his natural constituency. What sort of revolutionary would enlist in the king's army in this perilous moment? Coleridge did so on 2 December 1793 under an assumed name, fleeing debts and discouragement at college. He was rescued by family and friends after serving locally for some five months. Escape, servitude, and retreat would become a familiar pattern in Coleridge's life.

The Fall of Robespierre was a collaboration undertaken with Southey, whom he met at Oxford in June 1794, while on a walking tour from Cambridge. With Southey he hatched another escape route, a utopian scheme for immigration to America, where a small group was to found a commune on the banks of the Susquehanna in Pennsylvania. The ideals of Pantisocracy, as they called their project, involved shared labor and shared rewards. Servitude in this setting was exalted as "aspheterism," a Christian selflessness. *"Religious Musings"* envisions the dismal historical world which they hoped to escape, as well as their aspiration:

> 'Tis the sublime of man,
> Our noontide majesty, to know ourselves
> Parts and proportions of one wondrous whole!
> This fraternizes man, this constitutes
> Our charities and bearings!

Pantisocracy occupied Coleridge's energies and continued to influence his sense of vocation for some time after the scheme's collapse in 1795. A communitarian ideal remained essential to his writing, as to the life he now proposed to live.

For he left Cambridge, without taking a degree, in December 1794, in the midst of this communitarian enthusiasm and was soon thrown back on his own resources. In the course of the next year Coleridge delivered a series of lectures on politics and religion in Bristol, where Southey had connections. He considered various journalistic enterprises and made influential friends, including Joseph Cottle, a local publisher, who was interested enough in his poetry to advance him living expenses against copyright. The volume of *Poems on Various Subjects* (including four sonnets by Lamb and part of another by Southey) which Cottle would publish in 1796 represents a rite of passage. Behind him, the young author's school verse, sonnets, and rambling effusions trace a course of aimless poetasting. Before him, in "The Eolian Harp" (included in the 1796 volume as "Effusion xxxv") and in "Religious Musings" (which concluded the volume), something is stirring. The former, addressed to Sara Fricker, whom he married in Bristol on 4 October 1795, looks forward to the conversational line which he would develop and share with Wordsworth. The latter, on which he claimed in a letter to "build all my poetic pretensions," is an affirmation of Christian principle in troubled times. Both poems are broadly communitarian in aspiration.

Coleridge expanded on "Religious Musings" over the next two years. A section of it was published as "The Present State of Society" in *The Watchman*, a periodical which Coleridge conducted through ten issues (1 March-13 May 1796). Its contents were various, including reports from Parliament, foreign intelligence, and responses to current issues. The loaf was leavened with bits of poetry, some of it the editor's own. *The Watchman* failed despite Coleridge's strenuous efforts to enlist subscribers, but it bears witness to his seriousness of purpose. This conjunction was where Coleridge staked his claim. Poetry as a vatic art in the service of a general social revival: the restless England of George III, reeling from the shock of American and French revolutions, was surely prepared to listen. The scientific and political culture which had emerged in the 1770s was gaining force among the dissenters, Unitarians in particular, whom Coleridge cultivated in and around Bristol. They were his constituency and his means of support. He spoke to them in sermons and lectures, through *The Watchman* and also, as he hoped, through his verse.

His move with Sara to Clevedon, Somersetshire, along the Bristol Channel, in October 1795 was a change of air though not of social context. From here he continued his attack on the king and his ministers, returning occasionally to Bristol to lecture or walking to Bridgwater to speak at the Unitarian chapel. At his cottage he wrote "The Eolian Harp," a meditative poem different in every way from "Religious Musings" and the real inauguration of his mature voice. In its primitive form, as the effusion of 1796, it reflects the conflict between natural response—"the sense of beauty in forms and sounds," as he put it in the *Biographia Literaria*—and higher responsibility. Nature as an animated, omnipresent life force, a benevolent companion, is memorably characterized through the image of the wind harp, which is identified with the poet's "indolent and passive brain." Poetic imagination is simply an instrument of this Nature, one "organic harp" among others in its

universal symphony. In the exemplary setting of the new life he was undertaking, the claims of enlightenment thinking succumbed to faith.

"The Eolian Harp"establishes the terms of this important conflict, which was not simply intellectual but broadly social in implication. For pantheism was associated with the progressive scientific culture for which the empirical world of nature was simply reality itself. A personal God had no empirical reality. Unitarians and various sorts of deists adhered to a divinity which was known through sensation: a Nature god of sorts. This was Coleridge's intellectual milieu, and he tried out its ideas in his Bristol period. Yet his enduring commitments showed through. The community espoused in the conclusion of "The Eolian Harp" is not the egalitarian utopia of scientific aspiration, but "the family of Christ." The ideals of Pantisocracy triumph over the temptations of the new science. In his extensive correspondence of the period Coleridge proclaimed himself a Necessitarian for whom everything had a place in the divine scheme. "The Eolian Harp" shows how the lure of an alternative vision of human experience dominated by sensation could provoke an equal and opposite reaffirmation of first principles to the contrary. A traditional faith was confirmed through temptation.

Community after the collapse of Pantisocracy meant a wife and family, impassioned friendships based on shared concerns, and the company of kindred spirits. Thomas Poole, a prosperous tanner of good family in the tiny Somerset village of Nether Stowey, became Coleridge's closest associate in the uncertain period following his return to Bristol in 1796. The arduous and ultimately futile enterprise of *The Watchman* led him to seek a steady haven where he might work and write in sympathetic surroundings. Supporting Sara and their newborn son, Hartley (born September 1796), was a priority: "Literature will always be a secondary Object with me." There was something desperate in such a resolution, and it proved hard to keep after their move to a small thatched cottage in Nether Stowey at the end of 1796.

"This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison," composed from Poole's cottage garden the next year, relates to the community which he made there. Poole had proved a loyal friend and steady companion; his patronage was crucial to the success of the resettlement. Wordsworth, whom Coleridge had met in Bristol some time before, came to visit with his sister, Dorothy, and they soon occupied a substantial house at Alfoxden, walking distance from Nether Stowey. Charles Lloyd lived at Coleridge's cottage for a time, providing steady income in exchange for tuition. Lamb, the old friend from Christ's Hospital, and the youthful Hazlitt joined Cottle and other Bristol connections to make up a real if transient community of socially interested parties. All were writers at least by aspiration; all were involved in the reformation of English values for which "romanticism" has since come to stand. The lives they were leading on the fringes of conventional society would become the subject of their work.

So it was in "This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison," which describes a walk some of them took one day in Coleridge's absence. The jealous Sara had spilled a pan of boiling milk on his foot, excluding him from the company of Dorothy and William Wordsworth, as well as Charles Lamb, on a jaunt in the surrounding spur of low hills—*combes*, in local parlance—the Quantocks. From his confinement in the garden, he celebrates the pleasures of the natural world as seen from within this harmonious community of like-minded individuals. The detailed evocation of their itinerary marks the apogee of his response to landscape. In the end, the poet's imagination triumphs over his separation: his bower reveals pleasures of its own; Nature is hospitable to human response. Sensation proves adequate to human need; Nature is a providential resource against isolation. The poem's conclusion dwells on the joy of companionship in such a world.

Coleridge's new community was instrumental in bringing him to such feeling, and to such expression. This proved to be the most satisfying arrangement he would ever enjoy. It was the setting of his verse breakthrough, of the annus mirabilis in which most of his enduring poems were written. Here he built on the achievement of Clevedon, writing reflectively about his inner life in a social environment which excited and encouraged the questions he was asking. Was the human place in nature a merely passive one, comparable to the wind harp's? Was natural beauty sufficient to our moral needs? And more speculatively, what was the meaning of nature conceived as an organ of divine will? How did this bear on our idea of society?

These questions haunt the reflective idiom which he developed in the course of this residence of a year and a half at Nether Stowey, with storm clouds brewing on the horizon. The topographic realism of "This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison" reverts via Wordsworth's *An Evening Walk* (1793) to James Thomson and *The Seasons* (1730), but the voice at work here is that of "a man speaking to men," in the parlance of the "Preface" to the 1800 edition of *Lyrical Ballads*. Speech replaces stale poetic convention from the start. The character of the poet lies at the center of the exercise. The self-consciousness of Wordsworth's poetically premature ramble is turned to good effect in Coleridge's effort at something true to the occasion. The sense of occasion is conveyed in fresh blank verse, not the rattling heroic couplets of Wordsworth's first extended production. The prickly personifications and moralizing eye of "An Evening Walk" are vestigially present in "This Lime-Tree

Bower My Prison," but the effect is not of conventional chatter. Coleridge's diction is clear and direct for the most part, his apostrophes natural to the drama of the situation which he develops.

Walking was more than recreation for the writers' colony in the Quantocks. It provided the fresh air which their assumptions required. If Nature were to be their muse, and the source of their living values, it would have to be observed in all its sorts and conditions. Coleridge's plan for an expansive treatment in verse of the course of a brook from source to river shows how his walks in the nearby combes contributed to his reflection on the human condition. "The Brook" as he conceived it would mix "description and incident" with "impassioned reflection on men, nature, society." He traced a local stream to its wellsprings, recording occasional images in his notebook, but these are all that survive of an ambitious and characteristic project of the period.

Wordsworth's move to Alfoxden in the summer of 1797 stimulated further projects. At loose ends Coleridge found in Wordsworth a catalyst for his thinking about poetry. The year following his friend's move to the area would prove to be his most productive, and the beginning of a collaboration which culminated in the *Lyrical Ballads* volume. On his own telling, his conversations with Wordsworth during this year "turned frequently on the two cardinal points of poetry, the power of exciting the sympathy of the reader by a faithful adherence to the truth of nature, and the power of giving the interest of novelty by the modifying colors of imagination." The first point may be described as Wordsworthian, the second as basically Coleridgean. Imagination was already one of his preoccupations; he was interested in Erasmus Darwin's idea that "the excess of fancy is delirium, of imagination mania." Extraordinary states of mind, or casts of spirit, color his major poems of this period of innovation, and the effects which he achieved through them have earned enduring recognition.

Most extraordinary of all, in the eyes of later readers, is "Kubla Khan," an opium-induced, orientalizing fantasia of the unconscious. It is important to recognize that Coleridge himself claimed nothing for this production's "supposed *poetic* merits." He did not publish it until 1816, under financial pressure as usual and at the urging of Lord Byron, and only as an appendage to the more substantial "Christabel," which Wordsworth had excluded from the second edition of *Lyrical Ballads* (1800). The poem was not liked even then. As a "psychological curiosity" it was interesting to its author mainly as evidence of a state of extreme imaginative excitement. "Kubla Khan" had nothing to do with the reflective idiom to which Coleridge was committed. It might be verse, but it was not good poetry.

The story of its genesis is one of the prodigies of English literature. In the course of a solitary walk in the combes near the Bristol Channel in the fall of 1797, Coleridge took two grains of opium for the dysentery which had been bothering him for some time. He retired to an old stone farmhouse some distance from Porlock, where he fell asleep while reading an old travel book, *Purchase His Pilgrimage* (1613), by Samuel Purchase. He awoke hours later to record the extraordinary train of images which arose during his opiated stupor. The act of composition was interrupted by a "person from Porlock"—often conjured by later poets as a figure of life intruding on art—and it proved impossible to continue afterward. Much ink has been spilled over these circumstances, but their oddity makes them generally plausible, even considering Coleridge's habits of prevarication.

If they are significant at all it is because they epitomize his reputation as the truant phantast of romantic legend. He did much to encourage it, certainly, but he lived to regret what his friends made of him and to defend himself against charges of idleness and premature decay. The Coleridge phenomenon, as it might be called, has been recounted in every literary generation, usually with the emphasis on wonder rather than disappointment, though sometimes—among moralizing critics, never among poets—with a venom which recalls the disillusionment of his associates. Henry James's story, "The Coxon Fund" (1895), based on table talk of the genius who became a nuisance, is indicative of both attitudes. The Coleridge phenomenon has distorted Coleridge's real achievement, which was unique in scope and aspiration if all too human in its fits and starts.

The compelling imagery of "Kubla Khan" might be regarded as preparation for "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," conceived soon after on a walk to the port of Watchet on the Bristol Channel in the company of Wordsworth and his sister. Some time before, John Cruikshank, a local acquaintance of Coleridge's, had related a dream about a skeleton ship manned by spectral sailors. This became the germ of a momentous project in which Wordsworth acted as collaborator. The plot was hatched on the walk, according to Wordsworth's own later recollections, and it was he who conceived of the tale of crime and punishment which Coleridge would treat, in Christian terms, as a story of transgression, penitence, and atonement. Wordsworth also claimed to have suggested that the Old Navigator, as Coleridge initially called him, kill an albatross and be set upon by the "tutelary spirits" of Cape Horn, where the deed is done. He contributed some few lines of verse to the poem in addition.

The collaboration on "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" is interesting on several counts. It underlines the collective enterprise involved in the inauguration of the new poetic idiom which would eventually be

called Romantic. Creation of this kind is more than a matter of oracular power. It has much to do with rational inquiry and exchange. Further, the episode gives some idea of the working relations between Coleridge and Wordsworth at the moment when the scheme for *Lyrical Ballads* (1798) was being hatched. Their constant companionship on walks, at Alfoxden and elsewhere, gave rise to extended discussion of poetry present and past. Both proved open to suggestion; both grew as poets through their conversations. Most of what is known of this process is known through the *Lyrical Ballads* volume and its later "Preface." The conclusions which it expresses, in Wordsworth's voice more than Coleridge's, have long been seen as foundations of modern poetry.

The genesis of the "Ancient Mariner" is more than the story of one poem. It is the story of a project. In Coleridge's own account of events, they decided on two sorts of poems for *Lyrical Ballads* : "In the one, the incidents and agents were to be, in part at least, supernatural; and the excellence aimed at was to consist in the interesting of the affections by the dramatic truth of such emotions, as would naturally accompany such situations, supposing them real. And real in this sense they have been to every human being who, from whatever source of delusion, has at any time believed himself under supernatural agency."

Lyrical Ballads was deliberately experimental, as the authors insisted from the start. The "Ancient Mariner" pointed the way. The fact that it was a collaboration meant that both authors took responsibility for the design of the experiment. This was more than a volume of poems from various hands. The largely negative reviews which it excited on publication concentrated on the "Ancient Mariner," in part because it was the most substantial poem in the collection, but also because of its self-consciously archaic diction and incredible plot. Southey described it in a dismissive (and anonymous) review as "a Dutch attempt at German sublimity." Elsewhere it was reckoned "the strangest story of a cock and a bull that we ever saw on paper." The character of the Mariner also caused confusion.

Despite the problems, the poem flourished on the basis of strong local effects—of its pictures of the "land of ice and snow" and of the ghastly ship in the doldrums, in association with a drumming ballad meter. Wordsworth frankly disliked it after the reviews came in, but Lamb led the way in appreciating its odd mix of romance and realism. It is perhaps as a poem of pure imagination, in the words of Robert Penn Warren's landmark reading, that the "Ancient Mariner" has appealed. In this respect among others it bears comparison with "Kubla Khan"; they are usually classified, with *Christabel*, as poems of the supernatural. All answer to the formula proposed for Coleridge's contributions to *Lyrical Ballads:* supernatural, or at least preternatural, phenomena dignified by association with a human voice. For most readers this is the line of Coleridge's verse that has mattered. Whatever their liabilities of dramatic construction, the highly charged imagery of these poems has made a strong impression. Its influence rings clear in Shelley and Keats in the next generation, and in Tennyson, Browning, Rossetti, and Swinburne among their Victorian inheritors. In the title of W. H. Auden's *Look, Stranger!* (1936) the echo of the Mariner's exhortation, "Listen, Stranger!," from the text of 1798, shows how far Coleridge's oracular voice would carry.

Coleridge's contributions to the *Lyrical Ballads* volume included a short piece from *Osorio* called "The Foster-Mother's Tale," and a meditative poem in blank verse, "The Nightingale," as well as "The Ancient Mariner." The collaboration with Wordsworth is perhaps most striking in their development of the conversational idiom for which the subtitle of "The Nightingale, A Conversation Poem, Written in April, 1798" provided a name. It was not the first of the conversation poems; these are considered to begin from "The Eolian Harp" and to include "Reflections on Having Left a Place of Retirement'' and "This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison" among his earlier meditative verses. Coleridge himself never distinguished them in this way, nor has Wordsworth's poetry of the kind ever been described as conversational. Yet the term has come to stand for Coleridge's decisive innovation as a poet and for his contribution to the formation of Wordsworth's voice.

It was at this moment of intense exchange that Coleridge wrote his most imposing conversational verse, and that Wordsworth wrote "Lines Written A Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey," his startling initiation in the conversational idiom. Wordsworth's poem stands at the end of *Lyrical Ballads* rather as the "Ancient Mariner" stands at the beginning. It stands out, a monument to the realized achievement of the experiment. From the title, with its particularity about time and place, and the graceful discursive manner, through the association of ideas and the praise of Nature to the address in the concluding stanza to his sister, this poem is virtually a homage to Coleridge's conversational manner. What Wordsworth would make of the conversation poem is the story of the most distinguished poetic career of the period.

Their achievement in the developing conversational line has seemed more momentous in retrospect than it did at the time. "Tintern Abbey" was noticed only fitfully in early reviews. Yet the example of the conversation poems took where it mattered most, among the poets of the next generation and every generation since. Shelley's "Julian and Maddalo" (1818) represents an early effort to expand on the possibilities of

conversational verse. Matthew Arnoldand T. S. Eliot in England and Robert Frost in America elaborated variously on the conversational convention. The testimony of Charles Tomlinson shows how the influence of Coleridge's innovation has been transmitted by modern writers: "The distinguishable American presences in my own work, so far as I can tell, were, up to then, Pound, Stevens, and Marianne Moore, and yet, if through them the tonality sounded American, the tradition of the work went back to Coleridge's conversation poems." The meditative verse of Geoffrey Hillin the same postwar generation rings changes on the Coleridgean originals of this line of modern verse.

Wordsworth made the conversation poem the vehicle of his celebration of enlightenment values: of nature as spiritual home, of man as the measure of things. Coleridge's conversational verse points in the same direction under the influence of his great friend, yet it is deeply conflicted under the surface. The conviction of a benevolent nature is compromised by mounting fears. In the earlier poems of the kind these are indicated only indirectly. In "Frost at Midnight," composed from the front room of the Lime Street cottage in the winter of 1798, the poet's isolation drives him to test the resources of nature conceived as a mediating agent. The poem dramatizes Coleridge's sense of vulnerability in the face of a threatening outside world. Part of this feeling must have come from the growing hostility of the community in which he was living. Fear of a French invasion was widespread, and the outsiders were suspected of democratic sympathies, even of collusion with the national enemy. Walking home from Bristol, Coleridge heard himself described as a "vile Jacobin villain." The spy sent by the government found nothing much to report against him, but there was open mistrust of his motives and way of life. Such testimony provides incidental evidence of social pressures which Coleridge expressed in "Frost at Midnight"in an intensely personal way.

"Frost at Midnight" is the most psychodramatic of Coleridge's conversation poems even if the conclusion is not really consistent with the imaginative process which gives rise to it. For it exposes the deep fears behind the passion for Nature conceived in this way, as an intentional agent and life companion. "Religious meanings in the forms of nature" practically defines the idea as Coleridge understood it. In "Fears in Solitude," written soon after, and the source of this fine characterization, the sense of danger and vulnerability is directly related to political apprehensions. "Fears in Solitude" shows Coleridge trying to associate the scenery around Nether Stowey with feelings for his country without giving way to the government which he despised. It is an uncertain performance, rambling and disjointed, yet interesting as a portrait of political conviction under pressure.

Despite the difficulties, this was a time of rare promise for the young writer. Wordsworth's presence was catalytic. It was through the *Lyrical Ballads* volume that Coleridge's voices, conversational and "romantic," were developed and rationalized. Dorothy Wordsworth's journal of 1798 shows how collaborative were all of their undertakings of this formative moment. Yet their auspicious beginning was to prove the beginning of the end of Coleridge's poetic powers. While Wordsworth would carry on with the experiment for some ten years after that spring in the Quantocks, his companion in the art was all but finished with it. Reasons for the divergence are bound to be conjectures after the fact, but two at least remain worth considering. The collaboration turned out to be a struggle for poetic primacy, and Wordsworth's personal domination eventually meant loss of conviction—and loss of face—for his troubled colleague. There was room for only one strong voice of this kind. Coleridge was drawn to other roles in any case, and to other causes. Poetry was his means, not his vocation.

What was his vocation then? He is usually described as a man of letters—as the prototype of the modern writer who lives from his earnings as journalist, book reviewer, and jack of all literary trades. Coleridge was provided, quite unexpectedly, a life annuity of 150 pounds sterling by Josiah and Thomas Wedgwood, heirs to the pottery and friends of reliable standing. There were no strings attached. The point was to free him of the routine material difficulties which were already closing in on him from all sides. This was a godsend, but it also put Coleridge on his mettle. For he was now faced with the imperative to choose and define a vocation for himself. Freedom imposes its own obligations, and patronage remains patronage even without the strings. The imminent departure of the Wordsworths, whose one-year lease at Alfoxden was not renewed in June 1798 due to local doubts about their character, precipitated a personal crisis of sorts. The upshot was an extended residence in Germany, separation from family and friends in Nether Stowey, and a change of direction.

Coleridge was drawn to Germany for its literary ferment and new learning. His residence of some months at the university in Göttingen exposed him to the earlier Germanic languages and literatures and also to the new scriptural criticism which would change the face of modern theology. He read Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock and Gotthold Ephraim Lessing rather than Johann Wolfgang von Goethe; enlightenment thinking—not *Sturm und Drang*—was the object lesson. Germany opened doors whose existence he had hardly imagined. It was here that he learned the language sufficiently to approach the critical philosophy of Immanuel Kant, which

consumed his thinking from about 1800. Göttingen supplied a working idea of language which he would turn to his own uses on his return. And it involved him in historical inquiries—on the origin of the free farming class, for example—which he communicated to his correspondents at home. The impression left by his notebooks and letters of this period of residence abroad is of unusual intellectual attentiveness.

The intellectual turn is what distinguishes Coleridge from others, including his friends William Hazlitt and Lamb, whose activity as writers in the period was more clearly in the native grain. His example was followed by De Quincey and Carlyle with differing emphases; "men of letters" would appear less apt to their cases than "literary intellectuals," with the stress on fresh thinking. Literature, or "polite literature" as Coleridge sometimes called it, included the prose essay for all of them. Verse and prose did not live separate lives; they were distinctive in means but not different in ends as Coleridge explained them. Both gave scope to the same human understanding.

Coleridge rejoined his family in Nether Stowey in midsummer 1799, some time after having returned from Germany. It was an uncomfortable homecoming on several counts. Wordsworth was soon on his way to Dove Cottage at Grasmere in the remote north country, and Coleridge was not far behind. There was trouble with Southey and a difficult leave taking from Thomas Poole. On his way north he tarried in London as political correspondent for the *Morning Post*, writing a brilliant piece on Pitt, the prime minister, showing what his own convictions counted for. For readers interested only in the poetry, such topical work is bound to seem tedious; yet it represents the heart of Coleridge's commitment in the period when he was writing his best verse. His *Essays on His Own Times* (1850), collected long after in three volumes, show how serious and capable a critic of society he was. The promotion of his most personal and individualistic work by later readers has obscured his constant attention to social arrangements and social ideals.

His move to Keswick in summer 1800 (not long before the birth of his third son, Derwent, on 14 September) represented a kind of retreat from the discouraging world of city politics and city life. The Wedgwood annuity made it feasible, Wordsworth's presence nearby practically inevitable. *Lyrical Ballads*was to be republished in a new edition; *Christabel* was still unfinished, and here he added the second part, with its altered landscape reflecting the scenery of Langdale Pike and "Borodale." It was a critical time in his professional transition. Wordsworth's rejection of the still unfinished poem contributed to Coleridge's sense of personal incapacity. He came to feel that he was not a poet; not a great poet, at least not like Wordsworth. Yet his valedictory ode, "Dejection," first composed as a letter in 1802, shows him at the peak of his powers. Writing in the shadow of Wordsworth's "Intimations" ode, Coleridge here cultivated a more colloquial delivery while remaining true to his own muse. This is his magisterial conversation poem, the most compelling (though not the most celebrated) achievement of his foreshortened poetic career.

Coleridge was now on his own as never before, unsettled, constantly ill, searching for a way through his difficulties. He decided at this time on a career as a critic, at first proposing "an Essay on the Elements of Poetry / it would in reality be a *disguised* System of Morals & Politics—." The real orientation of his poetics is indicated here. It was refined but not fundamentally altered by subsequent reflection and formulation. By 1804 he was calling the same project *"On the Sources of Poetic Pleasure*—in which without using the words bad or good, I simply endeavor to detect the causes & sources of the Pleasures, which different styles &c have given in different ages, & then determining their comparative Worth, Permanency, & Compatibility with the noble parts of our nature to establish in the utmost depths, to which I can delve, the characteristics of Good & Bad Poetry—& the intimate connection of Taste & Morals.—" The lectures delivered at the Royal Institution in 1808 on "The Principles of Poetry" apparently fleshed out this program, beginning from Shakespeare and concluding "On Modern Poetry." They were the first of several lecture series conducted by Coleridge in the years 1808-1814. Their contents are known mainly from unreliable reports when they are known at all.

The lectures of 1811-1812 on Shakespeare were influential in the general revival of interest in the Elizabethan drama. Dr. Johnson's 1765 preface to his edition of Shakespeare's works had defended him as the poet of nature who held up a mirror to life and manners. Against this mimetic emphasis Coleridge lay stress on Shakespeare's expressive language and the psychological acumen associated with it: "In the plays of Shakespeare, every man sees himself, without knowing that he does so." A more important legacy of the lectures on Shakespeare is the idea of organicism, which has deep roots in his earlier critical reflection. In lecture notes on Shakespeare, Coleridge evokes organic form in terms which mimic the contemporary German critic August Wilhelm Schlegel. The form of Shakespeare's dramas grew out of his characters and ideas, on Coleridge's telling; the old dramatic conventions did not impede the conception. The structural variety of his plays—the seeming irregularities of *The Tempest*, in particular—arose from expressive requirements. Organic form redeemed Shakespeare's unconventional dramatic constructions.

The importance of the organic metaphor and idea for later thinking about poetry can hardly be exaggerated.

The sense of the work of art as an organism, self-germinating and self-enclosed, pervades modern writing and modern criticism. Coleridge's elaboration on the idea of imagination in this period owes something to the distinction of mechanic and organic form as well. His definitions of primary and secondary imagination and of fancy have become canonical; they served I. A. Richards, notably, as a theoretical basis of the "semasiology" which he proposed in 1935. This putative science of meaning was meant to shore up the foundations of English as an academic discipline and proved influential not only at Cambridge but throughout the English-speaking world, including the United States, where it provided impetus for the development of the New Criticism, as it was called. Treating Coleridge as a provincial outpost of the new German critical philosophy of Immanuel Kant, English and American readers have usually abandoned the complex record of his reading and response in favor of one or two manageable ideas. The result has been general misapprehension about his orientation and commitments. Coleridge does not make sense as a model of aesthetic reading despite the efforts of Richards and others to bend him to this purpose.

What sort of reader was he, then? Moral and political, certainly, but something more. On his return from Germany in 1799, Coleridge had undertaken "a metaphysical Investigation" of "the affinities of the Feelings with Words & Ideas," to be composed "under the title of 'Concerning Poetry & the nature of the Pleasures derived from it.'" The connection of his philosophical studies with his critical ambition is important for understanding how Coleridge imagined the critical function. He was not interested in judging writing by current standards. Conventional judgments of good or bad relied on unspoken assumptions which he was concerned to test and modify, where appropriate, by the light of reason. Adjudicating taste is the usual purview of the "man of letters." Coleridge was trying for something more philosophical, of larger scope and bearing: "acting the arbitrator between the old School & the New School to lay down some plain, & perspicuous, tho' not superficial Canons of Criticism respecting poetry."

In the wake of the republication of *Lyrical Ballads* in early 1801 (with '1800' on the title page), Coleridge's critical project became a protracted effort to come to terms with Wordsworth's radical claims in the "Preface" for a poetry composed "in the real language of men." This was the "New School" of "natural thoughts in natural diction": Coleridge's own school despite his differences with Wordsworth. His effort to make the case for the new verse in the teeth of pitched hostility on the part of reviewers culminated in his *Biographia Literaria* (1817), where the "Old School" is treated anecdotally in the opening chapters on the way to the triumph of Wordsworth's voice. The fifteen years between the "Preface" and *Biographia Literaria* were consumed with working through the critical agenda which Coleridge set himself at the turn of the century. The process was a fitful, often tortuous one. The metaphysical investigation assumed a life of its own, waylaid by deep plunges into Kant and Schelling, among others. It culminates in the first volume of the *Biographia Literaria* with an effort to provide rational ground for the critical exercise which follows in the second. His definition of imagination remains an important part of his poetic legacy, nevertheless, since it underwrites the development of a symbolist aesthetic still associated with his name though at odds with his enduring commitments.

The thoughtful approach to Wordsworth in the second volume represents Coleridge's understanding of poetry at its best. His account of the *Lyrical Ballads* project challenges some of Wordsworth's claims in the "Preface" to the second edition in a way which distinguishes the effective from the peculiar in his verse. Readers have often taken Coleridge's theoretic pronouncements about imagination as constituting his poetics, while the account of Wordsworth's verse shows him applying more conventional standards in new and thoughtful ways. This discussion of the new school in English poetry includes a detailed treatment of the question of poetic language as raised by Wordsworth, and it is Coleridge's response to his positions in the *Lyrical Ballads* "Preface" that makes up the real centerpiece of the argument. The defense of poetic diction in particular is important for understanding his idea of poetry. Its roots lie in a long meditation on language, not in a philosophically derived faculty of imagination.

This meditation on language occupied Coleridge occasionally during the years between his return from Germany in 1799 and the composition of the *Biographia Literaria*. Among projects which he undertook during these long years of opium addiction, physical disability, and aimless wandering, *The Friend* (1809) stands out for its originality and influence. After two years away, in Malta, Sicily, and Rome, he returned to Keswick in 1806, separated from his wife (who had given birth to their daughter, Sara, on 23 December 1802), lectured and dilated, and finally settled on publishing "a weekly essay" which ran from 1 June 1809 to 15 March 1810. The publication rose and fell by subscriptions, relying on Coleridge's name and reputation, and finally collapsed under the weight of his private difficulties. Eclectic in approach, broadly literary in style, its various essays remain worth considering for what they indicate of the evolution of letters in the period. *The Friend* established a high discursive tone which was influential among Coleridge's inheritors, including

Carlyle and Emerson, for whom it was counted among his most valuable works.
In 1812 the Wedgwood annuity was reduced by half due to financial difficulties related to the war. Coleridge continued to wander, staying with friends all over the kingdom and occasionally with his family in Keswick. In 1816 he published *Christabel* with "Kubla Khan" and "The Pains of Sleep" in a single volume; the next year his collected verse, *Sibylline Leaves*, appeared. He moved into the house of Dr. James Gillman, a physician in Highgate, now a north London village, trying to cure or at least to treat his opium problem. Here he would pass the remainder of his life, writing only occasional verse while preparing philosophical lectures (delivered in 1818), revising the text of *The Friend* for publication as a book, and collating the moral and theological aphorisms which appeared as *Aids to Reflection* (1825). These were popular and influential in America as well as in England. Coleridge published a meditation on political inspiration in *The Stateman's Manual* (1816) among other tracts on subjects theological and political. *On the Constitution of Church and State*appeared in 1830; *Confessions of an Inquiring Spirit* posthumously in 1840. He planned a comprehensive philosophical synthesis which he was unable to realize, conjuring with a system which lived only in his constantly working mind. The most finished text from among his philosophical papers was published in 1848 as *Hints towards the Formation of a more Comprehensive Theory of Life*. The reconstruction of his abortive synthesis is in progress.

Coleridge died in 1834 after years of personal discomfort and disappointment. A legend in his time, he came to be seen by friends and contemporaries as the genius who failed. The failure was largely relative to early expectations, however, and to hopes defeated by disease and drugs. Despite everything, Coleridge can still be regarded as a groundbreaking and, at his best, a powerful poet of lasting influence. His idea of poetry remains the standard by which others in the English sphere are tried. As a political thinker, and as a Christian apologist, Coleridge proved an inspiration to the important generation after his own. Recent publication of his private notebooks has provided further evidence of the constant ferment and vitality of his inquiring spirit.

Unit 7 (a): Publication History of *Osorio* and *Remorse*

***Osorio* (1797)**

Subsequent to The Fall of Robespierre, Coleridge turned his creative energies toward poetry, journalism, and political oratory, and might never have composed another play had he not in February of 1797 received from Richard Brinsley Sheridan, the celebrated playwright, liberal Whig MP, and manager of the Drury Lane Theatre, an invitation to compose for the London stage 'a tragedy on some popular subject'. The offer must have been as flattering to the young and relatively unknown Bristol radical as it was exciting, given that a successful run at Drury Lane would be far more lucrative than the pittance he was scraping together as lecturer, journalist, and poet. Moreover, the request suggested a unique opportunity to disseminate his political and theological views in the great metropolis where they might gain maximum exposure. Thus encouraged, Coleridge set to work for the ensuing seven months on a drama entitled, Osorio, The Sketch of a Tragedy. Despite these incentives, however, the writing proved arduous. Writing for the London stage meant addressing a more ideologically diverse audience than the reform-minded group of provincial dissenters and radicals to whom he had pitched his Bristol lectures (1795), The Watchman (1796), and demanding theologico-political poems like 'Religious Musings' (1794–6). He could not expect London theatre-goers to sympathize so unreservedly with his anti-ministerial and anti-clerical views, nor could he assume that a manuscript expressing such opinions would pass inspection by the Lord Chamberlain's Examiner of Plays. The challenge was especially severe during the period of Osorio's composition, given that threats of a French invasion and recent naval mutinies among the Channel and North Sea fleets had galvanized popular support for the government against its perceived enemies, Dissenters and radicals chief among them. Coleridge thus needed to be quite clever if he were to succeed in evading censorship, yet still make his political meaning intelligible and persuasive.
Coleridge met the challenge by attiring his political tragedy in the costume of a Gothic romance. Set in sixteenth-century Granada during the Inquisition's expulsion of the Moors, Osorio describes a rivalry between two brothers of Spanish nobility, Albert (the returning hero/outcast) and Osorio (the villain/usurper), who vie for the affection of their foster-sister Maria, the heroine. The action turns on Osorio's attempts to convince Maria that Albert has drowned in a shipwreck, though he believes (mistakenly) that he has had Albert secretly murdered. Albert, however, has returned to Granada disguised in the outlawed robes of a Moorish chieftain, and intends not to seek blood revenge, but to force Osorio to feel remorse for his fratricidal intentions. In the denouement, Osorio finally recognizes Albert as his brother but experiences self-loathing so intense that he begs for death and willingly submits to his fate at the hands of a rebel band of Moors led by Alhadra, whose

husband Osorio had murdered. Numerous cues signal the play's Gothic posture. The setting in Inquisitorial Spain follows the Gothic vogue for depicting Roman Catholic Southern Europe as the bastion of popery and repression.

Italy and Spain in particular were commonly portrayed in terms of the foreign and forbidden—the location of excessive passions, religious superstition, and dark intrigues carried out with ruthless malevolence. Coleridge's chief villain, Osorio, fits the stereotype of the tyrant/usurper that populated Gothic narratives. Together with Francesco the Inquisitor, another archetypal villain, Osorio forces the heroine, Maria, to make the generic choice of 'virtue in distress', that of marriage without love or life in a convent. The hero, Albert, conforms to the Gothic role of the returned outcast in the mold of Karl Moor from Schiller's The Robbers. Alhadra, Ferdinand's avenging wife and leader of the Moorish band, functions symbolically as the leader of the oppressed masses commonly portrayed in Gothic narratives as outcast robber bands or banditti, such as those featured in The Robbers and William Godwin's 'Jacobin novel' Caleb Williams. Finally, the play invokes the Gothic's trademark aesthetic of the sublime in its use of such stock topoi as the castle, the cave, and the dungeon, and in its engagement with the supernatural through clairvoyant premonitions, prophetic dreams, and spiritual channeling.

While Coleridge's decision to employ the Gothic makes sense insofar as he would be meeting demand for a popular form of entertainment, the choice nonetheless comes as something of a surprise given his critical appraisals of the genre. In the Critical Review (February 1797) he decried Matthew Lewis's best-selling The Monk (1796) for its violent and sexual sensationalism and for its infidelity to 'moral truth', which he argued must ultimately be the criterion that sustains the reader's interest. Coleridge's reviews of Ann Radcliffe's The Mysteries of Udolpho (1794) and The Italian (1797) were hardly less censorious, though here his attack focused on the tedious predictability of her trademark device of the 'explained supernatural', which introduced mysterious events and spectral appearances only to explain them away in the denouements by revealing their natural causes.

Moreover, the moral tenor of his remarks regarding the Gothic's treatment of mystery was also implicitly religious and political, for they were homologous with his Unitarian censure of 'mystery' as the manipulative obfuscations practiced by the Anglican priesthood and by the Pitt ministry in their attempts to maintain authority. In sum, Britain's taste for the Gothic appeared to Coleridge as an alarming symptom of an infirm nation grown addicted to sensationalism false forms of mystery.

Why then did Coleridge make such liberal use of the Gothic in *Osorio?* How are we to account for the contradiction between his dramaturgical and critical practices? While the possibility that he was willing to sacrifice principles for cash cannot be dismissed, the artistry of *Osorio* suggests another reason—that his objections were not so much with the Gothic *per se* as with the ways in which it was being employed. Additionally, the Gothic's popularity and frequent use as a vehicle for veiled political commentary made it attractive. Though often set in the feudal past of a 'forbidden' foreign culture such as Catholic Spain or Italy, Gothic romances were increasingly received in the politically charged climate of the 1790s as oblique commentary upon contemporary events. How they reflected those events from a political standpoint, however, was open to interpretation. Conservative appropriations of the Gothic looked back nostalgically in the manner of Burke's *Reflections* at a feudal past to argue for the restoration of violated property rights and a perpetuation of the class and gender values of feudal patriarchy. The radical Gothic, by contrast, asked its readers to condemn such a world and reform its entrenched systems of inequality. By 1797 and the writing of *Osorio*, multiple interpretive possibilities were available. If the Gothic romance was seen as a vehicle for exploring the question of what it meant to be English in terms of one's moral values, aesthetic taste, religious faith, and political heritage, then it could be manipulated to suit Coleridge's ambitions for propagating the tenets of Unitarian ideology. Thus despite his critical misgivings, Coleridge found good reasons to employ the Gothic in his tragedy: its popularity increased the chances of success, its concern with 'mystery' provided an opening for his criticisms of the religious and political establishment, and its ideological ambiguity suggested a means of encoding his radical politics and heterodox theology so as to protect the play from government censorship, yet allow its messages to find audience.

Coleridge's chief means of achieving these aims was to reverse Radcliffe's explained supernatural by creating scenes that expose false mystery but that then replace it with a 'legitimate' mysticism deserving of reverence. We first see this in the play's pivotal séance scene (III.i), which closely followed Schiller's recently translated *Der Geisterseher* (1788, trans. 1795): seeming to suggest the triumph of informed skepticism over base superstition, the audience is made aware at the beginning that Osorio has employed an alleged 'sorcerer' (though unbeknownst to him this is Albert in disguise) to 'channel' Albert's spirit in order to convince Maria of his death. The sham backfires, however, for Albert's invocation has the effect of reducing Osorio to fits of

paralyzing guilt, while it increases the swooning Maria's sense of mystical connection with Albert's 'departed' spirit.

The reversal also seeks to unsettle the audience. While Albert's invocation of spirits is a Gothic commonplace, his language echoes that of 'Preternatural Agency' and 'Religious Musings', Coleridge's most ambitious Unitarian poems. What particularly distinguishes *Osorio's* supernaturalism from the Gothic prototype is the ontological status of the 'spirit' Albert summons from an 'innumerable company' that encircle the earth, causing ominous whirlwinds and maelstroms, commonplace symbols of apocalyptic retribution during the revolutionary decade. Coleridge's major poems of 1795–6 feature such spirits as 'powers' that animate the natural order and guide the unfolding of human history toward its millennial destiny. These poems are concerned, moreover, with the epistemological possibility of apprehending such powers and they valorize an 'elect band of patriot-sages' (such as the Unitarian scientist and political radical Joseph Priestley) as the true seers of the contemporary age, who have succeeded in reclaiming 'Man's free and stirring spirit that [otherwise] lies entranced'. The spirit world Albert presumes to command thus recalls the natural world that Coleridge's Unitarian poems find to be alive with spiritual powers that hold revolutionary potential, and his invocation thus blurs the customary boundaries that distinguish the natural and the supernatural, science and magic, the secular and the sacred. From this perspective, Albert's persona as sorcerer subsumes the roles of natural philosopher, metaphysician, theologian, and poet, the same combination of identities that Coleridge had been assimilating as his own since his move to Bristol in 1794 Albert's spiritual affiliations with nature support his moral vocation as one who seeks to reform rather than avenge his murderous brother. One sees this, for example, in the soliloquy that Coleridge later excerpted as 'The Dungeon' for *Lyrical Ballads*, where Albert expostulates upon nature's ability, to quell rather than inflame the impulse toward revenge, unlike incarceration. Like the elect of Heaven and Unitarian Christ of 'Religious Musings', the 'Despised Galilaean [who] Self regardless […] Mourns for th' Oppressor' (PWI (CC), 174–5), Albert's ability to commune with 'Nature's Essence, Mind, and Energy' results in a refusal to 'imbosom' contempt or revenge. When questioned by Osorio's agents as to his identity, Albert cryptically replies that he is one who can 'bring the dead to life again' (*PW* III (CC), 87). At one level, the remark refers to his own status as one who, though believed dead, will reveal himself to be alive in the play's denouement. At another, it bespeaks his Christ-like intent to bring about his brother's spiritual resurrection. These multiple meanings underscore the aptness of Albert's chosen disguise as a sorcerer, that is as one who, though mortal, 'sees into the life of things' more deeply than others, and by virtue of his participation in the divinity of nature refuses hatred and vengeance.

The reversal of the explained supernatural in the séance scene thus aims at two effects. Intratextually, it chastens Osorio's smug materialism that would dismiss the possibility of a moral and spiritual order while it also signals Albert's eventual return from the dead as a living husband, brother, and son. Extratextually, it links Albert's apparent identity as a conventional hero/outcast of Gothic romance to a politically mysterious persona who uses the language of Coleridge's Unitarian poems.

A second key instance of Coleridge's reversal of the 'explained supernatural' takes place in the denouement, where having revealed his true identity and Osorio's fratricidal plot, Albert appeals to the God of mercy on his brother's behalf. Osorio, however, seeks divine retribution and begs for punishment rather than salvation. His entreaty is immediately answered by Alhadra and her band of Moors, who burst in to avenge the murder of her husband, Ferdinand. To his horror, Albert realizes not only that his mission to secure Osorio's spiritual salvation has been thwarted, but also that his séance performance has unwittingly contributed to Osorio's demise. His despairing final words, 'O horrible!' acknowledge these failures as the Moors carry Osorio offstage to his death and Alhadra delivers an impassioned, curtain-closing soliloquy thanking 'Heaven' for its wise assistance in meeting extreme despotism with extreme vengeance, and pledging her further assistance as an instrument of divine retribution that would 'shake the kingdoms of this world … Till desolation seemed a beautiful thing'. An audience accustomed to conventional Gothic dramas, in which good is ultimately rewarded and evil clearly punished, could be expected to cheer Osorio's downfall, but must also find itself puzzled over Alhadra's apparent triumph and Albert's failure peacefully to bring about his brother's spiritual reformation.

It would be especially disconcerting given that Alhadra's avenging band appears to conform to the stock Gothic feature of the 'crowd', which as Ronald Paulson notes, had come to signify the threat of revolutionary anarchy uncontained. Her curtain-closing soliloquy, however, takes on apocalyptic overtones, suggesting that underlying the apparent disorder of crowd violence there operates the plan of providence. *Osorio*'s conclusion thus fits the eschatological theme that Morton Paley has identified in Coleridge's writings in the 1790s where an early emphasis on millennial peace gives way to preoccupation with God's retributive vengeance. Albert's stunned silence as Alhadra calls for a cleansing of the established political and religious order mimes the

astonishment that accompanies the Burkean sublime. How far would the apocalyptic cleansing reach? Would it result in a millennial future for the peaceful 'elect' like Albert, or rather for religious militants like Alhadra? Does the healing power of nature suggested by the example of Albert's refusal to seek blood revenge win the day? Or do the ending's apocalyptic overtones suggest that human society is so tainted by self-interest and so doomed to fractiousness that only God's wrath can rectify it? Rather than provide Radcliffean closure, the text does not decide.

Precisely why Sheridan pocketed the manuscript of *Osorio,* failing even to acknowledge its receipt, is unclear, but Coleridge's humorous remark to Thelwall is telling: 'I received a letter from Linley, the long & the short of which is that Sheridan rejects the Tragedy—his *sole* objection is—the obscurity of the three last acts' (*CL* 1: 213). Certainly the strategy of reversing the explained supernatural jeopardized the play's intelligibility, though to have made his political and theological beliefs explicit would surely have meant rejection by the censors. Perhaps Coleridge hoped, that *Osorio* might nonetheless communicate a plea for tolerance and Christian forbearance at a time when the fears of clandestine enemies within, Dissenters and radicals in particular, were escalating. Perhaps given the challenges he faced he felt it would be enough to create a hero merely suggestive of Unitarian values with whom the Drury Lane audience might sympathize. The irony in this, however, is that the strategy of advancing Dissenting ideology under the camouflage of the Gothic, were it known, undermines the play's of dispelling reactionary fears that Unitarians were covertly working to foment revolution. In this sense, the tragic irony of *Osorio* is that it reveals how the censure of Unitarians, which had gained momentum throughout the decade and had become particularly acute during the invasion scare of 1797, became self-fulilling, for as objects of widespread distrust their cause could only advance by means of dissimulation. Sheridan's indictment regarding 'the obscurity of the three last acts' thus speaks more to the nature of the undertaking itself than to Coleridge's dramaturgical abilities. By attempting to insinuate beliefs he dared not make explicit, his drama languished from an obscurity that was, after all, its necessary condition.

REMORSE, A TRAGEDY (1813)

More than fifteen years separate the completion of *Osorio* from its reincarnation as *Remorse,* which ran for twenty nights at Drury Lane in January of 1813 and netted Coleridge more in revenues than all his other literary productions combined. While it is no small irony that the failure of nine months' labor in 1797 should provide the foundation for his largest commercial success, it is all the more surprising given the dramatic change in his political and religious views over the intervening years. Coleridge renounced his Unitarianism in 1805 and increasingly sought to dismiss or deny his earlier radical involvement, while over the same interval, his criticism of the Gothic as symptomatic of the nation's spiritual, moral, and aesthetic malady intensified and turned politically conservative: Gothic drama, which he now called 'Jacobinical drama', was infecting the British body politic with morally enervating ideas from the Continent by locating, goodness only in lower class characters and vice only in aristocrats and prelates. Just as the 'low' art of the Gothic was usurping the 'high' tradition of Elizabethan and Jacobean drama, so it inverted what Coleridge now took to be the natural social order. *Osorio*'s resurrection as *Remorse* thus poses several interpretive problems: first, how is it that a play rejected by Sheridan for its obscurity should later become one of Drury Lane's more successful productions? Was Sheridan merely mistaken, or did its positive reception reflect changes in the political environment, or changes in theatrical taste, or changes in the manuscript, or some combination of these? Second, how did Coleridge reconcile his conservative theological and political views with a play that was rooted in the soil of his earlier heterodoxies, and how did he reconcile his critical hostility to Gothic drama with *Remorse*'s Gothic credentials? Is *Remorse* an act of hypocrisy? J. D. Moore has argued that the political ambiguity of the Gothic, especially with respect to its representation of the central conflict between hero and villain, made it an easy matter to transform the aristocratic tyrant of the *ancien regime* into the usurping tyrant of the new order. Whereas an audience in 1797 might have interpreted Coleridge's villain as representing William Pitt, his ministers, or his aristocratic supporters, audiences in 1813 would be more likely to find the likeness of Napoleon. Moore also sees *Remorse* as an attempt to elevate the Gothic's aesthetic respectability through the aristocratic and moral valor of the hero Alvar (Albert of *Osorio).* Thus, according to Moore, Coleridge saw *Remorse* as a corrective to the 'Jacobinical Drama' he reviled, and as a positive example of what Gothic drama might become when crafted by morally and politically responsible playwrights. Yet while these explanations are surely correct, they don't go far enough. First, villainy in both plays is not so much political (signifying Pitt or Napoleon) as theological; the hero's struggles are with a zealous Inquisitor and an atheistic materialist. Second, whatever may be said about Alvar as a proper example of moral heroism may also be said of Albert. In each case, the hero is an aristocrat who overcomes the temptation to seek revenge with a Christ-like will to forgive his brother's fratricidal transgressions and heal his diseased soul.

Several small but highly significant changes to *Osorio*'s manuscript suggest how Coleridge sought to reshape

Remorse so that it would coincide with his changed theological, political, and critical views. In particular, the extraction of two short passages known as 'The Foster Mother's Tale' and 'The Dungeon' (appropriated as stand-alone pieces for *Lyrical Ballads*), and the diminution of Alhadra's character distinguish *Remorse* from *Osorio* to a greater degree than has been recognized. Critical opinion that 'The Foster Mother's Tale' was easily omitted misses its structural and political role in providing the psychological motivation for Maria to free the sorcerer (the disguised Albert) from incarceration in the dungeon, an act that sets up the final scene's revelations. *Remorse* struggles to fill the gap left by its removal: Teresa (Maria in *Osorio*) leaves the séance determined to find Alvar's grave where she intends to join him by committing suicide. Inexplicably, however, we find that she has sought out her Foster Mother in order to gain possession of the dungeon keys. In *Osorio*, Maria follows the sorcerer's instructions to seek out the Foster Mother, who cooperatively provides the dungeon keys and a tale that helps Maria make an intuitive connection between Albert and the sorcerer. Thus in addition to its structural function, the passage associates Albert with the tale's nature-boy protagonist and thus reinforces Albert's heterodox religious identity as a votary of nature and as the victim of political and religious persecution. The piece thus works suggestively to underscore the play's central themes—the superiority of spiritualized nature as a moral guide, over the Established Church and the plight (incarceration or escape to the New World) of those who dare to say so. The deletion of 'The Foster Mother's Tale' in *Remorse* thus generates a new political reading that, unlike *Osorio*, does not valorize religious heterodoxy as the victim of Anglican tyranny. The removal of Albert's prison soliloquy, 'The Dungeon', has a similar effect, by calling attention away from a standard Gothic symbol of *ancien regime* tyranny while also eliminating Albert's eloquent claim (as in 'The Foster Mother's Tale') that nature chastens and reforms the transgressor (whose transgressions are in any event the result of 'ignorance and parching poverty' perpetrated by aristocratic privilege) far more effectively than incarceration (*habeas corpus* was in suspension) prescribed by the 'pamper'd Mountebanks' of the judicial and ecclesiastical systems. The result is that *Remorse* offers a less theologically and politically radical hero, one more likely to be seen as an Anglican victim of the traditional Catholic enemy or the new breed of utilitarian atheists than as a Dissenter persecuted by the British government.

Coleridge also changes the political tenor of *Remorse* by diminishing the role and simplifying the character of Alhadra, to whom he had given considerable attention in *Osorio* as a representation of the masses oppressed under the *ancien regime* who were observed to have usurped the tyrannical roles of their overthrown masters. As the victim of brutal incarceration at the hands of the Inquisition and having witnessed her husband's murder by Osorio, Alhadra has good reason to seek revenge, but demonstrates instead a remarkably complex response, one that likely reflects Coleridge's own ambivalence about the course of the Revolution during *Osorio*'s composition. At times she feels impotent outrage, especially when she considers her children's fatherless future; at others a dutiful responsibility to her comrades and to her religious principles to seek revenge. For a brief moment, she becomes receptive to a Christian appeal for forgiveness urged by Albert's close associate and moral surrogate Maurice, but then rejects such 'puny precepts' as incompatible with 'the soul of Man', which rightly desires 'Ambition, Glory, thirst of Enterprize—/The deep and stubborn purpose of revenge' (*PW* III (CC), 137). At one point, weary from persecution and the prospect of vengeance that she feels called upon to commit, she lapses into a desire for oblivion that Coleridge referred to as his own 'Brahman Creed', in a letter to Thelwall (*CL* 1: 350, 14 Oct. 1797). Coleridge might not have condoned Revolutionary violence, but in Alhadra he demonstrates a sympathetic understanding of the dilemma faced by the oppressed. Eliminating these scenes in *Remorse* makes Alhadra a less complex and less sympathetic character, and suggests a less tolerant attitude toward the restive masses. Perhaps most significantly, he eliminates Alhadra's curtain-closing soliloquy that calls for apocalyptic vengeance and that appears to signal the defeat of Albert's aims at peaceful reform. Instead, Coleridge inserts for the stage version of *Remorse* a joyful family reunion and gives Alvar the play's final words—a pat moral that Heaven justly brings remorse to those who ignore their conscience. *Remorse* thus offers closure where *Osorio* had refused it; whereas in the earlier play, persecuted Unitarians needed to await a vindicating apocalypse, in the latter, the hero, now more Anglican than Unitarian, experiences the certainty of triumph over the villain's tyranny and atheism.

The explained supernatural is re-reversed. Taken altogether, *Remorse*'s erasures of these key passages in *Osorio* make it a less religiously heterodox, less politically radical and altogether less complex drama. Perhaps this goes some way towards explaining its success, for *Remorse* gave its audiences the exaggerated moral stereotypes and the final triumph of virtue over vice that they had come to expect. Whether it succeeded in achieving the moral penetration of Elizabethan drama that Coleridge admired is doubtful but by eliminating *Osorio*'s Dissenting voices, one may see how Coleridge sought to reconcile *Remorse* with his censure of the

'Jacobinical Drama'.

Unit 7: Coleridge, Spinoza and *Remorse*

Coleridge's reception of Spinoza is interesting historically both for what it contains and for what it does not contain. One of his most significant contributions to the intellectual life of nineteenth-century Britain was to serve as a conduit, from German exegetes such as Johann Gottfried Eichhorn, of the so-called higher criticism of the Bible. It might be taken as a sign of how thoroughly this historico-philological analysis of scripture, which provoked the first anti-Spinozan polemics in England in the 1670s because it rejected the normative assumption of divinely inspired authorship, had been assimilated by the early nineteenth century that Coleridge himself passed almost in silence over Spinoza's seminal contribution, in the *Tractatus theologico-philosophicus*, to the development of the higher criticism. But in fact Coleridge's aim of reconciling contextualizing exegesis with a belief in divinely inspired prophecy was incompatible with Spinoza's consistent rationalism, which rejected the possibility either of special knowledge on the part of the prophets or of any supernatural agency in the composition of scripture . When he alluded to the *Tractatus* in the *Aids to Reflection*, Coleridge was tellingly selective in his recollection, invoking Spinoza by way of differentiating theological mystery from logical absurdity: "I abide by a maxim, which I learnt at an early period of my theological studies, from Benedict Spinoza. Where an Alternative lies between the Absurd and the Incomprehensible, no wise man can be at a loss which of the two to prefer" (338-39). Coleridge was probably referring to Spinoza's refutation of the claim that scripture never expressly contradicts itself (*Opera* 3: 184), but he could not have endorsed Spinoza's conclusion in the same chapter of the *Tractatus* that reason and theology have separate domains, the former concerned with truth and wisdom (*ratio regnum veritatis, & sapientiae*), the latter with piety and obedience (*Theologia autem pietatis, & obedientiae*). Although Coleridge was careful to specify, in the work of biblical hermeneutics composed in 1824 and published posthumously under the title *Confessions of an Inquiring Spirit*, that he understood inspiration not as divine dictation but as the revelation of the truths that the scriptural writers expressed of their own accord and by their own means, even this qualified affirmation of inspired authorship implied, as Coleridge himself acknowledged, the "inappellable authority" of "whatever is referred by the sacred Penmen to a direct communication from God".

Equally noteworthy, if unsurprising, is the absence in Coleridge's response to Spinoza of reference to the programmatic concerns that are now identified with the radical Enlightenment, such as the advocacy of religious tolerance, freedom of speech, and democracy. These political commitments will have been no more congenial to Coleridge, as his disillusionment with the course of the French Revolution gradually hardened into a reactionary conservatism, than the uncompromising rationalism of Spinoza's biblical interpretation. Hence the restrictedness of Coleridge's interest to the metaphysical aspects of Spinozism, by which term I mean a congeries of monistic philosophical systems which he or others of his time happened to label Spinozistic, not excluding Spinoza's. Although he shared with radical Enlightenment figures some of their enthusiasm for Spinozism, the narrow focus of Coleridge's attention, especially with respect to the Spinozan corpus itself, was more characteristic of his late-Enlightenment and Romantic-era contemporaries in Germany whose responses to Spinoza were shaped by the so-called *Pantheismusstreit*, the prolonged controversy of the 1780s and 1790s involving many prominent German intellectuals, including Moses Mendelssohn, J. G. Herder, Goethe, and indirectly Kant.

As for my title, the word *ecumenical* has two principal meanings: the more general one is *belonging to the whole world*, while the more specific one is *belonging to the whole Christian world, or universal church*. I shall address the question of how Spinoza was, as interpreted by Coleridge, ecumenical in the narrower sense. Throughout the first three decades of the nineteenth century, Coleridge sought repeatedly to identify Spinoza in one way or another with Christianity and to rescue him from the prolonged anathematization that already by the end of the seventeenth century had made his name synonymous with the word *atheism*. Lecturing on philosophy in London in March 1819, Coleridge informed his auditors that "the theologic hatred of his name is one of the most incomprehensible parts of philosophic researches; for Spinoza was originally a Jew, and he held the opinions of the most learned Jews, particularly the Cabalistic philosophers. Next, he was of the most pure and exemplary life, and it has been said of him, if he did not think as a Christian, he felt and acted like one" (*Lectures 1818-1819* 578-9).

To be sure, Spinoza's early biographers had given some licence to the attempt to associate him with Christianity: Johann Colerus, whose biography was reprinted in the edition of the works that Coleridge annotated (Spinoza, *Opera omnia* 2: 591-665), quoted Spinoza's reassurance to his Lutheran landlady that her religion was a good one and she needed no other to be saved (Colerus 41-42), while Pierre Bayle, in

his *Dictionary*, reported that Spinoza had "publicly profest Christianity, and frequented the Assemblies of the Mennonites, or those of the Arminians of Amsterdam" (2799). In the *Tractatus theologico-politicus* Spinoza himself, albeit in an exposition of scripture, referred to Jesus as Christ and to his teachings as the assumption of divine wisdom in human nature (*Opera* 3: 20-21), thereby prompting his correspondent Henry Oldenburg to request a clarification of his Christological views (*Opera* 4: 304).

But as Coleridge will have known at least by November 1813, having read and extensively annotated a set of the *Opera omnia* which included the correspondence with Oldenburg, Spinoza understood the resurrection of Christ to be merely allegorical (*Opera* 4: 328), and confessed that the notion of the Incarnation seemed no less absurd to him than the squaring of a circle (*Opera* 4: 309). Moreover, Coleridge never claimed that Spinoza had actually been a practising Christian, or that his metaphysics were finally conformable to Trinitarianism—on the contrary, he observed consistently and regretfully that they were not. Indeed, this was the case even before the year of his most intensive study of Spinoza: when, for example, he borrowed the *Opera omnia* from his friend Henry Crabb Robinson in November 1812, Coleridge, according to Robinson's diary, "kissed Spinoza's face at the title-page, said his book was his gospel, and in less than a minute added that his philosophy was, after all, false. . . . Did philosophy commence in an IT IS instead of an I AM, Spinoza would be altogether true; and without allowing a breathing-time he parenthetically asserted, 'I, however, believe in all the doctrines of Christianity, even of the Trinity'" (Robinson 1: 112).

All the stranger, then, that Coleridge should have sought to mitigate Spinoza's supposed errors on the grounds of his proximity to Christianity, as he did in his philosophical lecture of March 22, 1819: "And if we come at last to the man's own professions and service, I have no doubt they were [sincere]; … that not only the immediate publishers of Spinoza's writings, but that Spinoza did think that his system was identical with but that of Christianity, on so subtle a point that at least it was pantheism, but in the most religious form in which it could appear" (*Lectures 1818-1819* 580). Why the importunate appeals to his Christian mode of life; the fierce denunciations of his detractors as less Christian, or at least no more orthodox, than Spinoza himself; the insistence that "that right Track was glimmering before him, just as it pleased Heaven to remove" (*SWF* 610)—which suggests a certain carelessness on the part of the infinite intellect? The most plausible answer, I think, is to be found in Coleridge's conflicted attraction to philosophical monism.

Though large in number and diverse in medium—notebooks, manuscript fragments, marginalia, letters, public lectures, published books—Coleridge's comments on Spinoza are relatively restricted in content and remarkably consistent. Their interest consists less in their exegetic value, for indeed they do not constitute a sustained analysis of the philosophical writings, than in their illustration, on the one hand, of the complexity of Spinoza's *Rezeptionsgeschichte* and, on the other hand, of a fundamental, unresolved conflict of Coleridge's own intellectual life. To the extent he sought to assimilate Spinoza to Christianity, or at least maintained that the two were not absolutely incompatible, Coleridge confirmed the applicability to himself of the observation he attributed to an unnamed Englishman of his acquaintance: "I never yet knew . . . a single person, whom Spinoza had ever converted to his way of thinking; but I know half a dozen at least who have converted Spinoza to theirs!" (*SWF* 620).

Coleridge's view of Spinoza remained consistently conflicted and characterized by special pleading from about 1803 to his death in 1834, as Richard Berkeley has observed (*Coleridge* 41-42). But he had become interested in Spinoza even earlier, certainly by the late 1790s, when he was espousing Unitarianism and consequently had no reason to be preoccupied with Spinoza's relation to Christian orthodoxy. The evidence from this period is somewhat sparser than for the richly documented later years of Coleridge's life, and seemingly contradictory. A letter of July 30, 1797, in which Coleridge tells Robert Southey that he is "sunk in Spinoza" and remains "as undisturbed as a Toad in a Rock" (*CL* 1: 534), implies that he was reading the philosopher's works at that date, whereas a letter of June 7, 1800, to the chemist Humphry Davy implies that he was planning to do so but had not yet had the opportunity. When, in a letter of Christmas Eve 1799 to Southey, Coleridge professes himself a Spinozist, he does so jokingly: "My Spinosism (if Spinosism it be and i' faith 'tis very like it) disposed me to consider this big City [Bristol] as that part of the Supreme *One*, which the prophet Moses was allowed to see" (*CL* 1: 551). Eighteen years later, in an anecdote about the government spy sent to monitor him and Wordsworth in the summer of 1797, Coleridge again made a joke of his Spinozan interests, but this time in order to insinuate the insignificance of his former political radicalism: "At first [the spy] fancied, that we were aware of our danger; for he often heard me talk of one *Spy Nozy*, which he was inclined to interpret of himself, and of a remarkable feature belonging to him; but he was speedily convinced that it was the name of a man who had made a book and lived long ago" (*BL* 1: 194). Admittedly that anecdote is too contrived to be entirely plausible, although the spy of course was real and the feeble pun on Spinoza's name had appeared in Coleridge's notebooks as early as 1799 (*CN* 1: 422).

However unreliable the evidence from Coleridge himself concerning his early engagement with Spinozan or Spinozistic thought, it is supplemented by that from Clement Carlyon, an Englishman who met Coleridge in Göttingen in 1799 and described their conversations in the first volume of his autobiography of 1858. Not only were "the doctrines of Spinoza" said "to prevail . . . among the literati of the North of Germany" (i.e., Lutheran Germany), the scandalized Carlyon recalls, but they were frequently discussed by Coleridge, who explained to his friends that the "great principle of Spinozism is, that there is nothing properly and absolutely existing but matter, and the modifications of matter; among which are even comprehended thought, abstract and general ideas, comparisons, relations, combinations of relations" (194). As a recreation of conversations conducted almost four decades earlier, Carlyon's extract will not bear close analysis. But taken in conjunction with the "concentrated definition of Spinozism" that he attributes to Coleridge, namely that "Each thing has a life of its own, and we are all one life" (Carlyon 193), the reference to "combinations of relations" suggests that the source of Coleridge's 1790s version of Spinozism was less likely Spinoza's works themselves than Joseph Priestley's elaboration of David Hartley's associationism (Perry 112-16).

Whereas Hartley himself, fearful of having to abandon the idea of the immaterial soul, had been unwilling to commit himself fully to a materialist theory of consciousness, Priestley had no compunction about doing so, arguing that man is composed of a single substance comprising both material and mental attributes (1: xix-xx). Coleridge will have been initially attracted to Priestley's theory because it seemed to resolve the problem of mind-body dualism, as Hartley's qualified materialism manifestly did not. A letter of 1794 to Southey makes Coleridge's allegiance explicit: "I go farther than Hartley and believe the corporeality of *thought*—namely, that it is motion" (*CL* 1: 137).

What followed from this materialist explanation of thought was a materialist explanation of divinity. For if, Priestley reasoned, we cannot account for our own thought except in terms of the properties and powers of matter (since to do otherwise would be to admit an insuperable dualism), then still less can we account for God in other terms (since to do so would be to deny the distinction between the immaterial and the material). The "Divine Being" (Priestley's preferred term for the deity) and the world are not essentially different because he, or it, could not act upon the world if he were not also in some sense material; and everything that exists and happens in the world must be owing to him: "matter is, by this means, resolved into nothing but the divine *agency* exerted according to certain rules" (Priestley 1: 39). And if, Priestley continued with studied casualness, "every thing is really *done* by the divine power, what material objection can there be to every thing *being* the divine power" (1: 40)? Just as the individual consciousness is one with the world, so the world is one with God. In "Religious Musings" (1794) and in his contribution to Southey's *Joan of Arc* (1795), Coleridge versified the Priestleyan conception of divinity and its implication for human self-understanding: "'tis God / Diffus'd thro' all, that doth make all one whole," he explained in "Religious Musings" (*CPP* 25 [lines 139-40]), and "'Tis the sublime of man, / Our noontide Majesty, to know ourselves / Parts and proportions of one wond'rous whole!" (lines 135-37). Hence the effusion of *Joan of Arc*:

Glory to Thee, FATHER and Earth and Heaven!
All-conscious PRESENCE of the Universe!
Nature's vast ever-acting ENERGY!
In will, in deed, IMPULSE of All to all.

Priestley published the first edition of his *Disquisitions relating to Matter and Spirit* in 1777 and the second, from which I have been quoting, in 1782. One notable addition to the second edition is a sentence expressly dissociating Priestley's monism from Spinoza's: "Nor indeed, is making the deity to *be*, as well as to *do* every thing, *in this sense*, any thing like the opinion of Spinoza; because I suppose a source of infinite power, and superior intelligence, from which all inferior beings are derived; that every inferior intelligent being has a consciousness distinct from that of the supreme intelligence, and that they will for ever continue distinct" (1: 42). Notwithstanding this disclaimer, of which he may in the event have been unaware, Coleridge evidently did consider Priestley's metaphysics to be a kind of Spinozism, and he became increasingly critical of it in the latter half of the 1790s because of what he considered its lack of self-consistency and its unsatisfactory provision for explaining the existence of evil. (He also grew dissatisfied with his own "Religious Musings," fearing, he acknowledged, that it could "easily be misconstrued into Spinosism" [*CL* 3: 467].) Precisely by trying to reduce thought to matter, and thereby transforming matter into "a mere modification of intelligence," as Coleridge later elaborated in the *Biographia Literaria*, Priestley had undermined his own stated position: "He stript matter of all its material properties; substituted spiritual powers; and when we expected to find a body, behold! we had nothing but its ghost! the*apparition* of a defunct substance" (*BL* 1: 136).

Already in March 1796, when he was still calling himself a necessitarian, Coleridge confided in a letter his

difficulty reconciling Priestley's theism with his materialist monism: "How is it that Dr Priestley is not an atheist?—He asserts in three different Places, that God not only *does*, but *is*, every thing. But if God *be* every thing, every Thing is God: —which is all, the Atheists assert—" (*CL* 1: 192). The pressure of that question grew more insistent in the following years, and finally intolerable in April 1799, when Coleridge, then attending lectures in Göttingen, received word that his infant son Berkeley had died back in England. In a consolatory letter to his wife he wrote, "But the living God is every where, & works every where—and where is there room for Death? . . . I confess that the more I think, the more I am discontented with the doctrines of Priestley" (*CL* 1: 482). This reflection augurs a crucial turning-point in Coleridge's intellectual life, after which he was no longer prepared to accept what Thomas McFarland unkindly called Priestley's "bargain-basement Spinozism" (169).

After returning from Germany in July 1799 with a good command of the language, Coleridge, while maintaining an interest in British theologians, devoted himself increasingly to the study of Continental, particularly German, philosophers, from Fichte and Kant in the first decade of the nineteenth century to Schelling and various *Naturphilosophen* associated with Schelling in the second decade. A serious, if as yet unspecific, interest in Spinoza manifested itself in Coleridge's plan, sketched out in notebook entries of November 1799 and October 1803, to compose a poem on the Dutch philosopher that would address the possibility of multiplicity, or "multeity" to use Coleridge's own word, within unity:

If I begin a poem of Spinoza, thus it should begin/

I would make a pilgrimage to the burning sands of Arabia, or &c &c to find the Man who could explain to me there can be *oneness*, there being infinite Perceptions—yet there must be a *one*ness, not an intense Union but absolute Unity. . .

CN 1: 556; cf. 1: 561

Coleridge did not in fact write a poem about Spinoza, but by the end of the decade he recognized in Spinoza's monism the only intellectually viable alternative to Kant's transcendental idealism: "Only two *Systems* of Philosophy – (sibi consistentia) possible 1. Spinoza 2 Kant, i.e. the absolute & the relative, the κατ' οντα, and the κατ' ανθρωπον. or 1 ontological, 2 the anthropological" (*CN* 3: 3756). That is one of three notebook entries devoted to Spinoza in the spring of 1810, and the defensiveness on Spinoza's behalf in the others (one of which I shall discuss presently) indicate that he felt himself on the horns of a dilemma, compelled but reluctant to make a choice and therefore taking provisional refuge in a fudge. Here, then, we can mark the beginning of his Christianization of Spinoza, an effort that, however implausible in itself, becomes comprehensible when considered in the broader context of Coleridge's intellectual life.

In the first volume of the *Biographia Literaria*, Coleridge presented his philosophical investigations up to 1815, the year he dictated the work, as a search for "a total and undivided philosophy" (*BL* 1: 282-3) in which, on the one hand, the original identity of subject and object could be assumed as the ground of knowledge, and, on the other hand, free will could be assumed as the ground of ethics. Retracing his path from associationism and materialism ("unintelligible") through Cartesian dualism ("long since exploded") and hylozoism ("the death of all rational physiology") to Fichte's subjective idealism ("crude egoismus") and finally to Schelling's identity philosophy, in the last of which he finds for the time being a "genial coincidence" with his own conclusions (*BL* 1: 160), Coleridge distinguishes two broadly opposed classes of philosophical system, the realist and the idealist.

Appropriating Coleridge's own homelier designations for these classes from the remark to Crabb Robinson that I quoted earlier, Thomas McFarland argues that Coleridge was able to settle the competing claims of the principles of "it is" and "I am" only by foregoing systematic philosophy for an emotional commitment to Trinitarian Christianity. In this account, the conflict Coleridge described in the *Biographia*, that "my head was with Spinoza, though my whole heart remained with Paul and John" (*BL* 1: 201), contained within itself the eventual resolution to his fundamental philosophical dilemma. But insofar as Kant's critical philosophy, by opposing philosophical dogmatism and excluding metaphysics from the realm of knowledge, urged Coleridge towards his *confessio fidei*, the "Trinitarian resolution," as McFarland calls it, amounted to a victory for the philosophy of "I am": "Christianity, as an expansion of the 'I am,' was Coleridge's lifelong commitment, in philosophical as well as religious terms" (251). To McFarland, whose attitude towards Coleridge is rather like that of a spectator shouting encouragement to an exhausted runner in the final stretch of a marathon, the concept of the Trinity not only anchored Coleridge's "complete system . . . in an extramundane ground without abandoning the reality of the natural world," but deepened his understanding "of the 'I am' starting-point" (227).

Attractive as this interpretation is in its neatness, it exaggerates the clarity of Coleridge's distinction between

the "it is" and "I am" philosophies, and hence between Spinozism and Christianity. To be sure, McFarland follows Coleridge himself in tending to treat the classification *pantheist* as a natural kind, and hence self-explanatory, which is why he can refer to "the pantheist tradition" with no more self-reflexivity than Coleridge displays in collocating "the Proclo-plotinian Platonists" and "their Spinosistic imitators, the nature-philosophers of the present Germany" under the rubric of pantheism (*Marginalia* 3: 909; cf. *CN* 3: 4497). Both in this respect are the indirect heirs of Bayle, who began his article on Spinoza by declaring that "the substance of his Doctrine was the same with that of many Ancient and Modern Philosophers, both in *Europe* and in Eastern Countries" (2782). A more restricted conception of pantheism, or at least one that did not in effect serve as the hermeneutic instrument of an inherited prejudice, might have spared Coleridge some of the intellectual quandaries he suffered when he read thinkers to whom he was attracted but of whom he thought he ought not to approve. Still, his response to Spinoza himself was often more complex than McFarland acknowledges.

It would be consistent with the account of a Trinitarian resolution to the choice between realism and idealism if Coleridge, having been content to call himself a Spinozist in his Unitarian youth, and probably before having read Spinoza, had then been at pains to reject Spinozism in his Trinitarian maturity, and especially after having read the philosopher's works. But the facts do not conform so tidily to that narrative. Consider, for example, a comment on F. H. Jacobi's *Über die Lehre des Spinoza*, the book (first published in 1785, though Coleridge read the expanded second edition of 1789) which inaugurated the *Pantheismusstreit* by revealing that the much-admired, recently deceased playwright Lessing, an exemplary figure of the German Enlightenment, had professed himself a Spinozist in private conversations with Jacobi. Jacobi's own primary concern had been neither Lessing nor Spinoza, but rationalism, of which he took Spinoza's *Ethics* to be the most perfect expression. Assuming the universal applicability of the principle of sufficient reason, a consistent rationalism must be deterministic and fatalistic, Jacobi asserted, and thus incompatible with the belief in a self-caused God and the freedom of the will. Spinozism could not therefore be dismissed as a harmlessly obscure and incoherent metaphysical doctrine, for in fact it made manifest the atheism latent in all rationalist philosophy. Thus its espousal by someone considered a representative of Enlightenment, an assessment with which Jacobi did not disagree, was a sign precisely of the Enlightenment's moral bankruptcy.

Now one would expect Coleridge to have found this a compelling argument, not least because he had rejected Priestley's necessitarianism on account of its ethical implications. But instead Coleridge sought either to defend the Dutch philosopher from the charge of atheism or, when he himself made the same charge, to qualify it strongly. Responding to Jacobi in the margin of Robinson's copy of Spinoza's works (rather than in his own copy of *Über die Lehre des Spinozas*), Coleridge insisted, with regard to the finite causality affirmed in the *Ethics*, according to which every finite thing is determined by an infinite series of finite causes,

> If these finite Causes can be said to act at all, then that on which they act has an equal power of action—: and even as tho' all in God *essentially*, we are yet each *existentially* individual, so we must have freedom in God in exact proportion to our Individuality. It is most necessary to distinguish Spinosism from Spinosa—i.e. the ~~imaginary~~ consequences of the immanence in God as the one only necessary Being whose essence involves existence, with the deductions from Spinosa's own mechanic *realistic* view of the World. Even in the latter, I cannot accord with Jacobi's assertion, that Spinosism as taught by Spinosa, is Atheism/ for tho' he will not consent to call things essentially disparate by the same name, and therefore denies human intelligence to ~~the~~ Deity, yet he adores his *Wisdom*. . . . It is true, he contends for Necessity; but then he makes two disparate Classes of Necessity, the one identical with ~~Freedom~~ Liberty (even as the Christian Doctrine, "whose service is perfect Freedom") the other Compulsion = Slavery. . . .
>
> *Marginalia* 5: 207-8; cf. Jacobi 118

Coleridge seems here to infer from proposition 28 of book 1 of the *Ethics* a distinction that Spinoza did not explicitly make, between absolute or logical necessity and merely causal necessity. The *essential* is that which, as an attribute of substance or an infinite mode from which a law of nature follows, could not be otherwise, whereas the *existential* is that which, although the result of a particular series of causes, is not itself necessitated by the general features of the universe and could conceivably, given a different casual series, be otherwise. From this possibility of the contingency of particularities in the universe—a possibility whose admissibility is still contested among interpreters of the *Ethics* (see, e.g., Curley 49-50, and Bennett 74-66)—Coleridge comes as close as he was ever to do in detecting in the *Ethics* a provision for individual freedom of will, such freedom being the basis of the individual's expression, through moral action, of a love of God. Having identified this mitigation of Spinoza's necessitarianism, Coleridge is momentarily content to explain away the rest by reference to the contemporary philosophical context: "But never has a great Man been so hardly and inequitably treated by Posterity, as Spinosa—No allowance made for the prevalence, nay,

universality of Dogmatism & the mechanic System in his age" (*Marginalia* 5: 208). Evidently Spinoza's necessitarianism followed necessarily from his philosophical milieu.

The observation of Spinoza's refusal to concede personhood to God, even in a metaphorical sense, anticipates what would soon become Coleridge's fundamental objection to Spinoza's metaphysics. But his special pleading on behalf of that metaphysics did not cease after he had returned the *Opera omnia*, now heavily annotated, to Crabb Robinson in November 1813. The differentiation of Spinozan monism from conventional pantheism figures in the *Biographia*, where Spinoza is unexpectedly aligned with the theosophist Jakob Böhme and the Quaker George Fox, "mystics" whom Coleridge credits with having enabled him "to skirt, without crossing, the sandy deserts of utter unbelief" (*BL* 1: 149-50). To McFarland this means no more than that both Böhme and Fox were, like Spinoza himself, representatives of the errant philosophy whose temptations Coleridge successfully resisted (245-46, 249-51). That is the negative version of an interpretation to which Frederick Beiser would offer the positive counterpart: what McFarland and Beiser share is the broad understanding of pantheism characteristic of the late Enlightenment itself. To Beiser the linking to Spinoza of Böhme and Fox, both of whom express their inner conviction of God's presence, would be perfectly comprehensible because he regards the rise of Spinozism in the German radical Enlightenment as the secular reassertion of the Protestant Counter-Reformation: if Spinoza had undermined the authority of the Bible, he had also preserved the possibility of realizing Luther's ideal of the immediate subjective experience of God. Indeed Spinoza enhanced that possibility, Beiser argues, precisely because he removed the obstacles of a transcendent deity and a difficult sacred text (50-52).

Coleridge's Spinoza, however, is not secular, and if not exactly Protestant, is trying to be so. His connection with the mystics, then, likely consists in Coleridge's sense that the geometric demonstration of the unity of God and nature demanded an affective supplement, which is exactly what the mystics, with their intuition of the divine presence, supplied. This interpretation would also account for Coleridge's frequent references to Spinoza's system as a "*Skeleton* of the Truth" (e.g., *Friend* 1: 54n; *CL* 4: 775). Just as Kant, in the third *Critique*, conceded to aesthetic judgment the possibility of enabling a transition in thinking from knowledge to morality, thus making the suprasensible ideas of reason real in the sensible world, so perhaps Coleridge hoped that feeling would make intuitable what reason had established to be necessary. In other words, the mystics' feeling might make Spinoza's "dry Bones live" (*CL* 4: 548). If that is correct, then the pairing of Fox and Böhme with Spinoza—a pairing that Coleridge made on at least two occasions in addition to that in the *Biographia*—would attest to the same need that found expression in Coleridge's theorization of the natural symbol in which sign and meaning are ontologically connected, that is, the aesthetic objectification to the subject of its theoretically posited unity with the world of objects (see Halmi). To the extent that a Spinozistic monism permitted the assumption of the primordial unity of subject and object in the infinite substance, it promised a solution to the impasses represented by Kant's dualism and Fichte's subjectivism.

Nonetheless, the logic of Coleridge's alignment of Spinoza with the "mystics" is peculiar, for he concedes on the one hand that the thought of the latter "is capable of being converted into an irreligious PANTHEISM"—a point he makes also in his marginalia on Böhme—and insists on the other that Spinoza's *Ethics* is not "*in itself* and *essentially* . . . incompatible with religion, natural or revealed" (*BL* 1: 152). Are we meant to conclude that the ostensibly atheist Spinoza is actually more amenable to religious belief—or more specifically, provides a more compelling assurance of the divine presence in the world—than the avowedly religious mystics? It is as if, having skirted the desert with Böhme and Fox, Coleridge were now prepared to plunge into it in search of Spinoza.

Perhaps he was engaging in the rhetorical equivalent of a bait-and-switch tactic, transferring the association with pantheism from Spinoza to the Christian mystics in order to render the contemplation of Spinoza's system more acceptable. If so, it is a strategem to which he would resort again in letters condemning "*Modern* Calvinism" as a kind of Spinozism that lacks "the noble honesty, that majesty of openness, so delightful in Spinoza, which made him scorn all attempts to varnish over fair consequence" (*CL* 4: 548), and Unitarianism (which he had long since disavowed) as "far, very far worse … than the Atheism of Spinoza" (*CL* 6: 893). Better a wolf in wolf's clothing. "Why in the instance of Spinoza alone," Coleridge fumed in a manuscript note of 1817-18, "should [it] be thought *suspicious* to extract the medicinal and praise what is praise-worthy? Or is he fixed at the summit of the temple of Heterodoxy as a Conductor, which attracting all the Lightning of our Odium Theologicum towards itself procures an immunity for the Fabric at large . . . ?" (*SWF* 616). What he meant by "the Fabric at large" is explained by a notebook entry in which he contrasted Spinoza favourably with "the Voltaires, Humes, and the whole mob of *popular* Infidels"—Hume in particular deserving such opprobrium because, in the *Treatise of Human Nature*, he had mischievously invoked Spinoza's "universally infamous" doctrine of the single substance in order to ridicule the idea of the

immortality of the soul (240-41). Yet as Richard Berkeley has noticed, Coleridge's appeals to Spinoza's Christian virtues are curiously irrelevant, in that they do not pertain to the content of his metaphysics except in excusing its errors as the consequence of his purported innocence ("Providential" 8-9, *Coleridge* 46).

An extraordinary passage from a note Coleridge left in manuscript serves synecdochally to illustrate this point. Composed in 1817-18, the note draws on Colerus and defends Spinoza by referring not only to his saintly life but to his rebarbative writing style, calculated to ward off casual seekers of heterodoxy:

> Consult his Life by COLERUS, who knew Spinoza personally, lived near him, and collected his materials on the Spot. Himself a strictly orthodox Divine, he speaks of Spinoza's Opinions . . . with at least sufficient Horror: but he did not therefore omit to refute every charge, every calumnious rumour, against his Character as a *man*: and . . . he records the blameless innocence of his Life, his inobtrusive sincerity and his solicitude not to disturb, nay, his anxiety to second, the unquestioning faith and pious exercises of the simple-hearted. . . . Nay, he expressed not only his doubts, but his reluctance to the publication of his MSS . . . in the most innoxious way, namely, in Latin & in the driest, austerest, and most inattractive form, adopted from the method of Geometry, and so free from the least wanton offence against the feelings of his age and [country], so reverential in his use of terms held in reverence by others, that Ludovicus Meyer, the Editor, appears to have seriously believed the tenets of his Master to be in all essentials co-incident with the doctrines of Christianity, as declared in the Gospel of John, and the epistles of S^{t} Paul: nor do we possess any satisfactory proof, that Spinoza himself thought otherwise.

Coleridge's defence is thus founded on two distinct claims: first, that in his innocence and single-minded philosophical rigour, Spinoza formulated a metaphysical doctrine without regard to its implications for the foundations of morality; and second, that the resultant "errors" of this doctrine were venial in nature. Variations of this defence, as we have seen, recur throughout Coleridge's later writings, and as late as 1830 he is supposed to have expressed his conviction that Spinoza "was on the borders of truth, and would no doubt had he lived had attained it" (*TT* 1: 557).

In the event, however, Coleridge's enduring attraction and insurmountable objection to Spinoza's metaphysics were both rooted in its demonstration of the logical necessity of the single substance. This dilemma found expression in a characteristically Coleridgean footnote to a letter of 1815 to the publisher John Gutch:

> Spinoza's is a World with one Pole only, & consequently no Equator. Had he commenced either with the natura naturata, as the Objective Pole, or at the "I per se I" as the Subjective Pole—he must necessarily in either case have arrived at the Equator, or Identity of Subject and Object—and thence instead of *a* God, = the one only Substance, at which all finite Things are the modes and accidents, he would have revealed to himself the doctrine of The Living God, having the Ground of his own Existence within himself, and the originating Principle of all dependent Existence in his Will and Word.
>
> *CL* 4: 548

While satisfying what reason demanded, the dissolution of subject-object dualism, Spinozan monism denied what morality required, a voluntaristic conception of God. For once Coleridge had determined that the only possible guarantor of the free will of individual humans was that of a transcendent but personalized deity, he could never fully accept Spinoza's allegedly unipolar conception of God. Referring in a note of c. 1817-18 to the "unica Substantia infinitis Attributis" as defined in the *Ethics* (although that particular formulation is never used in the work), Coleridge lamented that Spinoza's "error consisted not so much in what he affirms, as in what he has omitted to affirm or rashly denied . . . that he saw God in the ground *only* and exclusively, in his *Might* alone and his *essential* Wisdom, and not likewise in his moral, intellectual, existential and personal Godhead" (*SWF* 609). In short, the *Ethics* lacked the theoretical basis for an ethics.

As we saw earlier, it follows from the distinction between the essential (unconditionally necessary) and the existential (contingently necessary)—a distinction that Coleridge himself, with perhaps excessive interpretive generosity, conceded to the *Ethics*—that the Spinozan God, as the eternal actualization of the universe, need not impinge upon the temporal actualization of events, so that individual *qua* finite mode might indeed possess the freedom to actualize itself. But to Coleridge this possibility, to the extent that he seriously entertained it, was insufficiently consolatory because it excluded the existential from the deity itself: the infinite substance required the supplement of an absolute will. Accordingly, Coleridge sought in the abortive *Opus Maximum*, the broad aim of which was to reconcile faith with reason, to demonstrate the necessary existence of the divine will. But insofar as that will was conceived by analogy to human will—"the same power but in a higher dignity," as Coleridge himself asserted (*OM* 11)—the Coleridgean God exhibited exactly the anthropomorphism that Spinoza had ridiculed in the appendix to part 1 of the *Ethics*. What Coleridge wanted,

finally, was an infinite substance with a human face.

In that respect, his self-contradictory Christianization of Spinoza was consistent with his engagement with systematic philosophy generally, and particularly with Schelling's. The fundamental conflict in Coleridge's mature intellectual career was, as Christoph Bode has accurately summarized it, the systematic incompatibility of his religious convictions with "the philosophical materials [he] assembled from various sources to give substance to his own deliberations or to impress his audiences and readership" (610). The true object of the special pleading that Coleridge conducted on Spinoza's behalf was not the Dutch philosopher, therefore, but the Highgate sage himself. For it was Coleridge's persistent, if unrealized and indeed unrealizable, hope to become himself the Christian Spinoza, giving Christianity a systematic philosophical foundation while deriving systematic philosophy from a Trinitarian conception of a personalized God. The wistful hope of squaring the circle, so to speak, in a philosophically coherent and religiously satisfying way continued to manifest itself in Coleridge's statements about Spinoza to the end of his life. While acknowledging in a notebook of March 1832, "If like Spinoza, I had contemplated God as the infinite Substance (Substantia Unica) as the incomprehensible mindless, lifeless, formless *Substans* of all Mind, Life and Form—there would be for me neither Good nor Evil – Yet Pain, & Misery would *be*—& would be hopeless" (*CN* 5: 6659), Coleridge could nonetheless express in a letter of the same month, without obvious irony, the hope of encountering Spinoza's spirit in heaven, "with St. John and St. Paul smiling on him and loving him" (*CL* 6: 893). The implication, which hardly needed to be stated, is that Coleridge himself hoped to be present at the occasion, equally smiling and smiled upon.

If Coleridge was consistently drawn to dichotomizing, to the extent that his most enduring contributions to critical theory are the distinctions he formulated himself or adapted from others (e.g., imagination vs. fancy, imitation vs. copy, organic vs. mechanical form, symbol vs. allegory), he was just as consistently unable to constrain his thought by a dichotomous logic. Having identified two mutually exclusive intellectual positions, he might try simultaneously to adopt both while nonetheless accepting the truth of their mutual exclusivity. Coleridge's engagement with Spinoza is one example of such a situation, the "it is" and "I am" circling each other endlessly, the finite modes, one might say, of his infinite irresolution.

Unit 8(a): Summary of the Play *Remorse*

The scene of the play is in Spain, and the time, as Coleridge writes in his note, is the reign of Philip the Second, just at the close of the civil wars against the Moors. The action centres around Alvar and Ordonio, the two sons of lord Valdez, a noble Spaniard, and Donna Teresa, an orphan heiress, bequeathed by her parents on their death-bed to the wardship of the Marquis. Alvar, the eldest son of lord Valdez, to whom Teresa had been betrothed, is supposedly dead --- he has been absent for six years --- and Teresa is now addressed by Ordonio, the younger son of the Marquis.

Teresa, however, remains faithful to Alvar. Her indifference to Ordonio and unwavering fidelity to Alvar's memory provoke maddening despair and murderous jealousy in the younger brother, and Coleridge borrowing his materials from Otway and Schiller, weaves a complex fabrio of perverted human relationships.

As the play opens, we find Don Alvar has returned from his long exile (in) a distant shore. His treacherous brother Don Ordonio arranged --- successfully he thought --- to have murdered Alvar long years ago through the Moor Isidore who actually did not carry out the. command. Alvar returns in the guise of a Moresco Chief. As he heard a rumour that his beloved Teresa had married his villainous brother, Alvar wanted to arouse remorse in him, Hamletlike. Their father Valdez is also keen on Teresa*s marriage with Ordonio. ("We have mourned for Alvar. / Of his sad fate there now remains no doubt. / Have I no other son ?" /""IV, ii, 39-41) But Teresa does not love : the "other son" ("speak not of him,.' / That low imposture" / IV,ii, 41-42_7) Ordonio commands Isidore to play the role of a fake Sorcerer in order to convince Teresa that Alvar is really dead. The ''Stranger'1 (Don Alvar) claims that he knows how "to "bring the dead to life again" and Isidore asks Ordonio to visit the stranger in the wood near the ruin. Ordonio without recognising his elder brother in him makes him agree to come to his castle to perform certain deeds at his command. But the "Stranger" chooses to show his own 'murder' . The Inquisitors interfere and Ordonio being Claudius - like perturbed gets Alvar imprisoned in a dungeon. Suspecting Isidore's treachery, Ordonio murders .him in a cave ---- his first real murder. His wife Alhadra makes an assault on the castle with the help of the dead Isidore's friends ---- a scene charged with a sense of noble adventurism. Teresa enters into the dungeon to free the "Stranger" in whose appearance she saw "something". After a few moments of hesitancy Alvar discloses his identity, and Teresa, taking her portrait from his neck ("Ah '. who art thou ? / Nay, I will call thee, Alvar " / V, i, 87~88_7) "falls on his neck". But this moment of bliss does not last long ("Alvar my Alvar '. am I sure I hold thee ? / Is it no dream ? thee' in my arms, my Alvar '. " /~Y, i, 104-5_7) Ordonio enters with a goblet in his hand, and offers the "Sorcerer"

poisoned wine ; but Alvar says, "There is poison in the wine" (Y, i, 138). Ordonio now declares his intention, "for one of us must die" (Y, i, 1B9)* Alvar throws away the goblet' and calls his brother "Mountebank and villain '. " (V, i, 151) and also appeals'.-to him to repent for his act ("One pang '. / Could I call up One pang of true remorse '. " /~Y, i, 167-68 7) Now Ordonio "becomes desperately violent ("Cheat villain \ traitor '. Whatsoever, thou he. / I fear thee, man l " /~Y, i, 194-95J7)• Teresa uses her last weapon (''Ordonio /.'Tis thy brother '. " /"Y, i, 196_7) When he rushes at Alvar with his sword, Teresa flings herself on Ordonio and holds his arm ("Stop, madman, stop " /" Y, i, 195_7)• At this dramatic turn of events, Ordonio becomes almost dumb-founded **(there is no stage direction here). When Alvar calls out,** "Ordonio --- Brother '. / lay, nay, thou shalt embrace me", Ordonio draws back and gazing at Alvar significantly says, "Touch me not '. / Touch not pollution, Alvar i I will die." (V, i, 203-204). But when he attempts to fall on his sword, Alvar and Teresa prevent him. He kneels down and begs Alvar to "Curse me with forgiveness '. " (V, i, 214). In the meantime the doors of the dungeon are broken*open and Alhadra rushes in with a band of Morescoes. Alhadra orders to "Seize first that man" (V, i, 229), but Alvar tries to defend his brother. "Women, my life is thine '. " (V, i, 231), Ordonio says and warns the Morescoes, "I have strength / With this bare arm to scatter you like ashes." (Y, i, 233-34). He admits that he murdered her husband. (Here Alvar and Teresa cry out s "Oh horrible l The melodramatic suspense continues for some time. Alhadra suddenly stabs Ordonio and he begs of his wronged elder brother's forgiveness; Alvar and Teresa "bend over the dead hody of Ordonio while Alhadra speaks some of the most "beautiful lines in the drama. (7, i, 265-79) : she threatens destruction of "the Kingdoms of the world" (7, i, 271) and "foundations of iniquity" (7, i, 272), and will rest only when all with "the spirit of life" (7, i, 277) are united in song. Alhadra hastily retires with the Moors at the approach of lord Valdez, Alvar and Teresa kneel to Valdez who, unaware of the criminal action and death of Ordonio, blesses the couple with tears. The play ends on a sublime note with Alvar's speech — a kind of grim warning — on the tragedy of unheeded conscience.

Unit 8 (b): The Title of the Play

"Remorse' is, at one level, the dominating passion in Coleridge's play, and the stresses experienced by the individual minds ---- particularly Ordonio and Alvar ---- help to unify the different episodes. As Joseph W. Donohue, Jr., pertinently observes the emotions are not sufficiently objectified and a felt tension emerges between human psychology and dramatic form. Still, the interaction of the responses and reactions of the two brothers achieve dramatic progression and unity. Even Hazlitt admitted that the ''succession of situations and events /"in Pernorse_7 calm forth the finest sensibilities of human breast ...". 111 Don Alvar seeks to confront Ordonio with a moral challenge. This challenge and Ordonio*s response ---- that includes Satanic defiance, spiritual perplexity and torment, and final surrender ---- constitute the framework of dramatic action and give it a unified structure. .

The opening scene of the first act not only reveals the story of Alvar's exile but also shows that the disguised elder brother's intention is not to wreak vengeance but to arouse remorse. When Zulimez asks his master to "reveal yourself, / And let the guilty meet the doom of guilt '. " (I, i, 1.2-13**),** Alvar says : "Remember, Zulimez '. I am his brother, / Injured indeed deeply injured yet / Ordonio*s brother" (I, i, 14-16**.).** He says further : "The more behoves it I should rouse within him / Remorse '. that I should save him from himself" (I, i, 18-19**).**

Only after nineteen lines of the opening scene we come across an analysis of "remorse" which sounds like the "Motto" of the play :

Zulimez. Remorse is as the heart in which it grows :

If that he gentle, it drops balmy dews Of true repentance; hut if proud and gloomy, It is a poison-tree, that pierced to the inmost Weeps only tears of poison '. The first part of the second scene further enlarges Alvar*s image as a noble brother ---- wronged but still nursing no malice against the wrong-doer. This image is built up particularly through Teresa's endearing words for her lover and her description of Ordonio : "His proud forbidding eye, and his dark brow, / Ghill me like dew-damps of the unwholesome night : / My love, a timorous and tender flower, / Closes beneath his touch" (I, ii, 81-84). In the second part of this scene, Alhadra's narration of her sufferings to Teresa, especially of her horrible experience inside a dungeon, "then a young and nursing mother", (I, ii, 206), gives the play a new dimension and raises the expectation of the audience for great events to take place so that poetic justice may at last come to relieve the tension. Alhadra strengthens this expectation when she says':

"Great evils ask great passions to redress them"(I, ii, 230). But a little later the "great passioi turn-- out to be arousing remorse through forgiveness and appeal to better sense. In the same scene Alvar is hurt by Teresa's

casual mention of "my lord Ordonio" (I, ii, 335) and he muses on the implications of this expression. He suspects that "ere she married him, he /~0rdonio had stained her honour" (I, ii, 346); but even at this moment,. when jealousy may turn any lover's mind to the thought of murder, Alvar's thoughts shrink from blood and revenge, and the acrimony is dissolved in prayer : "Assist ^heaven, / That I may pray for my guilty brother (I, ii, 363-64).

Act two, scene one shows Ordonio*s conspiracy with his accomplice Isidore. It also exposes what happened when the hired assassin Isidore failed to murder Alvar when the latter had revealed that Ordonio was his brother. But this scene also throws light on Ordonio's susceptibility to the pricks of conscience. When Isidore tells him that Alvar "threw / His- sword away, and bade us take his life ..." (II, i, 116-17) Ordonio bursts out : ' And you killed him ? Oh blood hounds' . may eternal wrath flame ..round you He was his Maker's Image undefac'd (II, i, 119-20) And again : Oh cold — cold — cold shot through with icy cold .(II, 1,123) - /"Previously, in the second scene of Act I, Ordonio's guilt-ridden conscience is momentarily revealed, as if in a flash, when Alhadra reminds a startled Ordonio that Isidore is her husband whom "three years ago, three years this very week, / Thou left him at Almeria" (I, ii, 137-8).7 Ordonio looks "strange" and is evidently disturbed ; but, almost the next moment, Isidore is asked to play a sorcerer and show Teresa's portrait (which Isidore took from Alvar while sparing his life) to convince her about Alvar's death. The audience again prepare for either of the two eventualities-- either Alvar 'takes revenge or Ordonio becomes remorse-struck. While talking to Isidore Ordonio1s guilt-ridden mind suddenly suspects eavesdropping :

"Ha — Who lurks there /
Have we been overheard ?" (II, i, 182-83).

Ordonio says these words stopping suddenly at the edge of the scene, and the situation is ominous, presaging bloody action. Isidore's reference to a poor .idiot boy who "'sits in the sun, and twirls a bough about, / His weak eyes seeth'd in most unmeaning tears," (II, i;', 186-68) is in the nature of an anticlimax, but the tearful voice of the idiot boy is in consonance with the motif of the play,and what Alvar says in the next scene reinforces this motif:

O faithful Zulimez
That my return involved Ordonio' s death,
' I trust, would give me an unmingled pan
Yet bearable : but when I see my father
Strewing his scant grey hairs, e'en on the ground,
Which soon must be his grave, and my Teresa —
Her husband proved a murderer, and her infants
His infants — poor Teresa all would perish,
All perish — all '. and I (nay bear with me)
Could not survive the complicated ruin '. (II,ii, 30-39)

In the next scene of Act II, in the first confrontation between the two brothers after Alvar's arrival at Granada, Alvar's first thought on seeing, his brother is "To fall upon his neck and weep forgiveness (II, ii, 60). Something ails him, his hand trembles. When alone, at the end of the Act, Alvar soliloquizes:

Dear Portrait '. rescued from a traitor's keeping,
I will not now profane thee, holy image,
To a dark trick. That worst had man shall find
A picture, which will wake the hell within him,
And rouse a fiery whirlwind in his conscience.
(II, ii, 174-78)

Almost the whole of the first scene of Act III is devoted to Alvar's pathetic efforts to arouse the conscience of his brother. In the "Hall of Armoury, with an Altar at the back of the Stage" with "Soft Music from an instrument of Glass or Steel", Alvar feigns to "call up the Departed Soul of Alvar There is "Music expressive of the movements and images that follow". Ordonio remains proud and relentless and tells Alvar : ^The^innocent obey nor charm nor spell '. / My brother is in heaven" (III, i, 83-84). Alvar's words recall Prospero's admonition:

... What if thou heard' st him now ? What if his spirit
Re-enter'd its^corse, and came upon thee
With many a stab from many a murderer's poniard ?
What (if his stedfast /"sic 7* eye still beaming pity
And brother's love) he turn'd his head aside,
lest he should look at thee, and with one look

Hurl thee beyond all power of penitence ?
(Ill, i, 88-94)

Ordonio is apparently unrepentant, but the next 'scene shows a perceptible change in his inner world. : he feels deceived, hut we also note a faint stirring of conscience resulting paradoxically in a creeping paralysis of will :
Yaldez. ... But have you yet discovered
... what those speeches meant —
Pride, and hypocrisy, and guilt and cunning ?
Then when the wizard fix'd his eye on you,
And you, I know not why, look1d pale and troubled —
Why — why, what ails you now ? —
Ordonio: Me ? What ails me ?
A pricking of the blood — It might have happen'd
At any other time.— Why scan you me ?
Yaldez. His speech about the corse, and stabs and murderers,
bore reference to the assassins —
Ordonio. Dup'd '. dup'd '. dup'd '.
The traitor, Isidore
A little later Ordonio confesses to his father how he reacted to Alvar's sorcery:

I was benumb*d, and staggered up and down
Through darkness without light -- dark—dark—dark 1
My flesh crept chill, my limbs felt manacled
As had a snake coll'd round them '. ...
(Ill, ii, 79-82)

Ordonio's resistance gradually breaks down. He is a warped, morbid character lacking in balance, and throughout the play we see how his reactions oscillate between hatred and revenge and a paroxysm of fever and repentance : as the play progresses, there is a gradual erosion of his mental powers, and tkis is particularly marked after the ''incantation*1 scene. His mimicry of Isidore's manner and voice **("A** common trick of gratitude, my lord III,ii,85) and his specious reasoning suggest the inner erosion : "love '. love '. and then we hate I and what ? and wherefore ?/ Hatred and love fancies opposed by fancies '. / What ? if *one^reptile sting another reptile ? / Where is the crime ?" (Ill, ii, 94-97). He ends this speech wondering : "That this must needs bring on the idiotcy / Of moist-eyed penitence -- ' tis like a dream (Ill, ii, 103-4). He knows that he is a prisoner of passion and the thought of Teresa only deepens his perplexity:

This, then, is my reward and I must love her ?
Scorn'd '. shudder'd at yet love her still ? yes yes '.
By the deep feelings of revenge an# hate
I will still love her — woo her - win her too l
(III, ii, 168-71)

His outburst after a brief pause shows a mental delirium :

... My soul shouts triumph '.
The mine is undermined '. blood blood 1 blood
^hey thirst for thy blood thy blood, Ordonio l
(III,ii,174-76)

This delirium is followed by cool calculation : he decides to lure Isidore to "midnight wood" that yery day and "he shall never, nerer more return '. " (III,ii, 184).
The fourth act opens on "A cavern, dart, except where a gleam of moonlight is seen on one side at the further end of it". Isidore is seen alone, with an extinguished torch in his hand, and a few moments later comes Ordonio, lighting a torch. In this gothically romantic atmosphere, many intimate sentiments are exchanged between them. Ordonio significantly says that it is "abhorrent from our nature / To kill a man —" (IY,i, 83-84) . And yet when Isidore suggests that one may kill in self-defence Ordonio jumps upon the excuse : "Why that's my case ; and yet the soul recoils from it — / 'Tis so with me at least" (17,i, 83-86). His explanation of his own mental framework shows the source of his moral depravity and also offers a sudden glimpse into the multiple layers of his consciousness:

All men seemed mad to him
Nature had made him for some other planet,
And pressed his soul into a human shape

By accident or malice. In this world
He found no fit companion.
(IY, i, ,105-109)

Ordonio analyses his own self and ruminates philosophically on his past. He still remains proud and unrepentant ; hut his attempt to shake off the pang of conscience reveals an inner despair.

The final act renders dramatically Ordonio's confession and repentance, although his dying statements are more in the nature of an anguished surrender to destiny : he carries with him the galling "bitterness that prisons his own life and also the lives of others. To Alhadra he admits that he murdered Isidore- "most foully" (Y, i, 255). "When Alvar says, "... My anguish for thy guilt '. Ordonio — Brother '. / Nay, nay, thou shalt embrace me" (Y,i,202-203), Ordonio draws hack : "Touch not pollution, Alvar '. I will die" (Y,i, 204). It is indeed a heavy burden of guilt and pain that he hears all his life, and his prayer for forgiveness is almost a despairing cry : "My brother '. I will kneel to you, my brother '. /""kneeling.7.. / Forgive me, Alvar '. — Curse me with forgiveness '. " (Y,i, 213-14). For Ordonio, however, this is not a journey from darkness to light, and the play reaches a fitting finale when Alhadra stabs him. The drama ends with a warning, a note of moral admonition to mankind ;

Thei Conscience rules us e'en against our choice,
Our inward Monitress to guide or warn,
If listened to ; but if repelled with scorn,
At length as dire REMORSE, she reappears,
Works in our guilty hopes, and selfish fears '.
(Y. 288-92)

The interest of the audience is kept alive through a series of events which end in both death and spiritual salvation of the play's central figure. Coleridge's main business here is to render a perplexing moral dilemma reflected in human behaviour — and this is evident in all the episodes in the play, from Alver's playing sorcery to Ordonio's surrender. The coupled motivations, not only of Ordonio, but also of Alvar, Teresa, Yaldez and Alhadra are studied with a psychologist's curiosity and the results 'are deduced and recorded in brilliant poetic passages, "finer poetry", as Bertrand'Evans calls it.'"^ This "finer poetry" may sometimes have been served at the cost of exterior action. But, as Joseph W. Donohue, Jr., so rightly says, "... this 'finer poetry', undramatic or merely atmospheric as it sometimes is, reveals Coleridge's attempt to reconcile the inevitable (and, perhaps to him, lamentable) necessity for dramatic economy with a full explication of those characteristics of the human mind so subtle that exterior event has little relevance to them.

Suggested Reading

1. *The Oxford Handbook of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*-edited by Frederick Burwick.
2. *Tragic Coleridge*-Chris Murray (Ashgate Publication)
3. 'The English Romantic Writers as Dramatists'-Newman I. White
4. 'Coleridge's *Remorse*: Poetic Drama on the Romantic Stage'-Lawrence Wynn
5. 'Coleridge's Vindication of Spinoza: An Unpublished Note'-Lore Metzger
6. *Coleridge, Revision and Romanticism* (*After the Revolution:1793-1818*)- Ve-Yin Tee

Assignment

1. Discuss the significance of the title of Coleridge's *Remorse*.
2. Write an essay discussing the effect Coleridge's reading of Spinoza had on his play *Remorse*?
3. Analyze the impact of Schiller on Coleridge's *Remorse*.
4. Assess *Remorse* as a Romantic Tragedy.
5. Discuss Coleridge's skill in plot construction in his play *Remorse*.
6. Discuss the relation between Coleridge's *Remorse* and his earlier attempted play *Osorio*.

BLOCK III

UNIT 9

Frankenstein

by

Mary Shelley

CONTENT STRUCTURE

Unit 9 (a): Introduction to Mary Shelley: her family and contemporary radical ideas

Unit 9 (b): Plot Summary

9 (a): Introduction to Mary Shelley: her family and contemporary radical ideas

Late eighteenth and early nineteenth century was a period of radical thoughts that manifest in historical events like French Revolution and many other social agitations and movements. Born into this context of radicalism, Mary Shelley could initiate herself in this project of radical thought as she experienced them being generated from a very close quarter. Besides her parents, William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft, who were considered as leading exponents of radical thoughts, she, from her childhood was exposed to the debates and discussions of contemporary thinkers often taking place in her own house. Both, Godwin and Wollstonecraft were a part of the larger tradition of what we now know as enlightenment; a tradition of Voltaire, Rousseau and others. This tradition was designed to dismantle the established order of human society with the vision of creating a better universe. Such visionary ideas were reflected in the writings of parents Mary Shelley, Mary herself and definitely her husband P. B. Shelley. Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) is considered to be the first radical feminist writing which while voicing for the rights of women also condemns the ways patriarchy, as an agency of larger capitalist system, designs the oppression of women.

Mary's father, William Godwin, while contesting Edmund Burke's ideas on revolution, as explored in *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790), even went to the extent of suggesting the abolition of several social institutions like marriage, law and religion. Burke held a very conservative idea of revolution as he believed that change should evolve gradually and naturally, not hastened by human will. Godwin contests such ideas in his book *EnquiryConcerningPolitical Justice* (1793).

Mary Wollstonecraft exists to Mary Shelley, as her mother, only through her radical writings as she died of septicemia when she was only ten days old. Godwin married again four years later. Mary Jane Clairmont, Godwin's second wife, always encouraged Mary Shelley to write on radical and revolutionary ideas. Mary Shelley's understanding of radical ideas was corroborated by her friendship, turning later into a marital relationship with P. B. Shelley. As a disciple of William Godwin, P. B. Shelley would often visit his place where over discussions and debates he came close to Mary Shelley. By the time they met for the first time, P. B. Shelley had already earned notoriety as a non-conformist. He was expulsed from his college for writing a book full of radical ideas – *Necessity of Atheism* (1810). Radical in spirit were the fictional writings of P. B. Shelley that equally inspired Mary. Along with shorter poems like *Ode to the West Wind*, he has consciously articulated the spirit of revolution in his longer poem*Prometheus Unbound*, which contributes to revolutionary

zeal of the second generation of the Romantic poets as exemplified by *Hyperion* and *The Fall of Hyperion* by John Keats. The spirit of rebellion, thus, found in the sphere of literature is an offshoot of that on social and political level. The second generation of the Romantics restored faith on the ideals of the French Revolution – equality, liberty and fraternity. Apart from this Revolution of temporal and spatial distance, more immediate social agitation was informing the writings of the second generation of the Romantic with the revolutionary context. The Luddite agitation (1811-17) may be cited in this connection. Mills, factories and machines were destroyed by workers who were voicing their demands.

Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* unequivocally reflects such an understanding of the context of agitation, movement and revolution. The figure of the monster is often read as a representative of the proletariat class, being a product of the capitalist class itself, an equation when industrialization was growing mammoth based on the capitalist economic structure. Pushed to the margin by society at large and having been denied of his basic rights of living, food and other needs as well by his creator, the monster becomes a rebel like one associated with the Luddite agitation or the French Revolution. Born innocent like any human (non-human too) child and then repelled by the entire society including his own creator, primarily because of his look for which he is not responsible by any means, finally turns to an avenger and literally monstrous.

The chaos verging on anarchy that takes place in the novel is more a doing of Victor Frankenstein than of his 'flawed' creation. This withdrawal of Frankenstein from his paternal responsibility was a common social and familial phenomenon in contemporary Europe. Quite ironically, Mary Shelley's husband is one such irresponsible father in real life. P. B. Shelley abandoned his first wife Harriet Shelley who after giving birth to two children committed suicide and their father was denied the custody of them. This personal experience surely reflects in the narrative of *Frankenstein*.

9 (b): Plot Summary

Mary Shelley's Frankenstein was first published in 1818 as a continuum of the tradition of the Gothic novel. Along with displaying the features of that generic tradition, the novel also shows certain deviations as will be discussed later in detail. The novel begins with the letters of a voyager, Robert Walton, written to his sister. These letters, emulating the tradition of epistolary novel, form the narrative of the novel. During his voyage, he comes across an emaciated person, Victor Frankenstein, whom Walton rescues. After initial recovery, Frankenstein tells the story of his life and a demonic experiment. His father had married the daughter of one of his friends as he was dead. After their marriage they adopted an orphan, Elizabeth, who later becomes Frankenstein's beloved and wife. From early childhood he would straddle the 'forbidden' domain of science and experiments. He was extremely eager to understand natural phenomena by his learning of natural sciences and his own experiments. This interest grew stronger and took a more visible shape when, after the death of his mother, he entered the University of Ingolstadt. Having understood different branches of science like, physics, anatomy and many others, he planned to create a human being. He chose a 'solitary chamber', collected bones, flesh etc. and finally was able to create a human form which even he, the creator, would shriek with repulsion at the very sight of it. In the meantime, a misfortune befell the family of Frankenstein, the kid William was murdered for which Justine was held responsible. Finally, however, Frankenstein could relate this murder with the monster whom he finally met. After retelling his story of isolation and anxiety, the monster demanded that Frankenstein should create a female of his kind for him. Frankenstein agreed and initially started the project but then abandoned on the apprehension that later a whole species of monster might endanger human race itself. As the monster was not addressed with his cause, he, out of revenge and frustration, continued killing the family members of Frankenstein, including his newlywed wife Elizabeth and finally Frankenstein himself.

UNIT 10

Gothic Versus Romantic: A Philosophical Enquiry

The rise of the Gothic as part of a cultural movement is primarily a reaction against many neoclassical sensibilities. With the waning of the emphasis on the aspects of reason, wit and rationality that the neoclassical culture has so carefully nurtured,the element of the Gothic initially found expression in the genre of novels a few years before Romanticism officially starts in 1798 with the publication of the *Lyrical Ballads*. The first of its kind was published in 1764by Horace Walpole. In *The Castle of Otranto* Walpole, emulating the spirit of the medieval world, describes a locale in Southern Italy with appearances of ghostly creatures, unexpected and unexplained deaths, subterranean architectural passages and many other elements of horror. These external agencies of horror which perfectly correspond to the human disposition of passion, grief and wrath in this trend setting novel continue to dominate the narrative of almost all future works of the genre of Gothic novels.

Castles, forests, dungeons and caves as actual topographical realities and also as psychological understanding continue to inform the narrative of novels like *The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne* (1789), *The Romance of the Forest* (1791), *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) and *The Italian* (1797) by Anne Radcliff,*Castle Rackrent* (1800) by Maria Edgeworth and *The Monk* (1796) by Mathew Gregory Lewis.

A reaction to the neoclassical sensibilities was found in the field of poetryin pre-Romantic era as well. But that reaction was different in nature from one that manifest in novels. While the late eighteenth century novels were reviving the spirit and the space of the medieval world, post 1750 poetry was resorting to re-presenting nature understandably welcoming early nineteenth century Romantic Movement felt in different parts Europe. The element of the Gothic, primarily rooted in the medieval world, seems to interest the writers of different literary genres for a period more than a century. If the beginning of the interest in the Gothic is marked by Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* published in 1764, then it continues to inform many Victorian writings including John Ruskin's *Stones of Venice* (1853) with a large body of Romantic writings in between which quite unequivocally deal with the element of the Gothic.

However, finding out the rationale for the adoption of the elements of the Gothic by the writers of such a long stretch of time would demand a thorough analysis of the cultural, social and the political context of the period concerned. Novels had long been confined to the realist and the familiar settings as they were chiefly designed to address the taste of the rising and newly educated middle class. The 'story' of the family and other social institutions with the narrative tropes of marriage, reputation, inheritance and adjustability would reassure the beliefs of the emerging middle class when located in a familiar world. The description of feudal families as in *Pamela* (1740) by Samuel Richardson or *Tom Jones* (1749) by Henry Fielding made even more palatable with happy-ending code was a ploy to foster the readers'/subjects' faith in society, civilization and human beings vis-à-vis the familiar world. The interest in the Gothic was a strategy to shift the locale of the novels from the familiar bourgeois world to the unfamiliar world of castle, forest, dungeon or a cave. This shift was not meant for only the purpose of providing the readers with a taste they have not experienced before but also for suggesting the ideological implications of a changing society embedded in the narrative. Early novels, squarely steeped in neoclassical sensibilities, would array sequences of events in terms of the law of causality where all events, actions and the presence of characters are explained in a complementary relation between cause and effect. But this relation is based mostly on the materialistic and worldly understanding of events rather than a psychological understanding of them. Gothic novels, thus set in an unfamiliar world, would present a narrative where the sequences and events are not governed by the law of causality. The 'irrationality' of the Gothic narratives, including both, poetry and novels, in late eighteenth and early nineteenth century was a deliberate deviation from the emphasis on reason as found in neoclassical narratives. It is thus very difficult to assess why the ancient mariner killed the Albatross in Coleridge's poem in material and worldly term. The same spirit of the 'inexplicable' continues to inform other poems of Coleridge, 'Christabel' being one fine example. Though there are differences between poetry and novels in relation to the representation of the Gothic, they together develop a major aspect of the Romantic sensibility, the emulation of the sense of wonder. While in poetry the representation of the Gothic was truly 'irrational' it was a little tempered with the 'reason' of the realistic narratives in novels.

The growth of industrialization, emerging in Europe late seventeenth century onwards, which opened up the possibility of industrial reproducibility, is in a way critiqued by the Gothic narratives' love for medieval world. As opposed to the art object produced by the industrial system, that crafted in mediaeval world is considered to be more 'original'; each produced separately and born from within the mind of the creator. The attempt to resort to the medieval art, with an engrained 'grossness', was a stance of resistance against industrialization.

However, considering the trajectory of the genre of the Gothic novels, it is difficult to place *Frankenstein* unequivocally in that generic category. The novel simultaneously exhibits its affiliation to and deviation from the tradition. A close analysis of the entire oeuvre would reveal that the label Gothic means certain common narrative elements recur quite often. It is just a combination of a few narrative tropes placed in a specific setting that makes a work 'Gothic'. Regarding the narrative tropes, some of them are empirically explicable, the way they are in any realist work. They might, in the beginning appear as irrational; a consequence of some magical charm, but finally by the end of the work they are rationally explained. The object of mystery and terror is explained in terms of the law of causality. The supernatural forces terrifying Emily finally proved to have been done by human agency in Ann Radcliff's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* is a case in point in this connection. As opposed to this there are many examples where the events are not resolved empirically at the end; they remain a source of mystery and terror. Blood running from the nose of Alfonso's statue in Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* may be cited as an example.

Given the points of departure and acknowledgement, the inclusion of *Frankenstein* in the oeuvre of Gothic

novels is problematic. Regarding the narrative components not a single one is 'irrational' and 'inexplicable' in *Frankenstein*. All mysterious and uncanny events are rationally explained, not just at the end of the novel, but through the entire course of it. Whether explained or not, the novel is full of mysterious events as required by the genre of Gothic novels. The unexplained murder of William in the beginning, the act of revenge taken by the fiend as manifest in the event of the murder of Elizabeth on the very day of wedding as a result of Frankenstein's decision of not creating a female mate for the monster, the sudden appearance of 'a monster', everything squarely fit in the scheme of the narrative of a Gothic novel. But not the chain of these events, rather the language in which they are narrated and the locales where the events take place make them 'Gothic' in nature as the genre is heavilydependent on the form. The trope of the locale of Gothic novels finds a very obvious expression in the beginning of the novel when Frankenstein plans to create a human being. The details of the chamber, the apparatus and the ingredients required for the experiment are truly gothic as they evoke as sense of mystery, fear and unfamiliarity.

> One secret which I alone possessed was the hope to which I haddedicated myself; and the moon gazed on my midnight labours, while, withunrelaxed and breathless eagerness, I pursued nature to her hiding-places. Whoshall conceive the horrors of my secret **toil** as I dabbledamong the unhalloweddamps of the grave or torturedthe living animal to animate the lifeless clay? Mylimbs now tremble, and my eyes swim with the remembrance; but then aresistless and almost frantic impulse urged me forward; I seemed to have lost allsoul or sensation but for this one pursuit. It was indeed but a passing trance,that only made me feel with renewed acutenessso soon as, the unnaturalstimulus ceasingto operate, I had returned to my old habits. I collected bonesfrom charnel- houses and disturbed, with profanefingers, the tremendoussecrets of the human frame. In a solitary chamber, or rather cell, at the top of thehouse, and separated from all the other apartments by a gallery and staircase, Ikept my workshop of filthy creation; my eyeballswere starting from theirsocketsin attending to the details of my employment. The dissectingroom andthe slaughter- house furnished many of my materials; and often did my human nature turn with loathing from my occupation, whilst, still urged on by aneagerness which perpetually increased, I brought my work near to a conclusion. (33)

The reference to the spaces like 'solitary chamber', 'slaughter-house', 'charnel-house', 'gallery' and 'staircase' emulates a sense of eeriness of the Gothic medieval world. They perfectly address the setting vis-à-vis the architectural pattern of the genre of the Gothic novels. Even the solitary figure of Frankenstein involved in a 'sacrilegious' act of creating a human being is a very common narrative trope in Gothic novels. But while such an act performed by a sorcerer in a conventional Gothic work is a practice of black magic and necromancy, that in this novel becomes a rational and scientific exercise performed by a formally educated researcher. This is how the novel along with acknowledging the tradition of the Gothic novels makes a departure from the trend too. Thus the narrative code of an uncanny medieval world, recurring often in the tradition of Gothic novels, is relocated in a world of enlightenment as Frankenstein's. But whether this relocation marks a departure from the tradition of the genre or contributes to the development of the continuing tradition is a matter of debate.

Nature, despite its dual representation of the 'sublime' and beautiful, as suggested by Edmund Burke, was also was also finding expression as the literature of the supernatural. Sublime, dealing with the grand objects of nature, creates a sense of awe which purges the moral self of human beings. Beautiful, on the other hand, dealing with the little objects of nature, functions as the source of pleasure. Nature, in nineteenth century supernatural writing, does not fall in any of these categories. Nature there is mostly associated with mystery, a phenomenon which explains the Romantics' love for the medieval charm and the 'inexplicable'. Gothic novels often deal with the grand objects of nature like mountain, forest etc. but they do not at any point graduate to being the source of moral purgation. They only serve to evoke terror and mystery. *Frankenstein* also contains similar representation of nature on many occasions. Frankenstein confronts the monster amidst the grand objects of nature, evoking mystery and fear, immediately after the death of Williams.

> He bounded over the crevicesin the ice, among which I had walked with caution; his stature, also, as he approached, seemed to exceed that of man. I was troubled; a mist came over my eyes, and I felt a faintnessseize me, but I was quickly restored by the cold galeof the mountains. I perceived, as the shape came nearer (sight tremendous and abhorred!) that it was the wretch whom I had created. I trembled with rage and horror, resolving to wait his approach and then close with him in mortal combat. He approached; his countenance bespokebitter anguish, combined with disdain and malignity, while its unearthly ugliness rendered it almost too horrible for human eyes. But I scarcely observed this; rage and hatred had at first deprived me of utterance, and I recovered only to overwhelm him with words expressive of furious detestation and contempt. (65)

Frankenstein as an Artist

The element of self reflexivity is pretty discernible in the entire course of Romantic literature. Poetry talking about poetry or a poet talking about his own self was a common trope of self reflexivity in this era. The break from neoclassical tradition, also occasioned by the philosophical shift from Lockean empiricism to Kantian idealism encouraged the writers writing about their own art and composition. The oeuvre of Romantic poetry is replete with such examples. Coleridge in many of his poems is writing about the act, agony and the process of composition with 'Rime of the Ancient Mariner', 'Dejection: An Ode', and 'Kubla Khan' being obvious instances. Wordsworth's 'Immortality Ode' and 'Tintern Abbey' also fall in this category of literature on artefacts. Other Romantic poets too subscribed to this idea of self reflexivity. Through this process of writing about the moment of composition, the litterateur of the age was obliquely underpinning the 'self', a phenomenon which gained priority over anything else in this period.

This aspect of composing artifact being reflected in another composition is not so common in nineteenth century novels or novels of any specific era for that matter as novels mostly deal with the objects and the events of external reality rather than the subjective understanding of them. *Frankenstein* may be read just as an exception in this trend. Once directed to this perspective we are summarily reduced to considering Victor Frankenstein as the 'creator'/artist and the monster as the artwork. But the notions of artform, artists and the process of poetic creation sprawl beyond just the relation between Victor Frankenstein and the fiend he has created. Corresponding to the circular structure of the narrative, the novel begins and ends with Robert Walton's narration vis-à-vis experience. The art of the novel, as a narrative form, is revealed through the agency of Robert Walton. In fact the letters written to his sister during his voyage to the North Pole is the key narrative component of the novel. As the writer of those letters, he enjoys the authorship of the narrative and the mode of this narrative written through the letters is a tribute to the genre of the epistolary novels flourishing during the previous century.

What counts most in this narrative project is the aspect of loneliness, so thoroughly valorized by Romantic artists. The feeling of loneliness, as he was away from society and on his voyage towards theNorth Pole, his narrative enterprise, manifest through the letters, are in a complementary relation in this novel. This loneliness of Walton occasions the possibility of his union with nature as it happens to any Romantic artist. While amidst the vast sea, a sublime presence of nature, Walton engages himself in a dialogue with self and nature which finds expression in the letters. Walton's letters thus pretty easily fit in the Romantic design of escaping to different form of nature and compose art forms.

> But I have one want which I have never yet been able to satisfy, and theabsence of the object of which I now feel as a most severe evil, I have no friend,Margaret: when I am glowingwith the enthusiasm of success, there will be noneto participate my joy; if I am assailed by disappointment, no one will endeavour
>
> to sustain me in dejection. I shall commit my thoughts to paper, it is true; butthat is a poor medium for the communication of feeling. I desire the company ofa man who could **s**ympathizewith me, whose eyes would reply to mine. Youmay deemme romantic, my dear sister, but I bitterlyfeel the want of a friend. Ihave no one near me, gentle yet courageous, possessed of a cultivatedas well asof a capaciousmind, whose tastesare like my own, to approve or amendmyplans. (10)

This loneliness is a recurring metaphor in the novel and one of Walton with which the novel begins matures into a formidable element and anticipates the same experienced by others. More over this is a creative loneliness which inspires artists to create. Victor Frankenstein's existence and his creative enterprise are informed by this philosophy of loneliness. As Frankenstein chronicles his childhood it seems that he was a keen reader, especially of books on Natural Sciences; the writings of Cornelius Agrippa, Paracelsus and Albertus Magnus and he did not read them as part of a curriculum of any academic institution. He read them privately as a lonely reader.

Frankenstein becomes all the more lonely after the death of his mother. His engagement with natural sciences which inspires his Faustian desire to create life begins after the death of his mother, once he leaves home to study at the University of Ingolstadt. His stay and study, as he mentions, was not one of solidarity with students and the professors. He was discouraged to read his favourite writers of natural sciences by Mr. Krempe, though he was encouraged by Mr. Walton. The process of Frankenstein becoming a scholar was a

solitary journey, something which was not only a formidable attribute of the Romantic artists but also of Mediaeval and Renaissance scholars like Prospero and Dr. Faustus. He begins his enterprise of creating a life in a solitary chamber which is symptomatic of the isolated self of the poet and of mind of a poet as artists can create only in solitude. However, regarding this dialogic relation of loneliness and creativity, Frankenstein does not absolutely conform to the Romantic ideas. Nature plays an important role in this relation between loneliness and creativity. Renouncing the social milieu, the Romantic artists become one with nature. Once this unitary relation is established, the artists become inspired to articulate the benevolence, piety and the regenerative faculty of nature. This aspect is seen clearly in Wordsworth's 'Tintern Abbey' 'Immortality Ode' and many of Coleridge's poems like 'Dejection: An Ode' and 'Frost at Midnight'. The superiority of a greater creator, Nature, is established over the power of the human creator, the poet. Victor Frankenstein does not involve himself in creative preoccupation to once more eulogize Nature as he intends to create a life, not an artifact. His enterprise was rather an act of transgression; he defies nature and usurps the regenerative order of nature. He aspires to become nature itself, a God.

UNIT 12

Narrative Structure

With the apparent acknowledgement of a specific tradition of realistic novels, i.e. the epistolary one, as evident in the letters of Robert Walton written to his sister, *Frankenstein* invents a method of narration quite new in the early nineteenth century context. There are three distinct layers of narrative in the novel; the narration vis-à-vis letters of Robert Walton, the narration of Victor Frankenstein told to Walton and finally the narration of the monster expressed to his creator. All these narrators are loners and transgressors. When it comes to the aspect of loneliness, this is rather a self chosen phenomenon for Walton and to some extent for Frankenstein. Both the narrators carve out a space to enjoy their loneliness and their narration/creation materializes only in this domain of loneliness. As mentioned earlier, Walton's exercise of writing letters as the mode of his narration is a strategy to negotiate with that loneliness. Walton's narrative thus formulated in this sphere of loneliness, anchors all other narratives. His narration forms the narrative of the entire novel. The novel begins and ends with his narration. This overarching and large spherical narrative of Walton contains two other spheres of narratives within it.

Creation and narration were to some extent voluntary for Victor Frankenstein. The narration that he utters in a lonely ship sailing across the sea is a consequence of his experience of and the engagement with his 'creation' which was again was critically amenable to his preoccupation with loneliness. The moment of his narration to Walton is one of pathetic loneliness when he was forced to abandon the society; when he has nobody to fall back upon.

But unlike other two narrators, the monster is a lonely narrator by compulsion. In fact his narration was an appeal to his master to rescue him from the world of terrible loneliness to the world of companionship. He requests his creator to create a female of similar kind for him to get a respite from this unbearable loneliness. The more, we, as reader, get inside the story more we find this loneliness growing stronger for the narrators. The loneliness of the monster is of an 'originary' nature as he is the first 'being' of his species born on this earth. The narrative of the monster has several implications. Primarily this narrative is the core of all narratives. It occupies the central most position in the matrix of the narrative structure. Due to this centrality in terms of the location in the structure of the narrative, the monster's is a self sufficient and an independent narrative; a narrative which encapsulates a time span ranging from the moment of his birth to the moment of his first meeting with his creator. This meeting occasions the key narrative of the monster. The narrative primarily explores his identity and experiences; the identity of alienation and the experience of his engagement with human civilization and society. How he was abandoned by his own creator and was abhorred by the human society at large, primarily for his 'look', becomes the chief component of his narrative. In his first meeting with Frankenstein he opens and closes the story of his own life. Apparently this narrative of the monster has a greater degree of freedom and self-sufficiency compared to that of the other narrators. But this does not anyway ensure an authority over other narratives.

Narration in the Romantic contexts and other spheres of culture too involves charm, authority and power. Narrator always enjoys a power; a power which makes the listener powerless. It hypnotizes the listener as is seen in Coleridge's 'Christabel' and 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner'. Both, Christabel and the wedding guest are powerless and charmed by the narration of Geraldine and the ancient mariner respectively. Mary Shelley however does not strictly subscribe to this convention. The listeners of the narratives are equally empowered as the chronicle and at times contribute to the 'stories' they hear. The listener here may be amazed and enthralled but they are never spellbound. With the apparent autonomy the narrative of the smaller/meta narrative of the narrative of Victor Frankenstein which again is just a part of the narrative of Robert Walton

manifest through his letters.

Hence in the first place Frankenstein is not only creating the monster but also carrying his narrative to be chronicled and told by Robert Walton. That apart from the Monster's narrative that he reciprocates to his creator in the first meeting is an incomplete narrative which once again is to be completed, as the monster thought, by Victor Frankenstein as he pledged him to create a female for him. This 'creative' intervention by Frankenstein would confer a sense of completeness to this newly created being and species.

All narrators are locked in a vulnerable state in this novel and they tell their narratives in order to extricate themselves from this helpless and vulnerable condition. In the same manner as the monster Frankenstein's condition is vulnerable and he is physically weak waiting for death only when he starts telling his narrative. The listener, Robert Walton, from a comparatively better and powerful position attempts to restore him.

The structure of the narrative of this novel is like a Russian doll or a Chinese box; a doll inside another doll, a box inside another box. Such is the narrative of this novel. The narrative of Frankenstein inside that of Walton and the narrative of the monster inside that of Frankenstein form the structure of the novel. And all these narratives are brought together by the overhauling narrative of the form of Walton's letters.

One strategy in this narrative structure is whoever, as in a Russian doll or a Chinese box, opens the narrative first must wait for others to close down their narratives and is entitled to close his/hers at the end. The narrative opens with the letters written to Mrs. Saville who might be read as an objective correlative of the persona of Mary Shelley herself. The narrative of letters closes down the novel. The smaller the narratives, the freer the narrators are to open and close their stories instantly. The monster is thus free to open and close his at one go like the smallest doll in a set of a Russian doll.

Suggested Readings

Chris Baldick. In Frankenstein's Shadow: Myth, Monstrosity and Nineteenth Century Writing. Oxford: Clarendon, 1990.

David Punter (ed). A Companion to Gothic. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2000.

Fred Botting (ed). *Frankenstein*: Contemporary Critical Essays (New Casebooks) London: Macmillan, 1995.

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Maurice Hindle. Mary Shelley *Frankenstein*. Penguin Critical Studies. London: Penguin Books, 1994.

Neil Cornwell. The Literary Fantastic: From Gothic to Postmodernism. New York and London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1990.

Paul J. Hunter (ed) *Frankenstein*: A Norton Critical Edition. New York and London. 1996.

Sandra M. Gilbert, Susan Gubar. The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth Century Literary Imagination. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979.

Victor Sage (ed). The Gothick Novel: A Selection of Critical Essays (A Casebook) Macmillan, 1990.

Assignments

1) Would you agree with the view that *Frankenstein* is a perfect example of Gothic novels? Give reasons for your answer.
2) Why do you think that the figure of *Frankenstein* is symptomatic of a Romantic artist? Discuss
3) Is it possible to read *Frankenstein* as a cautionary tale of tapering with nature? Discuss.
4) Discuss *Frankenstein* as a novel inspired by the zeal of revolution.

BLOCK IV
A Defence of Poetry
By
P.B. Shelley

CONTENT STRUCTURE

Unit 13 (a): Percy Bysshey Shelley- A Short Introduction
Unit 13 (b): Summary of *Defence of Poetry*
Unit 14: The Context of the Peacock Shelley Debate
Unit 15 (a): The Function of the Poet according to Shelley
Unit 15 (b): The Nature of Poetry according to Shelley
Unit 16: Sidney, Shelley and the Moral Function of Poetry

Unit 13 (a): Percy Bysshey Shelley- A Short Introduction

Percy Bysshe Shelley was born in 1792, the year *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* was published, into a wealthy aristocratic family. He was a declared atheist, in the spirit of Locke's and Hume's empiricism, already in his teens. He read Thomas Paine and William Godwin and corresponded with Godwin. In 1811 Shelley got himself expelled from Oxford for co-authoring a pamphlet, *The Necessity of Atheism*, and sending it to the heads of Oxford colleges. As a result of his refusal to renounce this work, together with his scandalously bohemian love life – eloping with Harriet Westbrook, then marrying her, then deserting her for Mary Godwin – he was disinherited by his family. He found an intellectual equal in Mary Godwin and together they led a rootless, creatively productive, bohemian life, until his early death in a boating accident in Italy in 1822. Shelley wrote "A Defence of Poetry" in 1821, but it remained unpublished until 1840, when Mary Shelley was finally able to overcome the objections of his family in order to edit it and publish it. It is one of the most widely read theoretical statements on literature to this day and has attracted enormous admiration as well as criticism.

Unit 13 (b): Summary of *Defence of Poetry*

Shelley's *Defence of Poetry*, written in 1821 but not published until 1840, was a direct reply to 'The Four Ages of Poetry', an essay by Thomas Love Peacock (1785-1866) which was published in Ollier's *Literary Miscellany* in 1820. Nowhere is the collision between neoclassical detachment and Romantic fervour more acutely represented than in these two essays. Peacock's is essentially comic, yet it conveys a penetrating critique of many fashionable Romantic assumptions. The 'four ages' are those of Iron, Gold, Silver, and Brass. The iron age is the age of primitive panegyric supplied by bards under pressure from royal warriors and in exchange for liquor, itself an inspiration. The golden age is the age in which poetry becomes retrospective. Something like a civil polity has been established, individual heroism has given place to institutionalism. So poets acclaim an early found whose courage and glory in the misty past can be celebrated as represented in his current successor. 'This is the age of Homer, the golden age of poetry.' In the silver age there are two kinds of poetry; the imitative which recasts the poetry of the age of gold as Virgil recast Homer, and the original, chiefly comic, didactic, and satiric, in which there is fastidiousness of style and a choice harmony of expression that bores by its repetitiveness. It is only obvious moral truisms that lend themselves to poetic expression, and as the sciences of morals and of mind mature, they move beyond the reach of imaginative and emotional treatment. Since there is a limited scope for polished versification of good sense and elegant learning, poetry declines towards extinction. In conclusion comes the age of brass. It rejects the 'polish and learning of the age of silver' and regresses to the crude barbarisms of the age of iron, which pretending 'to return to nature and revive the age of gold'.

So far as modern literature is concerned, Peacock identifies the mediaeval age of romance, chivalry and knightly honour as the age of iron. The golden age was the Renaissance when the riches of all ages and nations were compounded in such writers as Ariosto and Shakespeare. The silver age was the reign of authority, the age of Dryden and Pope. But soon the influence of Hume and Gibbon, Rousseau and Voltaire brought every authority into question. The changes had been rung on conventional pastoralism. Even poets began to think it necessary to know something of what they talked about. Thomson and Cowper actually *looked* at trees and

hills instead of just being content to write about them. The effect of this change was revolutionary. Poetical genius began to be reckoned the finest of all things, and only poetical impressions could nourish it.

> "Poetical impressions can be received only among natural scenes: for all that is artificial is anti-poetical. Society is artificial; therefore we will live out of society. The mountains are natural, therefore we will be in the mountains. There we shall be shining models of purity and virtue, passing the whole day in the innocent and amiable occupation of going up and down hill, receiving poetical impressions, and communicating them in immortal verse to admiring generations."

Peacock's attack is wholesale yet good-natured. He ridicules the notion of a poetic return to nature in nineteenth-century England. Historians and philosophers are making progress while poets are 'wallowing in the rubbish of departed ignorance'.

> "Mr Scott digs up the poachers and cattle-stealers of the ancient border. Lord Byron cruizes for thieves and pirates on the shores of the Morea and among the Greek islands. Mr Southey wades through ponderous volumes of travels and old chronicles, from which he selects all that is false, useless, and absurd ... Mr Wordsworth picks up village legends from old women and sextons ..."

Coleridge, Moore and Campbell all come in for scathing ridicule. 'A poet in our time is a semi-barbarian in a civilized community', obsessed with the barbaric and superstitious past. The true philosophic poise which surveys the world coolly and justly, gathers and analyses data, and thus develops new and useful thinking is the direct opposite of the poetic mind. For the inspiration of poetry lies in 'the rant of unregulated passion, the whining of exaggerated feeling, and the cant of factitious sentiment'. Poetic composition is simply a waste of time that might be given to useful work.

'Your anathemas against poetry itself excited me to a sacred rage,' Shelley wrote to Peacock, recommending him to read Plato's *Ion;* and the Platonic influence on Shelley's *Defence is* evident. He contrasts the synthetic principle of imagination with the analytical principle of reason. 'Reason is to imagination as the instrument to the agent, as the body to the spirit, as the shadow to the substance.' Poetry is 'the expression of the imagination'. In the widest sense of the word, not only artistic creators but the founders of laws and civilisation, as well as other inventors, are all poets. For the poet 'participates in the eternal, the infinite, and the one', and he seeks to express the order and beauty he discerns. The poet in the more restricted sense uses language as his medium. 'A poem is the very image of life expressed in its eternal truth.' It is creating 'actions according to the unchangeable forms of human nature, as existing in the mind of the Creator', that distinguishes a 'poem' from that 'dialogue of detached facts' which constitutes a 'story'. A 'story of particular facts' obscures and distorts what should be beautiful: poetry makes what is distorted beautiful.

Shelley's definitions preclude the distinction between poets and prose writers as 'a vulgar error'. Great philosophers and historians have been poets. Shelley's idealism is such that he speaks as though the poet is generally reduced to making do with inadequate contemporary morals and fashions as his material. Few poets have 'chosen to exhibit the beauty of their conceptions in its naked truth and splendour'. Indeed 'the alloy of costume, habit, &c' is probably 'necessary, to temper this planetary music for mortal ears'. So the mystic's sense that, as T. S. Eliot puts it, 'humankind / Cannot bear very much reality' is appropriated by Shelley as an equivalent limitation on the poet. He seems obsessed by the sheer potency of poetry. Ethical science can provide us with schemes and models, but poetry acts in a 'diviner manner', awakening and enlarging the mind, and lifting the 'veil from the hidden beauty of the world'. Shelley's prose is nothing if not inspired and inspiring. The imagination is 'the great instrument of moral good' which strengthens man morally as exercise strengthens him physically. Shelley seems to be close to Wordsworth here: but he makes clear that direct moral instruction demeans poetry and diminishes the poet.

As Peacock made a comic survey of the history of poetry, Shelley now makes a serious one. He gives due praise to Greek poetry, but insists that *King Lear* is 'the most perfect specimen of the dramatic art existing in the world'. Tracing the connection between great drama and the moral health of society, he notes that in our own age 'the greatest degradation of the drama is the reign of Charles II' in which only Milton stood aloof from acclaiming the defeat of liberty and virtue by monarchy. But the peculiar stamp of Shelley's theorizing about poetry emerges most clearly when, comparing the Romans with the Greeks, he argues that 'the true poetry of Rome lived in its institutions'. The disinterested achievements which built the empire amounted to poetry.

'They are the episodes of that cyclic poem written by Time upon the memories of men.' Likewise whatever evil there was in the darkness of the dark ages 'sprang from the extinction of the poetic principle'. It seems that Shelley's concept of what constitutes poetry embraces everything that is good. Small wonder, then, that he rejects Peacock's challenge to poets 'to resign the civic crown to reasoners and mechanists', and the argument that denies poetry its usefulness. On the contrary, 'whatever strengthens and purifies the affections, enlarges the

imagination, and adds spirit to sense, is useful'. Those who serve society in seemingly more practical ways merely follow in the footsteps of poets. In fact we have more moral, political and historical knowledge than we can handle. It is for lack of the creative faculty and imaginative power that our civilization remains enslaved to materialism. It is precisely at such periods as the present that the cultivation of poetry is most desperately necessary. Shelley's rhetoric takes wing as he proclaims his gospel:

> Poetry is indeed something divine. It is at once the centre and circumference of knowledge; it is that which comprehends all science, and that to which all science must be referred.

Even so, the most glorious poetry is probably but a 'feeble shadow' of the poet's original conceptions. 'Poetry is the record of the best and happiest moments of the happiest and best minds.' It represents 'the interpenetration of a diviner nature through our own'. It immortalises all that is best and most beautiful in the world. The poet therefore must be incontrovertibly 'the wisest, the happiest, and the best' of men. Indeed poets are 'the hierophants of an un-apprehended inspiration'. 'Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world.'

Unit 14: The Context of the Peacock Shelley Debate

Percy Bysshey Shelley (1792-1822) is one of the major English Romantic poets who passionately searched for love and social justice. His essay *A Defence of Poetry* (published in 1840) eloquently declares that the poet creates human values and imagines the forms that shape the social order: thus each mind recreates its own private universe and "poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world".

A Defence of Poetry is an essay by Shelley, written in 1821 and first published posthumously in 1840 in *Essays, Letters from Abroad, Translations and Fragments* by Edward Moxon in London. The essay was written in response to his friend Thomas Love Peacock's *The Four Ages of Poetry*, which had been published in 1820. Shelley wrote to the publishers Charles and James Olivier (who were also his own publishers):

> "I am enchanted with your *Literary Miscellany*, although the last article has excited my polemical faculties so violently that the moment I get rid of my opthalmia, I mean to set about an answer to it…It is very clever, but I think, very false."

In response, Shelley wrote to Thomas Love Peacock:

> "Your anathema against poetry itself excited me to sacred rage…I had the greatest possible desire to break a lance with you…in honour of my mistress Urania".

A Defence of Poetry was eventually published with some edits by John Hunt, posthumously by Shelley's wife Mary Shelley in 1840 in *Essays, Letters from Abroad, Translations and Fragments*.

The unfinished critical work *A Defence of Poetry* by Shelley is minutely skilful. The essay by Shelley was originally written, as its title suggests, in a polemic vein, as an answer to Thomas Love Peacock's *The Four Ages of Poetry*. Peacock's work teases and jokes through its definitions and conclusions, specifically that poetry has become valueless and redundant in an age of science and technology, and that intelligent people should give up their literary pursuits and put their intelligence to good use. Shelley takes this treatise and extends it, turning his essay into more of a rebuttal than a reply. In its published form much of the controversial matter was cast out, and only one or two indications remains of its controversial nature. The essay as it stands is among the most eloquent expositions that exist of the ideal nature and essential value of poetry. Its chief distinction lies in the sincerity and enthusiasm of the author.

Peacock's essay is half-serious. There Shelley's friend argued that poetry passed through repeated four-stage cycles: first, an Iron Age, in which literature was crude and simple (the period of court-bards, folk ballads and romances, both primitive and medieval); second, an Age of Gold, in which genius develops the great epic and tragic forms (from Homer to Euripedes and from Dante to Milton); third, a Silver Age of polished and civilized, but derivative poetry governed by fixed rules (the Augustan Period in Rome and the English Augustan Age of Dryden, Pope and their successors) and finally, the Age of Bronze-in which the narrow vein of polished social poetry and satire having been exhausted, poets sought novelty in pseudo-simplicity. This is the stage in which Peacock saw in England at the time of his writing:

> "Mr Scott digs up the poachers and cattle-stealers of the ancient border. Lord Byron cruises for thieves and pirates on the shores of the Morea and among the Greek island. Mr Southey wades through ponderous volumes of travels and old chronicles, from which he carefully selects all that is false, absurd and useless. Mr Wordsworth picks up village legends from old women and sextons and Mr. Coleridge, to the valuable information acquired from similar sources, superadds the dreams of crazy theologians and the mysticisms of German metaphysics, and favours the world with visions in verse, in which the quadruple elements of sexton, old woman, Jeremy Taylor and Emanuel Kant, are harmonized into a delicious poetical compound."

Peacock, who after failing as a poet, had recently begun work at the East India Company, urged intelligent men to stop wasting their time writing poetry and apply themselves to the new sciences, including economics and political theory, that could improve the world. Shelley, angrier than he pretended to be about this judgement on the work to which he was dedicated for life, wrote in February and March 1821 an answer that he hoped would appear in a subsequent issue of *The Literary Miscellany*, when Olivier informed him that the periodical would not be continued. Shelley suggested that his *A Defence of Poetry* be issued as a pamphlet, but he died before he could complete his arrangements. Late in 1822, Mary Shelley tried to include the paper in the *Liberal*, but that publication also failed before the *Defence* could appear. Ultimately Mary Shelley, after removing the references to Peacock's by then long forgotten essay, included it in *Essays, Letters from Abroad, Translations and Fragments* (1840).

Like several other essays on poetry, Shelley's *Defence* is based on one of those fundamental distinctions here that between reason and imagination which Coleridge so expounded and which here serves as a main point of departure. There are two main parts-the nature of poetry, as something connate with man, and poetical expression; and the effect of poetry upon mankind. This latter past, though even more eloquent than the former, is more rambling. The critical question at issue in both is a very fundamental one, and is practically the same as that which has been debated for many years between two opposed schools of ethics and philosophy, the intuitional and the utilitarian, and is today rife betwixt rationalists and pragmatists. Of the truth of Shelley's main thesis there is occasion for much discussion, but regarding his own vigour there can be no question.

Shelley sought to show that poets make morality and establish the legal norms in a civil society thus creating the groundwork for the other branches in a community. In *A Defence of Poetry* Shelley attempts to prove that poets are philosophers; that they are the creators and protectors of moral and civil laws, and that if it were not for the poets, scientists could not have developed either theories or their inventions.

Poets introduce and maintain morality. Social mores are codified into laws. The social function or utility of poets is that they create and maintain the norms and mores of a society. In *The English Romantic Writers* David Perkins wrote:

> "Shelley mainly concerned to explain the moral (and the social) function of poetry. In doing so, he produced one of the most penetrating general discussions on poetry that we have."

Shelley begins his discussion thus:

> "According to one mode of regarding those two classes of mental action, which are called reason and imagination, the former may be considered as mind contemplating the relations borne by one thought in another, however produced; and the latter as mind acting upon them with its own light, and composing from them as from elements, often thoughts, each containing within itself the principle of its own integrity".

To explain this matter further, Shelley goes on to say:

> "Reason is the enumeration of quantities already known; imagination the perception of the value of those quantities, both separately and as a whole. Reason suspects the differences, and imagination the perception of the value of those quantities, both separately and as a whole. Reason respects the differences and imagination the similitude of things. Reason is to imagination as the instrument to the agent, as body to the spirit, as the shadow to the substance."

Shelley then proceeds to define poetry in the following manner:

> "Poetry, in a general sense, may be defined to be the 'expression of the imagination'; and poetry is connate with the origin of man. Man is an instrument over which the series of external and internal impressions are driven, like alternations of an ever changing wind over an Aeolian lyre, which move it by their motion to ever-changing melody."

Shelley's argument for poetry in his critical essay is written within the context of Romanticism. In 1858, William Stigant- a poet, essayist and translator wrote in his essay 'Sir Philip Sidney' that Shelley's beautifully written *Defence of Poetry* is a work which "analyses the very essence of poetry and the reason of its existence-its development from, and operation on, the mind of man."

Shelley writes in *Defence of Poetry* that while "ethical science arranges the elements which poetry has created, and leads to a moral civil life, poetry acts in a way which "awakens and enlarges the mind itself by rendering it the receptacle of a thousand unapprehended combinations of thought".

In *A Defence of Poetry* Shelley argued that the invention of language reveals a human impulse to reproduce in rhythmic and ordered, so that harmony and unity are delighted in wherever they are found and incorporated,

instinctively, into creative activities"

> "Every man in the infancy of art, observed an order which approximates more or less closely to that from which highest delight results."

This 'faculty of approximation' enables the observer to experience the beautiful, by establishing a "relation between the highest pleasure and its causes". The ones who possess this faculty "in excess are the poets." The poets' task is to "communicate the pleasure" of their experiences to the community. In this connection Shelley writes:

> "Poets, or those who imagine and express this indescribable order, are not only the authors of language and of music, of the dance and architecture and statuary and painting; they are the institutors of laws and the founders of civil society and the inventors of the arts of life and the teachers, who draw into a certain propinquity with the beautiful and the true that apprehension of the agencies of the invisible world which is called religion."

Shelley further adds:

> "Poets, according to the circumstances of the age and nation in which they appeared, were called in the earlier epochs of the world legislators: a poet essentially comprises and unites with both these characters."

This very sentiment was expressed by Sir Philip Sidney who pointed out in his *An Apology for Poetry* (1595) where 'vates' is the Roman term for poet which means a 'diviner, foreseer, or prophet'. Shelley explicates this view by saying:

> "For he [the poet] not only beholds intensely the present as it is, and discovers those laws according to which present things ought to be ordered, but he beholds the future in the present, and his thoughts are the germs of the flower and the fruit of latest time."

Shelley then goes on to speak of the role and function of the poet:

> "A poet participates in the eternal, the infinite and the once; as far as relates to his conceptions, time and place and number are not. The grammatical forms which express the moods of time and the difference of persons and the distinction of place are convertible with respect to the highest poetry without injuring it as poetry; and the choruses of Aeschylus, and the book of Job, and Dante's "Paradise" would afford, more than any other writings, examples of this fact, if the limits of this essay did not forbid citation. The creations of sculpture, painting, and music are illustrations still more decisive."

Shelley does not claim language is poetry on the grounds that language is the medium of poetry, rather he recognizes in the creation of language an adherence to the poetic precepts of order, harmony, unity and a desire to express delight in the beautiful. Shelley pointed out:

> " Language, colour, form and religious and civil habits of action are all the instruments and materials of poetry, they may be called poetry by that figure of speech which considers the effect as a synonym of the cause. But poetry in a more restricted sense expresses those arrangements of language, and especially metrical language which are created by that imperial faculty, whose throne is curtained within the invisible nature of man."

Aesthetic admiration of "the true and the awareness". Poetry and the various modes of art it incorporates are directly involved with the social activities f life. Shelley nominated unlikely figures such as Plato and Jesus in their excellent use of language to conceive the unconceivable. In this context Shelley's observation is:

> "An observation of the regular mode of the recurrence of this harmony in the language of poetical minds, together with its relation to music, produced metre, or a certain system of traditional forms of harmony and language."

Shelley even adds:

> "Yet it is by no means essential that a poet should accommodate his language to this traditional form, so that the harmony which is its spirit...the practice is indeed convenient and popular, and to be preferred, especially in such composition as includes much form and action."

About the nature of an entire poem Shelley opines that it is:

> "...the very image of life experienced in its eternal truth. There is this difference between a story and a poem, that a story is a catalogue of detached facts which have no other bond of connexion than time, place, circumstance, cause and effect, the other is the creation of actions according to the unchangeable forms of human nature, as exiting in the mind of the creator, which is itself the image of all other minds."

He concludes his comment about story and poetry by drawing a distinction:

> "The story of particular facts is a mirror which should be beautiful: Poetry is a mirror which makes beautiful that which is distorted".

After having determined what poetry is, Shelley proceeds to state who poets are and then estimate the effects of poetry upon society. He remarks:

> "Poetry is ever accompanied with pleasure: all spirit on which it falls, open themselves to receive the wisdom which is mingled with its delight."

Compared to other great 'defences' of poetry we may find Shelley's *A Defence of Poetry* somewhat unusual. There is little practical analysis of the elements of good literary work. There is no methodical history of poetry, as one finds in Sir Philip Sidney's *Apology for Poesy*. There are no clear pronouncements about the rules of composition. Instead, Shelley offers a philosophical analysis of the role of the poet as a special kind of person, one who can see the essential harmonies of the world beneath the discordant images people find in their everyday lives. Whereas Aristotle, Sidney, or John Dryden see the poet as a superb craftsman capable of delighting readers through masterful blending of form and content. Shelley assigns the poet a higher calling: the revelation of truth about life and the promotion of universal betterment.

These high claims are justified by Shelley's insistence that the production of poetry is not simply a craft. Rather, the true poet is a visionary who is inspired to create art as a means of revealing something about the nature of the world. The poem itself is merely an attempt to reproduce that vision. Such claims have been misinterpreted. Shelley has been accused of promoting automatic writing or devaluing the importance of craftsmanship. On the contrary, Shelley sees the imagination as a shaping power that gives form to the poet's vision. Only those who master the form can hope to convey their vision to readers. Those who consider Shelley to be a promoter of emotional poetry are wrong-headed. Shelley is insistent that the practice of poetry involves the intellect as well as the heart. He believes that great poets have a special gift that allows them to use the materials of their own time (the forms and subjects that might appeal to their contemporary readers), but transcend the limits of time and place to speak to people of all ages.

In his essay Shelley argued that poetry brings about moral improvement. Poetry excercises and expands the imagination, and the imagination is the source of sympathy, compassion and love, which rest on the ability to protect oneself, into the position of another person. He writes:

> "The great secret of morals is Love; or a going out of our nature, and an identification of ourselves with the beautiful which exists in thought, action, or person, not our own. A man, to be greatly good, must imagine intensely and comprehensively; he must put himself in the place of another and of many others; the pains and pleasures of his species must become his own. The great instrument of moral good is the imagination; and poetry administers to the effect by acting upon the cause. Poetry enlarges the circumference of the imagination. "

Shelley defends poetry with the two classes of mental action, one being reason and the other imagination. He states that "reason is to the imagination as the instrument to the agent, as the body to the spirit, as the shadow to the substance."

Shelley argues that every man experiences happiness and delight in certain experiences but those in whom it exists in excess are poets in the most universal sense of the word. He opines that the poet's role in society is to be all-encompassing.

He is here defending poetry by calling it "my mistress Urania" against an attack by Thomas Love Peacock in *The Four Ages of Poetry*. Peacock's point was that poetry never amounts to much in civilized society. Shelley's defence is that poetry is essential. Their views are thus antithetical to each other, even though neither was in contact with the other. Peacock's attack is a boisterous satire, Shelley's defence is an elevated prose poem.

Nevertheless, Peacock's article is still a necessary preface to Shelley's arguments, not because one prompted the other or because Shelley adopted Peacock's historical method in the middle section of his essay, but because as a pair the opposing preferences of the older public for eighteenth century wit and of the younger for enthusiasm. Peacock's essay has also the merit of being amusing; whereas Shelley is never so. Peacock's argument is that poetry belongs properly to the primitive societies, that as they become progressively civilized they become rational and non-poetic. Hence it was not until the late seventeenth century that England equalled, in the work of Shakespeare and John Milton, the Golden Age of Homeric Greece. Early nineteenth century England to him seemed to have reached the Age of Brass in poetry but a kind of Golden Age in science; therefore poetry should be left to the primitive societies where it belongs.

Peacock is most amusing in the picture of the first Age of Iron, in which the bard of the tribal chief "is

always ready to celebrate the strength of his arm, being first duly inspired by that of his liquor." Apart from Homer, Peacock respects no poet, not even Shakespeare, who flouted the unities and thus did grave harm to the art of drama according to Peacock. Peacock's jest turns sour as he tires of his figure and his strictness on contemporary poetry became a diatribe of which the gist is that "a poet of our times is a semi-barbarian in a civilized community". Shelley, to whom Peacock sent his essay, was stirred to write his only prose statement of his craft-*A Defence of Poetry*.

Unit 15 (a): The Function of the Poet according to Shelley

Non merito nome di creatore, se
Non Iddio ed il Poeta

The above quotation of the sixteenth century Italian poet, Torquato Tasso reproduced by Shelley in his essay *A Defence of Poetry,* when translated would read as follows, "None but God and the poet deserve the name of creator." Shelley considers poetry to be the manifestation of man's creativity and the poet is a "creator" in his own right. He creates through his genius. The generally accepted view of a genius is that of a person of a very high intellectual or creative ability which is consciously or unconsciously aimed at breaking through the existing human situation. Shelley also sees the poet as a genius, who creates "forms of opinion," and achieves a breakthrough in the existing human situation. He aspired to do the same through his own poetry and his work has strong overtones of reform and religious fervor. Being a genius, the creative powers of the poet are almost semi-divine and the mind of a poet is quite close to that of God.

In *Adonais,* an elegy written for John Keats, Shelley refers to his genius as a 'godlike mind':

The sun comes forth, and many reptiles spawn.
He sets, and each ephemeral insect then.
Is gathered into death without a dawn.
And the immortal stars awake again;
So it *is* in the world of living men:
A godlike mind soars forth, in its delight
Making earth bare and veiling heaven

The poet is essentially a creative genius and his mind is "god-like" with his high intellect. It is the inherent genius of the poet which helps him make his mark on the existing human situation. All the great religious personages were essentially so who created new forms of belief and practice. The sacred writings of these personages abound in poetry of the highest order. Most of the great poets, who were great philosophers as well, wrote poetry with significant religious overtones. Shelley points out in his essay that the poets of ancient Greece helped in laying the foundation of Greek civilization and also created edifying patterns for the Greeks to follow:

> "The poems of Homer and his contemporaries were the delight of infant Greece; they were the elements of that social system which is the column upon which all succeeding civilization has reposed. Homer embodied the ideal perfection of his age in human character; nor can we doubt that those who read his verses were awakened to an ambition of becoming like to Achilles, Hector, and Ulysses: the truth and beauty of friendship, patriotism, and preserving devotion to an object, were unveiled to their depths in these immortal creations; the sentiments of the auditors must have been refined and enlarged by a sympathy with such great and lovely impersonations, until from admiring they imitated, and from imitation they identified themselves with the objects of their admiration."

After the age of Homer the development of Greek civilization continued further till it reached its zenith during "the century which preceded the death of Socrates." The dramatic and lyrical poets of Athens" flourished during this period and Shelley has high admiration for their achievement in creating an ideal order full of beauty and harmony: "never at any other period has so much energy, beauty, and virtue been developed; never was blind strength and stubborn form so disciplined and rendered subject to the will of man, or that will less repugnant to the dictates of the beautiful and the true .... ". The poets through their poetry brought man closer to god and religion: "Of no other epoch in the history of our species have we records and fragments stamped so visibly with the image of the divinity in man. But it is poetry alone, in form, in action, and in language, which has rendered this epoch memorable above all others. " In Athens the poets created drama which had a profound impact on the lives of the Greeks: "The tragedies of the Athenian poets are *as* mirrors in which the spectator beholds himself, under a thin disguise of circumstance, stripped of all but that ideal perfection and energy which everyone feels to be the internal type of all that he loves, admires, and would become. "

The same role was played by the poets of ancient Rome. Ennius, Varro, Pacuvius, Accius, Lucretius, Virgil, Horace, Catullus, and Ovid are the poets Shelley admires. Of all of them Lecretius and Virgil were the most perfect. "Lecretius is the highest, and Virgil in a very high sense, a creator. The chosen delicacy of expressions of the latter, are as a mist of light which conceal from us the intense and exceeding truth of his conceptions of nature."

The Romans, however did not rise to the high standards of the Greeks. More than the written poetry of Rome Shelley approves of its institutions. "The true poetry of Rome, "says Shelley, "lived in its institutions, for whatever of beautiful, true and majestic they contained, could have sprung only from the faculty which creates the order in which they consist."

The creative principle amongst the Romans was responsible for creating the "beautiful, true and majestic," in institutions and action: "The life of Camillus, the death of Regulus; the expectation of the senators, in their godlike state, of the victorious Gauls; the refusal of the republic to make peace with Hannibal, after the battle of Canne." These things happened because the imagination of the Romans "beholding the beauty of this order, created it out of itself according to its own idea." They are not the less poetry *quia carent vate sacro* or in other words because they lacked a sacred bard. The creative nature of the Romans was responsible for the creation of such a "rhythm and order in the shows of life."

Poets have been associated with religion from the onset of civilization and this is why Shelley links the poet to God and calls him a creator. In his *Defence* Shelley cites the example of Christianity and Jesus Christ:

> At length the ancient system of religion and manners had fulfilled the circle of its evolutions. And the world would have fallen into utter anarchy and darkness, but there were found poets among the authors of Christian and Chivalric systems of manners and religion, who created forms of opinion and action never before conceived, which copied into the imagination of men, became as generals to the bewildered armies of their thoughts.

The poets created new "forms of opinion and action," and not only achieved breakthroughs but also saved the world from "anarchy and darkness." Through his creative power the poet replaced old values and created new ones, relevant to his time. This does not mean that they discarded the older poets altogether. They worked on what was erected by the older poets to affect further advancement. Shelley mentions that it is probable that the poetry of Moses, Job, David and Solomon, and Isaiah had produced a great effect upon the mind of Jesus and his disciples. Of Jesus Christ he says, "The scattered fragments preserved to us by the biographers of this extraordinary person, are all instinct with the most vivid poetry." "The poetry in the doctrines of Jesus Christ," points out Shelley was responsible for creating a "new fabric of manners and opinion."

The ignorance of the dark ages, Shelley asserts, was due to the lack of the creative principle:

> It is an error to impute the ignorance of the dark ages to the Christian doctrines or the predominance of the Celtic nations. Whatever of evil their agencies may have contained sprang from the extinction of the poetical principle, connected with progress of despotism and superstitution. Men, from causes too intricate to be here discussed had become insensible and selfish: their own will had become feeble, and yet they were its slaves, and thence the slaves of the will of others: lust, fear, avarice, cruelty and fraud, characterised a race amongst whom no one was to be found capable of creating inform, language or institution.

The extinction of the poetical principle due to the absence of someone who could create, namely the absence of the poet was responsible for all the maladies of the dark ages, emphasize Shelley, It is a historical fact that this period saw very little intellectual or creative activity and hence very few intellectuals, "creators" or geniuses. By the eleventh century however, the effects of the Christian and Chivalric systems began to be felt. Christianity which subsequently caught the imagination of the Western world, is actually eclectical and its sources Shelley points out are the poetry and wisdom of antiquity. One influence was the poet Plato and Shelley has deep regard for his intellectual prowess.

In his *Republic*, Plato had put forward the principle of equality as the theoretical rule of the manner in which the materials of pleasure and power produced by the common skill and labour of human beings ought to be distributed. Following the doctrines of Timaeus and Pythagoras, Plato also taught a moral and intellectual system of doctrine, which comprehended at once the past, the present and the future condition of man. Through religion, Jesus Christ revealed the truth of these views:

> Jesus Christ divulged the sacred and eternal truths contained in these views to mankind, and Christianity, in its abstract purity, become the exoteric expression of the esoteric doctrines of the poetry and wisdom of antiquity.

Poetry is one of the oldest of arts and one of the most persistent. Religious sentiments initially took their birth· in poetry. The poet had a high place in early civilizations. Shelley has shown that the absence of poetry led to moral, cultural and social degeneration. The poet's creative genius was responsible in arousing noble sentiments and in creating high ideals and "forms of opinion and action," and manners as a consequence of which the quality of life improved, Thus we cannot deny the effects of poets, in the large and true sense of the word, upon their own and all succeeding times.

The poet for Shelley is therefore someone who is a genius and as a consequence has almost semi-divine powers which he uses to create forms of belief and practice capable of affecting human life and existence.

One of Shelley's best lyrics, in *Prometheus Unbound,* "The Poet's Dream," seems to have been written for the sole purpose of delineating the poet's vocation. The song is sung by one of the healing spirits which comes to soothe and comfort Prometheus who lies chained to the mountain and is suffering untold misery. Prometheus' misery has been greatly aggravated by the torture he undergoes at the hands of the Furies. Shelley creates Prometheus as a champion of mankind and an embodiment of human wisdom and heroism. Prometheus is a prisoner of Jupiter, the oppressor of mankind and a representative of tyranny and superstition. The Furies torture him in order to force him to reveal a secret known only to him-the fear of which is troubling Jupiter. Prometheus does not yield and when the Furies depart, the Earth, out of pity for the suffering Prometheus sends some "fair and subtle spirits" to comfort him. These good spirits who inspire the noblest of human activities, sing lyrics to cheer up Prometheus. The first of these spirits seems to be the patron of heroism, the second of altruism, the third of wisdom and the fourth of poetry. The song of the fourth spirit, "The Poet's Dream," is an important statement of Shelley's theory of poetry and his concept of the poet:

On a poet's lips I slept
Dreaming like a love adept
In the sound his breathing kept:
Nor seeks nor finds he mortal blisses,
But feeds on the aerie! kisses
Of shapes that haunt thought's wildernesses.
He will watch from dawn to gloom,
The lake reflected sun illume
The yellow bees in the ivy-bloom.
Nor heed nor see what things they be;
But from these create he can
Forms more real than living man,
Nurslings of immortality."

The poet, like God, causes something to come into existence. Unlike God who can create things out of nothing, the poet creates from "thought's wildemesses"-through the exercise of his imagination. The poet for Shelley does not make discoveries of preexistent knowledge, he does not explore the unknown in an effort to find what is hidden. He is a creator who brings into existence what his mind conceives. Though the poet may hardly notice the visible world, he nonetheless, uses it as material to create independent beings having superior degree of reality. Shelley also saw that reason must somehow be related to the imagination, and its special task is simply to analyze the given and to act as an instrument of the imagination which uses its conclusions to create a synthetic and harmonious whole. He calls poetry "the expression of the imagination," because through it, diverse things are brought together in harmony instead of being separated by way of analysis. Shelley recognizes" imagination" to be man's highest faculty through which he realizes his noblest powers and creative capability.

Unit 15(b): The Nature of Poetry according to Shelley

Poetry for Shelley is essentially an expression of the human creative spirit and in its essence it is not different from other arts. All have common roots and poetry therefore is not merely literature in verse, but, also whatever prose that is allied to that literature. All actions, inventions, institutions, and ideas and moral dispositions which the imagination brings into being in its efforts to satisfy the desire for perfection is poetry. Painters and musicians are poets. Plato and Bacon, Herodotus and Livy were poets, though there is much in their works which is not poetry. So were the men who invented the arts of life, founded institutions, constructed laws for tribes or cities, revealed, as sages or founders of religion, the excellence of justice and love. For Shelley anyone who can perceive the beauty of an imagined virtue or deed and translate the same into a fact is a poet. All these things can come only from the imagination and Shelley recognizes poetry as the

"expression of the imagination."

Thomas Love Peacock in his essay *The Four Ages of Poetry,* called the poet a "semi-barbarian in a civilised community." For Shelley the poet had just the opposite character and it was this accusation of Peacock which hurt Shelley and launched him into a "sacred rage" in the defence of poetry. The result was his essay *A Defence of Poetry.* Written in the penultimate year of Shelley's life, after a considerable poetic output, it is all the more credible and authentic as a piece of literary criticism. Shelley had all through his poetic career strove and achieved perfection through order, harmony and rhythm in his verse and he firmly believed that poetry is a search for order, harmony and rhythm in life that leads to excellence in truth, beauty, love, honor and virtue.

Since *A Defence of Poetry* was written specifically as an answer to Peacock's essay *The Four Ages of Poetry* it places a disproportionate emphasis on points raised by Peacock. The essay has a caustic undercurrent directed against the poetry of Coleridge, Wordsworth, Hunt, Moore, Byron and Shelley himself. The reason for this lay, in part, as Shelley hints, in Peacock's thwarted ambitions as a poet. The fact that he had outlined in detail and written two books of a projected twelve-book epic, *Ahrimanes* shows how lofty these ambitions had been. Furthermore, there was a personal as well as an ideological element in dispute. When Peacock wrote of the "degenerate fry of modern rhymesters," he could hardly have intended to exclude Shelley, and when Peacock read in Shelley's *Defence* of the "low thoughted envy which would undervalue contemporary merit," he might well have felt that the comment was aimed at him.

The essence of Peacock's argument is that poetry has twice passed through four ages-iron, gold, silver and brass-once in the ancient world and once in the modern, and that it is now, in its second brass age, a childish outmoded art. A man with intelligence would be better off turning to science or politics. Poetry, in its origin, that is the iron age was despicable, arising from the untutored superstition of savage hymning the deeds of brutal chieftains. The poets were regarded as prophets only because of the ignorance of the people, whom they misled: "delivering their oracles ex-cathedra, and being indeed often themselves as portions and emanations of divinity, building cities with a song, and leading brutes with a symphony; which are only metaphors for the faculty of leading multitudes by the nose." In the next age, "the age of Homer, the golden age of poetry," poetry is supreme only because it stands alone and "has no rivals in history, nor in philosophy nor in science." From this point on, poetry must of necessity decline. In the next period, the silver age, stretching from Aristophanes to Vigil, this decline is apparent, as poetry degenerates into mere polished repetition of past glories, and other arts develop. With the brass age, the age 'ofNonmus *(a* Christian Greek epic poet ofthe fifth century), this degeneration is complete: Thus ended the four ages of poetry in the ancient world.

In the modern world, Contents Peacock the iron age is the time of the troubadours and romance writers with their absurd "semi-deification of women" and hero-worship of knights and chivalry. The golden age was the age of Ariosto in Italy and of Shakespeare in England. The silver age was the Augustun period, beginning with Dryden, coming to perfection with Pope, and ending with Goldsmith, Collins and Gray. The "brass" age was the romantic period. It is this last that Peacock has really been working towards and once he gets to it, he lets loose with full force, inveighing against "the herd of desperate imitators, who have brought the age of brass prematurely to its dotage," namely, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Southey, Byron, Campbell, and Moore. Poetry has become a cultural anachronism, the poet "a semi barbarian in a civilized community." As poetry possesses no utility value, intellectual power and intellectual acquisition have turned themselves into other and better channels-mathematics, astronomy, chemistry, ethics, history, politics, political economy-and "have abandoned the cultivation and the fate of modern poetry to the degenerate fry of modern rhymsters."

Shelley received the copy of Oilier's *Literary Miscellarv* in which Peacock's essay appeared in January 1821 and began a first tentative reply in the form of a letter to the editor. In his first draft, Shelley lists what he considers to be Peacock's main arguments. These are "four ages of poetry ... in which this art or faculty has progressively deteriorated", the early poets were "savages" who wrote only to flatter "semi-barbarians"; poetry has "deteriorated," as civil society and the "arts of life" have progressed; and every intelligent person should desert poetry for "political economy." Although Shelley set out to produce a "reply" he ultimately produced an independent and critical work, one which W .B. Yeats called, "the profoundest essay on the foundation of poetry in English," and Sir Herbert Read echoed him with "the profoundest treatment of the subject in the English Language."

In the beginning of the essay, Shelley attempts to counter Peacock's argument on the barbarous and contemptible origins of poetry. This leads him into a discussion of the nature of poetry. Shelley first states that whatever poetry is, in its essence it cannot be different from other arts. All are an expression of the human creative urge and creative spirit, and must therefore he argues, have a common base and common roots.

Shelley's contention is that all artistic expression is cognate with the origin of man. It is cognate in two ways-sociological and psychological. This relationship can be perceived in the child and can be assumed in the origin of society:

> A child at play by itself will express its delight by its voice and motions; and every inflexion of tone and every gesture will bear exact relation to a corresponding antitype in the pleasurable impressions .... The savage (for the savage is to ages what the child is to years) expresses the emotions produced in him by surrounding objects in a similar manner,- and language and. gesture, together with plastic or pictorial imitation, became the image of the combined effect ofthose objects and his apprehensions of them.

Poetry, Shelley maintains, did not arise out of a desire to flatter savage chieftains as was Peacock's contention, but is the expression of an elemental force within human nature; a force that turns the personality out\\lard in imitative and rhythmic response to its environment. Initially, this response was to "objects," natural or man-made but gradually it spread out. Shelley believes that the human mind has certain capacities which have developed as a result of psychological and social forces reacting upon each other. He states that "social sympathies" develop from interactions of human beings in society. These interactions result in certain basic socio-psychological "principles," namely: "equality; diversity; unity; contrast; mutual dependence." These "principles" form the basic structure of the "social being." They provide a base or-"constitute"-the qualities that form the essence of cultural and psychological life: "Pleasure in sensation, virtue in sentiment, beauty in art, truth in reasoning, and love in the intercourse of kind." pleasure, virtue, beauty, truth, and love are not innate qualities. They would not develop in any human being in isolation from his fellows, for they result from the human psychological mechanism with its natural capacities-among which is one for the "social sympathies"-acting in response to social intercourse. It is because of these socio psychological reactions that art arose. They were, in fact, operative in the very first societies, those of the "savage," and were responsible for turning him to "language and gesture" in dance and song, and to "plastic" and "pictorial imitation." They constitute the "laws" from which art "proceeds."

Although in regard to "art" Shelley mentions only "beauty," this is not because he felt that the other qualities listed are not associated with art, but because he considered that beauty constitutes the essence of art as "truth" constitutes the essence of "reasoning." Pleasure, virtue, and love are obviously all as much a part of art as they are of human intercourse. All of them arise from the basic "principles" of socio-psychological interaction. In searching for the roots of art, as for the roots of ethics, Shelley attempts to find a natural and social explanation.

At the outset Shelley wished to establish that poetry is not different in essence from the other arts, and that all the arts grow from socio-psychological processes. In seeking the particular qualities of the mind which, interacting with these processes, result in artistic creativity, Shelley singles out the imagination. It cannot, he argues, be reason, or at least not reason alone, because it is primarily analytic, concerned with "the enumeration of quantities already known," whereas imagination is primarily synthetic. Reason and imagination, however are not antithetical, they work in harmony.

The law by which the imagination operates is that of "association." It creates new concepts by combining materials presented to it by the senses and analyzed by reason. Reasoning, cannot create, it can only operate upon the products of imagination. Shelley defines Poetry as "the expression of the imagination" because he believes the imagination to be the prime source of everything that has intrinsic value in life. For want of imagination we have no sympathy in our hearts and do not feel what we know. It is clear that Shelley considers poetry in general to be a force for good:

> ... poetry acts in another and divine manner. It awakens and enlargens the mind itself by rendering it the receptacle of a thousand unapprehended combinations of thought. Poetry lifts the veil from the hidden beauty of the world, and makes familiar objects be as if they were not familiar, it reproduces all that it represents, ... The great secret of morals is love, ... A man to be greatly good, must imagine intensely and comprehensively he must put himself in the place, of another and of many others; the pains and pleasures of his species must become his own. The great instrument of moral good is the imagination and poetry administers to the effect by acting upon the cause .... poetry strengthens the faculty which is the organ of moral nature of man in the same manner as exercise strengthens a limb…

Imagination is both creative and expansive. It sends the mind outward end encourages generous and humanitarian feelings. Such also is the general function of "the arts," including poetry. The imagination lies at the root of love, and love is a many sided force-love between man and woman, between the individual and humanity and nature. As poetry is akin to imagination, it is also akin to love.

For Shelley, poets are those who imagine, or more specificially those who can perceive the beauty of an imagined virtue or deed and translate the image into a fact. All this can come from the imagination that has before it, or feels within it, certain ideas which answer perfectly to its nature, fills it with delight and arouses the desire to realize what causes it. This idea, as and when it originates, need not be distinctly imagined and is always accompanied by emotion. The reason why such ideas delight the imagining soul is because they are, in fact, images or forebodings of its own perfection and of itself become perfect in one aspect or another. These aspects are as various as the elements and forms of its own inner life and outward existence. They and the idea therefore can be that of perfect harmony of will and feeling 'a virtue' or of the perfect union of soul with soul (love), or of the perfect order of certain social relations or forces (a law or institution), or of the perfect adjustment *of* intellectual elements ('a truth) and so on. The formation and expression of any such idea is thus the work of poetry in the broadest sense, and such ideas for Shelley can only come from an active involvement of the imagination.

The imaginative idea is always regarded by Shelley as beautiful. It is desirable for itself and not merely as a means to a further result; and it has the formal characters of beauty. This is because it is always the image of an order, harmony, or unity in variety, of the elements concerned. Shelley sometimes even speaks of their 'rhythm' using for example, this word in reference to an action.

The poet is someone who has "a certain order or rhythm" different from that of the rest; and from this "order" the audience receives "an intenser and purer pleasure" than from any other. Hence the poet who creates this particular "order" and has a special "faculty of approximation to the beautiful," writes a kind of poetry based on these principles. Poets and artists in all fields differ not in kind but in degree from their fellows, for as all people have something of this "order or rhythm" in them that they can respond to. Hence, there can be a close link between the artist and the audience. Turning specifically to the poet as writer, Shelley argues that he has more insight into reality than most people, which is conveyed in a language that by its imaginative insight and beauty of rhythm starts a resonance in the mind, giving new insight into life and new meaning to language. The poet, however, is not, as the creative artist in general is not, of a different species, but is a person with an unusual imagination and sense of beauty. He does not create something from nothing or have mystic visions but remolds what he takes in from society and nature.

Shelley believed that truth could be discovered either by reason or by imaginative insight or, best of all, by both acting together. Conveying truth to others can be done by rational analysis alone, but it can be done in greater depth if the mind is put in a responsive state through imaginative, emotional, and rhythmic language, or by music or graphic representation. Shelley does not abandon logic, reason, or science but only argues that poetry has its own pathways to truth.

Nearing the end of his essay Shelley sums up the functions of the poetical faculty as two fold: "by one it creates new materials of knowledge, and power, and pleasure; by the other it engenders in the mind a desire to reproduce and arrange them according to a certain rhythm and order which may be called the beautiful and the good. Since poetry arises from socio-psychological reactions, a poem for Shelley is therefore the "very image of life expressed in its eternal truth." Comparing poetry to the other form of written literature, namely the story he says: "A story of particular facts is as a mirror which obscures that which should be beautiful: poetry is a mirror which makes beautiful that which is distorted." Poetry certainly makes us see the world we live in as different and more shining. Calling poetry as "indeed something divine," Shelley asks a very relevant question: "What were virtue, love, patriotism, friendship-what were the scenery of this beautiful universe which we inhabit; what were our consolations on this side of the grave and what were our aspirations beyond it, if poetry did not ascend to bring light and fire from, those eternal regions where the owl-winged faculty of calculation dare not ever soar?" Poetry is as Shelley says, "If blighted, denies the fruit and the seed, and withholds from the barren world the nourishment and the succession of the scions of the tree of life."

Unit 16: Sidney, Shelley and the Moral Function of Poetry

Although separated by the Elizabethan and Romantic eras, Sir Philip Sidney (1554-1586) and Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822) crafted defences of poetry which identified moral functions that were specific to literature. For Sidney, imbued with Renaissance humanism, poetry is the ultimate instrument of moral instruction because it "be so good as to teach goodness and to delight the learners".

Shelley, in a typically Romantic privileging of the imagination over reason, believes that poetry is invaluable to society because it enlarges the imagination, stimulates empathy and produces "the moral improvement of man".

Despite his aristocratic birth, military prowess and intellectual brilliance, Sir Philip Sidney was denied public office by a pragmatic queen who distrusted his ardent Protestantism. Banished from court for criticizing Elizabeth Tudor's marriage negotiations with a French Catholic prince and thwarted by more opportunistic rivals for royal patronage, Sidney might well have reflected that poetry alone could, in the classical Greek tradition, teach moral virtues which were so lacking in the sycophantic court.

Stephen Gosson's denunciation of poetry's immorality in *The School of Abuse* (1579) provided Sidney with a perfect opportunity to counter such puritanical bias and proclaim the discipline's unique fitness for the teaching of virtue. Although written in 1579, *An Apology for Poetry* was not published until 1594, ten years after Sidney's heroic death at the Battle of Zutphen.

Like Sidney, Percy Bysshe Shelley came from a privileged background. Heir to a wealthy baronetcy, he was, however, a political radical whose scandalous private life offended his peers. Deploring the inequities of Regency England, its imperfect democracy, discrimination against the Catholics and brutal oppression of Ireland, Shelley linked this evidence of civic decay to a decline in sensibility towards poetry - a pattern he discerned in the rise and fall of other civilizations in history (Leader and O'Neill 2003: *xxii*). When Thomas Lovelock Peacock published *The Four Ages of Poetry* (1820) and challenged poetry's relevance to modern society, Shelley immediately responded by advocating a compelling moral function in *A Defence of Poetry* (published posthumously in 1840): the strengthening of man's moral faculty.

So how then do Sidney and Shelley's arguments for a moral function which is unique to literature proceed? In his *Apology for Poetry*, Sidney affirms poetry's credentials for the teaching of virtue, the highest moral object of all human learning. Poetry is the foundation of all knowledge, the treasury into which history and philosophy have traditionally dipped to sweeten their teachings and gain passage into popular understanding (Adams and Searle 2005: 186). While other disciplines are constrained by rules, the poet is liberated by an imagination which perceives man's potential for moral perfection so that he is "lifted up with the vigor of his own invention...making things better than nature bringeth forth, or, quite anew, forms as never were in nature".

It is easy to imagine the Puritans of Elizabeth's court frowning at this usurpation of a function which was the provenance of God. Sidney, however, insists that it is man's proximity to "the Heavenly maker" who "made man in his own likeness" which ensures that "our erected wit maketh us know what perfection is". According to Sidney, divinely inspired imagination, which can "feign" such images of virtue, has resonances with Shelley's perception of the symbiotic relationship between poetic imagination and moral sensibility. It is, Sidney suggests, the poet's ability to craft such wondrous images of perfection which renders his creations superior to those of nature, whose "world is brazen [brass]" whereas "the poets only deliver a golden". Poetry, therefore, can "make better" an historical character such as King Cyrus, or "make anew" one "so excellent a man in every way as Virgil's Aeneas".

The signposts are thus firmly pointing towards both poetry's knowledge of virtue and, perhaps more important, its skill to teach it. In the definition of poetry which now follows, Sidney's draws on Aristotle's concept of *mimesis,* where poetry provides a role model of heroic virtues worthy of civic imitation. Poetry is "an art of imitation...a speaking picture; with this end, to teach and delight" (189). In one succinct phrase, Sidney has both defined poetry *and* illutrated its moral function. The best poetry is, therefore, the heroic, tragic and epic and genres, whose poets "do imitate to teach and delight" and "range...into the divine consideration of what may be, and should be" (189). This last phrase is particularly significant because it underscores poetry's interest, not in historical experience and imperfect human actions, but ideal worlds and perfect human behaviour. Such poetry is the very embodiment of virtue because it aims "both to delight and teach, and delight to move men to take that goodness in hand...and teach, to make them know that goodness whereunto they are moved" (189). By delighting us with beauty and making learning so pleasurable, poetry inspires us to both embrace the concept of goodness it teaches and observe it in our daily lives (189). The teaching of goodness, is, suggests Sidney, "the noblest scope to which ever learning was directed".

Shelley's *Defence of Poetry* offers a vigorous affirmation of poetry's intrinsic value to society. He refutes allegations of its immorality by demonstrating that it "acts to prove the moral improvement of man" (542). Emulating Sidney's strategy in *Apology*, Shelley sketches poetry's moral pedigree and then offers a definition which is suggestive of its moral function. He begins by considering two types of mental action, reason and imagination: reason is the "enumeration of quantities already known" while imagination is the

"perception of the value of those quantities" (538). This offers an important qualitative distinction between the possession of knowledge *per se* and an understanding of the value of knowledge**,** thus underscoring the fundamental differences between philosophy and poetry.

Shelley's definition of poetry is, quite simply "the expression of the imagination" (538). It soon becomes clear that the imagination plays a pivotal role in the moral function performed by poetry. Shelley sees man as "an instrument" who responds to a series of internal and external impressions and who possesses a unique faculty for harmony and melody. This gives man an exquisite responsiveness to the stimuli of beautiful sound, reflected in his ability to produce "internal adjustments of the sounds or motions thus excited to the impressions which excite them" (538). This is a crucial point because it explains the imagination's susceptibility to beautiful poetry and why it can perform the powerful role, shortly outlined by Shelley, as man's moral organ.

Shelley suggests the "faculty of approximation to the beautiful" is most highly evolved in poets, who communicate their exquisite visions in wondrous prose (539). He claims, rather majestically, that "to be a poet is to apprehend the true and the beautiful", to perceive the very essence of goodness inherent to existence and experience. Edith Cameron notes that the twenty-first-century reader might feel uncomfortable with such a sweeping claim (*Shelley's'Defence' Today).* Yet how surprising that, Cameron, herself a poet, is not more tolerant of such grandiosity particularly when Shelley is merely using standard Romantic phraseology to illustrate poetry's superior facility for perception and interpretation. What then are the effects of the "excellence of poetry" upon society? (Adams and Searle 2005: 541). In one of Shelley's most beautiful metaphors, "the poet is a nightingale" and men are seduced and entranced by the beauty of his verse (541).

Poetry's capacity to both captivate and teach is immortalised by Homer's ability to inspire the Greeks of classical antiquity. Homer personified "the ideal perfection of his age in human character" and enchanted his peers with the heroism of Ulysses and Achilles. Indeed, men were moved to emulate "the truth and beauty of friendship, patriotism and persevering devotion to an object..."(41). Such mimetic poetry inculcates civic virtue through its power to engage with the emotions and arouse a desire to imitate examples of nobility and goodness. Man's capacity for empathy nudges Shelley towards that all important moral function for literature. Enhanced empathy is an outcome of man's experience of poetry (there is, of course, no mention of woman's experience). Thus "the sentiments of the auditors must have been refined and enlarged by a sympathy with such great and lovely impersonations" (541). Shelley recalls that Greek citizens strove to model their civic behaviour on the worthy models they encountered in Homer, thus "from admiring they imitated, and from imitation they identified themselves with the objects of their admiration" (541).

Yet how does poetry achieve this miraculous moral improvement in man? Like Sidney, who perceived a certain divinity in poetic imagination, Shelley considers that poetry functions "in a divine manner" and "awakens and enlarges the mind by making it receptive to a multitude of exquisite thoughts" (542). For Shelley, "the great secret of morals is love" (542). Why? Because love enables us to transcend the limitations of our own natures and experience "an identification of ourselves with the beautiful which exists whether in thought, action or person which is not our own" (542). Here, selflessness, empathy and imagination converge in a beautifully evocative definition of philanthropy: goodness requires man "to imagine intensely and comprehensively; he must put himself in the place of another...the pains and pleasures of his species must become his own" (542).

Thus, "the great instrument of moral good is the imagination" which poetry nurtures by perpetually stimulating with new images of beauty, delight and joy (542). For Shelley, therefore, "poetry strengthens the faculty which is the organ of the moral nature of man" in the same manner as "exercise strengthens a limb" (542). This establishes two fundamental points: first, poetry alone can perform this moral function by nurturing the imagination (synonymous with man's moral sense), and secondly, if Shelley is right, then human society will enjoy its greatest periods of social stability when poetry is at its most dazzling brilliance, and its darkest moments of ignorance and moral depravity when it is extinct.

To illustrate how poetry expands the circumference of the imagination and strengthens morality, Shelley dips into history and suggests a pattern where poetic brilliance is accompanied by epochs of unparalleled moral and cultural vigour. He offers the example of Athenian supremacy, where democracy, sculpture, art and poetry achieved the most dazzling heights of perfection. During this golden period of civilization "never...has so much energy, beauty and virtue been developed" where "poetry alone...has rendered this epoch memorable above all others" (543). Of course, it could be argued that it was the stability and prosperity of a strong democracy and powerful empire, consolidated by Themistocles and later, Pericles, which created an environment in which poetry could prosper. Shelley observes that the brilliant tradition of

Greek literature, commenced by Homer, reached its apotheosis in the dramatic art of Sophocles. His tragedies engaged the imagination and sympathy of the audiences where "the imagination is enlarged by sympathy with pains and passions...the good affections are strengthened by pity, indignation, terror and sorrow" and the calming effect of the catharsis which followed was carried into domestic and civil life (543).

What then are the consequences for society when the quality of its poetry dramatically declines? The answer provides further, and for Shelley, compelling, evidence of poetry's unique moral function. The deterioration of the poetic tradition in Greece was accompanied by the atrophying of Greek power, the imploding of social infrastructures and the disintegration of empire. First Macedon and then Rome subjugated Greece by which time her creative literary brilliance had dimmed. Poetic decline is manifested in the failure of poetic empathy and production of inferior classical and domestic dramas, whose writings were "unimaginative" and portrayed ignoble emotions of "caprice and appetite" (543).

In such periods of decline, the imagination is not engaged, empathy remains dormant and the moral faculty atrophies through lack of use (recalling, of course, his earlier analogy in which poetry strengthens the imagination, the moral organ of man). Literature, in this scenario, becomes a barometer of an epoch's moral fibre. Shelley attributes the rise of despotism and ignorance during the Dark Ages to the extinction of poetry and corresponding decline in creative power. Similarly, he equates the stirrings of the early Renaissance to Dante's rediscovery of poetic language and beauty. During such periods of history, this decay "begins at the imagination and intellect....and distributes itself thence as a paralysing venom" eroding all goodness of character until "all becomes a torpid mass in which hardly any sense survives" (544). Moral function is effectively disabled. Closer to his own century, Shelley refers to the Restoration period where the immorality and decadence of Charles II's court was marked by a decline in the quality of drama. Dramatists wrote for royal favour, rather than love of virtue and Milton alone stood as a beacon of poetic integrity. Well might Shelley observe that "the highest perfection of human society has ever corresponded with the highest dramatic excellence" (544).

Shelley now recalls the two mental actions with which he opened his discussion: reason and imagination. The utilitarian veneration for reason in his own epoch, seen in the calculations of scientists, mechanists and political economists, has yielded social injustices because of its lack of connection to "those first principles which belong to the imagination" (548). The consequences are grim as "the rich have become richer, and the poorer have become poorer" therefore modern man needs the imagination which poetry fosters if he is recover his social conscience (548). "We want the creative faculty to imagine that we know; we want the generous impulse to act that which we imagine; we want the poetry of life" (549). Ignore this at your peril, warns Shelley, because "the cultivation of poetry" is never more relevant to society than during periods of "the selfish and calculating principle"" (549). It was a prophetic statement: England was on the cusp of an Industrial Revolution which would alter the fabric of society and make redundant all that was poetic and rural (549).

Suggested Reading

1. 'Sir Philip Sidney, Percy Bysshe Shelley and the Moral Function of Poetry'-Susan Laverick.
2. 'A Defense of Percy Bysshe Shelley'- Joann Deiudicibus.
3. 'Shelley and the Religion of Joy'-Timothy Webb
4. 'Shelley's Defence of Science'-Harry White
5. 'Refocussing Shelley'- George Herbert Clarke
6. 'Shelley's Platonism in *A Defence of Poetry*'-Tracy Ware
7. 'A Defence of Poetry'-Colin Falck
8. Brailsford, H.N. *Shelley, Godwin and their Circle*
9. Cox, Jeffrey. *Poetry and Politics in the Cockney School: Keats, Shelley, Hunt and their Circle*
10. Eliot, Charles W. *English Essays: From Sir Philip Sidney to Macaulay.*
11. King-Hale, Desmond. *Shelley: His Thought and Work*
12. Rogers, Neville. *Shelley at Work: An Enquiry*
13. Symonds, J.A. *Shelley*
14. *Percy Bysshey Shelley: A Literary Life*-Michael O Neill
15. *Percy Bysshey Shelley*(The Griffin Authors' Series): Donald H Reiman

Assignments

1. What role does Shelley envisage for poets in an industrial and materialistic culture?
2. How does Shelley put forward imagination as a positive factor against the onslaught of rationality?
3. What, according to Shelley, is the contribution of poetry to the fabric of society?

E N G L I S H

(POST GRADUATE DEGREE PROGRAMME)

SEMESTER 2

Core Course IV

Course Material

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UNIVERSITY OF KALYANI
KALYANI-741235, WEST BENGAL

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Utmost care and precision have been ensured in the development of the SLMs, making them useful to the learners, besides avoiding errors as far as practicable. Further suggestions from the stakeholders in this would be welcome.

During the production-process of the SLMs, the team continuously received positive stimulations and feedback from Professor (Dr.) Sankar Kumar Ghosh, Hon'ble Vice- Chancellor, University of Kalyani, who kindly accorded directions, encouragements and suggestions, offered constructive criticism to develop it within proper requirements. We gracefully, acknowledge his inspiration and guidance.

Sincere gratitude is due to the respective chairpersons as well as each and every member of PGBOS (DODL), University of Kalyani. Heartfelt thanks is also due to the Course Writers-faculty members at the DODL, subject-experts serving at University Post Graduate departments and also to the authors and academicians whose academic contributions have enriched the SLMs. We humbly acknowledge their valuable academic contributions. I would especially like to convey gratitude to all other University dignitaries and personnel involved either at the conceptual or operational level of the DODL of University of Kalyani.

Their persistent and co-ordinated efforts have resulted in the compilation of comprehensive, learner-friendly, flexible texts that meet the curriculum requirements of the Post Graduate Programme through Distance Mode.

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Core Course 4

Restoration to the Age of Sensibility (1660-1788): Fiction & Non-Fictional Prose

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Block I: *Robinson Crusoe* by Daniel Defoe

Unit 1(a): Introduction-Daniel Defoe: Life and Times
Unit 1(b) *Robinson Crusoe*: Source in Travel-Writing
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Unit 1(a): Introduction-Daniel Defoe: Life and Times

The world into which Daniel Defoe was born was one on a much smaller scale. It was a preindustrial world. There were no machines, no daily newspapers, and no rapid means of communication. It was a localized world, in which the dominant means of transport was horseback. It is, therefore, difficult for us to-day in this twenty-first century world, luring a sophisticated technology dominated age, to make the imaginative leap necessary to contemplate this localized world with its obvious limitations and a much slower pace.

Of course, it should not be concluded from this that the seventeenth century world was a static one. Strife was commonplace in England and on the continent of England. The period between 1642 and 1649, witnessed a civil war between Puritans (supporters of parliamentary government) and Royalists (supporters of the monarchy and the divine right of kings) in England. The two civil wars were followed by Cromwell's protectorate and long period of political instability. Rural parties and factions were engaged in fierce arguments, since the English were divided bitterly over a range of political and religious issues. Fundamental to these disagreements was the argument over what should be the relationship between the Crown and the Parliament. This debate was raging intermittently throughout Defoe's early life and was not resolved until the 'Glorious Revolution of 1688 when Defoe was 28. These decades of conflict in which England was divided against itself, help to explain the polemical nature of much of his early writing and the restlessness which is so characteristic of his work.

Daniel Defoe was born in London Probably in the autumn of 1660. His exact date of birth remains unknown since there is no written record of his birth or baptism. He was the son of James and Alice Foe of parish of St. Giles Cripplegate, lying just beyond the wall on the northern edge of the city of London. James Foe was a tallow chandler - a dealer in candles and soap - and later became a merchant of some substance, extending his activities into overseas trade. Little or nothing is known of Alice Foe - not even her maiden surname is recorded. There is no evidence of any literary or creative background in Defoe's ancestry, though the values inculcated in his childhood home were those he remembered all his life. Defoe had two older sisters, Mary (born in 1657) and Elizabeth (born in 1659), but the latter died in infancy. His boyhood home was situated in Swan Alley in the parish of St. Stephen, Coleman Street, within a walking distance of St. Paul's Cathedral and the Royal Exchange. The atmosphere of the house was quiet and respectable, but just beyond the courtyard lay the bustle of the city and the narrow festering alleys leading down to the Thames.

Defoe was brought up in a world in which the predominant values were orderliness discipline, self-sufficiency and respectability. To improve one's lot through one's own industry was the prevailingethic. As a boy, Defoe must have been familiar with such terms as 'merchant', 'trade' and 'commerce'. He must have been impressed by the knowledge that his father had attained a position of modest prosperity as a result of hard work and initiative. The earnestness of

his childhood background is reflected in his writing out in longhand the whole of the first five books of the Old Testament.

When Defoe was only a small boy, his life was torn violently by two events, which haunted his imagination in future : the Plague and the Fire of London. The Plague left the streets deserted - streets that had once been populous, of grass growing among the cobblestones, of the crying of the bereaved. The sight had deep impression on the tender mind of Daniel. He weaved his memory of the terrible epidemic into his masterly *Journal of the Plague Year* later. London had barely recovered from the plague, when it was gutted by the Great Fire, which raged for four days and nights, destroying St. Paul's and 87 parish churches, including St. Stephens, and 13,000 houses. Many of the familiar landmarks Defoe had seen as a boy were destroyed by the Fire. It included the Royal Exchange, the Customs House and the Guildhall. He never forgot the impression this disaster made upon him. Though the Foe household and shop escaped destruction in the fire, many of James Foe's friends and business associates were directly affected by it. Daniel could not forget the sight of the sky glowing at night, the smoking ruins of the city, and the homeless camping on the grass.

Defoe does not record any reminiscences of his school, though he retained affectionate memories of Dorking and its surrounding scenery. When he was 11, he was sent to a boarding school by his father. This school was at Dorking in Surrey. These were highly impressionable years when he took a lively interest in politics from an early age. He must have been aware of the national and international events that were happening around him and talked about at home and at school : the freezing of the assets of the Lombard Street banks by Charles II (which caused the ruin of many businessman), the uneasy truce between the crown and the Dissenters, the rise to fame of the young William of Orange. He stayed for five years at Dorking. The school was kept by the Reverend James Fisher, an elderly nonconformist clergyman and a former Cambridge scholar. Fisher instilled a passionate faith in the virtues of a classical education and a knowledge of Greek and Latin into his students' minds. In fact, Defoe's fondness for Latin books, (which were included in his library) had a great impact on his pamphlets and essays.

Soon after his sixteenth birthday in 1676, his father sent him to the dissenting academy kept by Reverend Charles Morton at Newington Green, Stoke Newington. James Foe wanted his son to be in the ministry and he therefore, thought a three-year training at Morton Academy would be very helpful for Daniel. Daniel received an excellent opportunity and guidance at Morton's Academy and studied Logic, Politics, English, Philosophy and Mathematics. He was indebted to Morton because under his supervision Defoe also read widely outside the curriculum, including travel, history, poetry (especially Samuel Butler's *Hudibras*) and devotional literature. He derived an inquiring attitude of mind for science and English language. Morton's influence helped him to develop an ability to write in a persuasive, flexible style that followed the natural rhythms of conservation. Though Morton Academy was a remarkable school, Defoe never entered the ministry, and therefore disappointed his father. He felt that he would be a misfit as a clergyman and hence tried for other means of livelihood. However, the training at Morton's helped Defoe in so many ways for becoming what he became in future.

Morton encouraged his pupils to think for themselves and indulge in individual reading and enquiry. Defoe, eagerly read Bunyan's *Pilgrims Progress* as soon as it was published in 1678. He also admired the poetry of Andrew Marvell, the Earl of Rochester and John Milton. Inspired by his readings Daniel tried his hand in composing a volume of poetry, *Meditations*, though the volume lacked literary promise.

The 1680's were a promising time for an energetic young man to establish himself as a

tradesman. Though it was still a pre-industrial society, the outline of the modern business world were already obvious. These years saw the advent of the penny post in 1680, and this made possible several postal deliveries in the London area each day. There was a rapid expansion in the number of joint stock companies, company promoters and dealers in stocks and shares. Banking and insurance systems were becoming well-established. There was considerable growth of overseas trade. It was a period of optimism and self-confidence for the youth of the country. Defoe engaged himself as a London merchant, trading in hosiery, wines and spirits, tobacco and other commodities. It was a conventional custom of that time that in order to establish one self as a businessman, one had to be apprenticed for seven years before setting up one's own. Defoe ignored this convention by establishing himself as a dealer and whole-seller at the age of twenty. He did this with the financial aid provided by his father. This probably created a resentment among his fellow businessmen, who had to establish themselves by learning 'the hard way'. Defoe had no doubt, great enthusiasm, though he lacked practical experience. His energy carried him forward for some years but his inexperience proved to be his undoing in the long run.

Defoe began to travel widely, in the course of his business, journeying on horse-back to many parts of England and Scotland, and developing a taste for solitary travel, which remained with him throughout his life. On January 1, 1684, he married Mary Tuffley, the only daughter of a rich merchant. She brought her a dowry of £ 3700, a very large sum for those days. She proved to be a loyal and patient wife, bearing him eight children (of whom two died in infancy) and holding the family together through all the odds and Defoe's frequent absence from home. Shortly after the marriage Defoe established himself in quite a high-class area in Freeman's Yard, on the north side of Cornhill, a locality which was newly rebuilt after the fire.

In 1688, an event of national importance occurred in England. On the 5th of November, the forces of William of Orange landed at Torbay. The invasion was promptly followed by the collapse of James II and his regime. This significant event is known in history as The Glorious Revolution' - the end of the divine rights of Kings and at the same time, the establishment, once and for all, of the supremacy of the Parliament. Defoe was a great supporter of the Revolution and all its ideals, the assertion of the fundamental rights of the Parliament; the limitation of the royal prerogative and legal toleration for protestant dissenters.

The English Revolution was not a social revolution like the French Revolution. It former was a political revolution since it inaugurated the sovereignty of the people and the permanence of the Parliament.

For a few years, Defoe really did well in his trade, applying all his energy and enthusiasm. He dealt with shipbuilding, marine insurance, land deals and civet cat, (bred for a secretion used in the making of perfume). A combination of over-confidence, inexperience and sheer bad luck ultimately led to this failure in his laboriously and enthusiastically built up empire of business. Later in his *The Complete English Tradesman*, he referred to the miserable, anxious and perplexed lifewhich the poor tradesman has to go through, before he is finally crushed; how harassed and oppressed he is for money, to what he is driven to for supporting himself.

Yet Defoe never lost his interest in trade. His experiences as a tradesman shaped him as a writer - with his store of knowledge of subjects and topics of varied fields and his extensive interest in human character. His fictional narratives have temporary setting instead of a fabulous past or a mythical past.

Towards the end of the century, he was referred to as 'Daniel de Foe,' and he started this

style while signing his name. Probably, the prefix 'De' sounded rather aristocratic to him. Anyway, it was possibly an easy transition from D(Daniel) Foe to 'Defoe' - his usual signature. He definitely liked the sound of the prefix, otherwise he would not have adopted it.

From the end of the century, he was gradually preoccupied with literary work in the form of pamphlets, broadsheets and essays. *An Essay upon Projects* was published in 1698. though out of print to-day, the *Essay upon Projects* is an important indication of the modernity of Defoe's thinking, his fascination with sociology and economics.

The late 17th century and the early 18th century was a period of partnership on social, political and religious issues and at the same, a period of acrimonious journalism. Newspapers and journals bristled with controversy on the leading issues of the day, conformity or dissent, Whig or Troy, Stuart or Hanover, isolation or involvement in Europe, toleration of minorities or persecution. Defoe could not resist himself from taking the opportunity of bursting into print on any one of these issues. In 1702, his taste for polemical argument landed him into hot water. In December, 1702, he published an anonymous pamphlet *The Shortest Way with the Dissenters*. It was quite ironical in its expression, for his object was to expose the intolerance and bigotry of those favouring persecution, but the pamphlet misfired. The Fanatics applauded it for saying what they had long felt in private, whereas the dissenters condemned it for its outspokenness. When its true authorship was known, Defoe was arrested in May 1703, accused of having written and published a seditious libel. He was fined, condemned to stand in the pillong, and send to Newgate Prison 'during the Queen's pleasure'. When he was released in November 1703, he found that his factory had come to grief and he was bankrupt for a second time. Now at the age of 43, he had to start his life afresh.

At this point, he was approached by Robert Harley, the Speaker of the House of Commons and an influential figure in the Government. Unlike Defoe, he was a whig, but a man of moderation. He invited Defoe to serve as a confidential agent (as we refer to-day as a 'secret agent'. He was supposed to travel throughout the country and report to Harley, the political temper of the countries and help pave the way for the union between England and Scotland, which became a reality in 1707. Defoe served for this purpose from 1703 to 1714. he was temperamentally well-suited to this work and he performed his duties quite seriously. Many years later, he used his experiences for this period in his *Tour Through the Whole Island of Great Britain*.

The political scene was transformed in 1714, with the death of Queen Anne and the accession of George I. The Tory Government was replaced by the Whig government. Defoe adjusted himself to the new scenario and continued until 1730 to serve successive the Whigs through his journalistic activities. In addition to all these activities, he started writing a manual of moral and religious instruction, published in two volumes between 1715 and 1718, under the title *The Family Instructor*. In writing these two volumes, he gained a lot of experience in handling conversation and, since each dialogue is linked with passages of narrative and comment, he learned to master many techniques which would be of service to him as a novelist. He mastered the art of conversing with the reader in an intimate and familiar way, of creating credible characters, of writing sequences of convincing dialogue and argument, of writing stories designed with a didactic intention. The book earned a reputation for Defoe. At that time there was a demand for well-written criticism, history, travel and fact, presented in a lively and readable form. Defoe, with his background of journalism and experience, was ready to meet this demand.

In February, 1704, he published the first number of his periodical - *The Review* Theoretically, Defoe was its editor, but in practice, he was the sole contributor, writing commentary and discussion on various issues, - trade, religion, politics and international affairs. The periodical was a very important one in the sense, that the future author of ***ROBINSON CRUSOE*** became acquainted with writing scenes and conversations, in which he assumed an imaginary persona. *The Review* was the workshop in which he perfected his style as a man of reason with an ear for the speech of ordinary people.

In 1719, he published *Robinson Crusoe*, a book which has been described as the first long piece of prose fiction that had the primary purpose of giving the illusion of reality. Defoe did not have a background of literature, rather he did have a background of trade. Though he had had considerable writing experience, it was popular journalism and not literary writing. In this sense, he was the antithesis of Pope and Swift and was regarded by them with suspicion and disapproval. Though *Robinson Crusoe* was published at the price of five shillings, it sold very well. His writing reached a new reading public, eager to read his stories of travel and adventure, written in a fluent, conversational style. Though ignored by scholars and book collectors, it was widely read by newly literate artisans and workmen who were looking for convincingly written narratives. The growth of literacy, improvements in printing techniques and the increase of popular journalism, combined together to create a favourable atmosphere for the kind of narratives which Defoe was writing. The new readers could identify with the characters featured in these novels. All these factors helped to give birth to the modern novel.

After 1724, he stopped writing fiction. The reasons behind this decision is, of course, not very clear. Perhaps he felt that he had 'written himself out'. Perhaps he was tired of writing narratives of this kind and wished to return to non-fiction. For the rest of his life, he remained engaged in the composition of works of edification, a genre for which he had a great fascination. First came his massive work of topography, *A Tour Through the Whole Island of Great Britain*, a summary of the impressions he had formed from many years of journeying through England, Scotland and Wales. He next published *The Complete English Tradesman*, an interesting handbook on the complexities of running a business ; *A System of Magic* and *An Essay on the History and Reality of Apparitions*, with its attention on the supernatural was a subject which held for him a lifelong fascination. In these writings, he showed his awareness of the popular interest in ghosts and demons. In 1728, when he was sixty eight, came his last major work on trade, *A Plan of the English Commerce*. Though he was now often in considerable pain from gout, he was still capable of writing fluently and lucidly. To the end, he continued to write manuals, pamphlets, essays and summaries revealing his gift for presenting large masses of information in an easily digestible form. The last years of his life were spent in writing and revising *The Complete English Gentleman* with anecdotes and homilies. This book intended to be a guide to a life of culture and respectability.

For some years he had been living quietly and comfortably at Stoke Newington, not far from his old school. Here he built a library of his own where he spent time in reading and writing. Inspite of his leading a life in genteel surroundings, death came to him on April 26, 1731, at a lodging house in Ropemakers Alley, London, where he had been, for some months, apparently absconding from one of his creditors. He was buried in Bunhill Fields, Finsbury, in the same cemetery as John Bunyan and William Blake. In 1870, the plain stone that marked his grave was replaced by a marble pillar erected from the subscription of 1700 children in gratitude to the author of *Robinson Crusoe*.

Had Defoe died before writing *Robinson Crusoe*, it is doubtful whether he would be remembered

to-day as a prominent name in the field of writing a novel - a novel that won the heart of both young and old. He was certainly not conscious at the time that in writing *Robinson Crusoe* and *Moll Flanders*, he was creating the first novels in English and paving the way for a host of successors, including those of Samuel Richardson, Joseph Fielding and Jobias Smollett. The paradox is that, by writing these 'non-serious' works, he has earned for himself a permanent place in literary history.

The whole lot of immense output of essays, handbooks and pamphlets is completely forgotten today, but his novels are still alive and widely popular. These novels will continue to be read, enjoyed and appreciated and will carry his name into the future.

Unit 1(b) *Robinson Crusoe*: Source in Travel-Writing

The prototype of Robinson Crusoe was a stubborn sailor, Alexander Selkirk (1676 - 1721), who on a voyage with William Dampier, quarrelled with his captain and had himself put ashore in 1704 on the uninhabited island of Juan Fernandez off the east coast of south America. After some initial difficulties, Selkirk managed to survive on this island and live there for a little less than four and a half years. When he was rescued in January, 1709 by Captain Woodes Rogers, he was found to be in good health and quite satisfied with his island life. *Robinson Crusoe* like most of Defoe's later fiction, has a firm basis in actuality; while his fiction is basically fiction, it often starts from and sometimes stays very close to a fact, or a series of facts.

Defoe got the Selkirk story from several sources. Accounts of his life on the island was published in 1712 in Edward Roger's *Cruising Voyage Round the World* and by Edward Cooke's *A Voyage to the South Sea and Round the World* (1712). Moreover, on December 3, 1713, Richard Steele, the essayist devoted as whole issue of *The Englishman* to the Selkirk story. It is obvious that Defoe had read these accounts; and though he had not featured Selkirk in the pages of his own *Review* (1704 - 1713) there is every possibility of Defoe having sought out Selkirk to hear his story from his own lips.

There are some obvious similarities between Selkirk's experiences and those of Defoe's hero such as :

(a) the basic situation of the marooned mariner ;

(b) Selkirk, like Crusoe, had been invaded by cats and had tamed goats ;

(c) Selkirk had been supplied with bedding and provisions, while Defoe rescued his own from the shipwreck.

(d) *Crusoe*, like Selkirk had lived on turtles initially.

(e) Steele's interview with Selkirk also mentions that like Crusoe in the novel the former had gone through a period of deep depression. Then gradually, "by the force of reason and frequent reading of the scriptures, …… he grew thoroughly reconciled to his condition." Selkirk's development from dejection to reconciliation, is paralleled by that of Crusoe, but Defoe could have invented this without having known Selkirk's similar predicament.

(f) Apart from these few details, the rest of *Robinson Crusoe* is Defoe's own invention. For whereas Selkirk had spent only four-and-a-half years, *Robinson Crusoe* lived for twenty eight years on the island off the Eastern Coast of South America near the mouth of the river Orinooco.

Defoe, in fact, could have drawn these details from several accounts, real or fictitious, of shipwrecked sailors namely : William: Dampier's, *A New Voyage Round the World* (1703), Robert Knox's *Historical Relation of Ceylon* (1681) and Maxmillian Missions fictitious *Voyage of Francois Legaut* (1707). In his book Knox relates his twenty - year imprisonment in Ceylon

which is very different from *Crusoe's* shipwreck, in character and personality, Knox, rather than Selkirk, comes closer to Crusoe.

In spite of its close relation with historical facts, Defoe's story is entirely fiction. He had collated his details from various sources and also from his wide personal experience. Defoe was actively involved in trade and business throughout his life and through this was associated with later travel, stories of adventure and maritime gossip. He bought and sold ships and his brother was a shipbuilder and, therefore, he had a thorough knowledge of ships and navigation.

However, what is significant in this link between *Robinson Crusoe* and contemporary travel literature is the assumption that the novel is also a travel account or at least, belongs to the tradition of travel literature.

In the seventeenth century travel books, in spite of their sub-literary status, acquired a great deal of popularity. The reason for this was by growth of maritime exploration and the consequent increase and expansion of trade in which England and several European nations were involved during this time. This commercial and later colonial expansion gave rise to and later was supported by factual and fictitious accounts of travel and exploration such as those by Mission and other such writers.

These travel books had certain common characteristics :

(a) The basic formula was the chronological movement from place to place; there was much geographical detail about the place and its inhabitants ; thus, the emphasis was on information and factual details rather than events.

(b) The typical narrative begins with the author's credentials ; the nature and purpose of the current voyage; the details of the ship its size and number; important crew members are introduced; details of the log-book at sea; masses of nautical and navigational details (wind, currents, routes, detours); certain unusual events (storms, pirate encounters, crew changes) — though these are digressive and minor anecdotes — ; topical descriptions of places and people are given greater space; events are therefore, either ignored or subordinated to these topical details.

(c) Even when an unusual happening is related, the tone and style is calm and dispassionate ; a thorough "objectivity", characterizes the style of this type of writing.

(d) An important aspect of this objectivity is the total absence of a central theme or an informing idea which is used to link or structure the chronology of visits; at the most, chronology is sometimes replaced by topicality when the narrative is interrupted to give details about a particular place; yet, this is by
far, the only organizing principle - thematic considerations being foreign to this convention.

(e) Thus, what is obvious is that these travel books lack thematic unity or ideological focus by becoming more an enumeration of voyages and topical details.

(f) A.W. Seccord emphasises the links *Robinson Crusoe* has with the typical travel book and states that "*Robinson Crusoe*, finally, is not so much a fictitious autobiography, as it is a fictitious book of travel …… ". Seccord points out that *in this novel there are* "a series of things well known in the literature of travel " — storm, shipwreck, captivity, life on a desert island ; description of these events and the details of the sea journey (position at sea, winds, direction, speed) and of the island (flora, fauna, animals, climate,
sailing conditions around it). *Robinson Crusoe* also has that objective matter-of- fact style typical of this writing.

However, as J. Paul Hunter points out, in spite of these similarities "*Robinson Crusoe* makes no attempt to follow the conventional pattern of the travel tradition." The similarities, he

adds, are merely superficial; Defoe's emphasis is totally different or, at least, there is a different use of conventional material.

(a) In *Robinson Crusoe*, the facts about several places are never presented as mere information. Each fact emerges out of the experience of the hero and often funcitons as a narrative situation which contributes to the development of the hero's character or that of the novel. For, instance, Crusoe describes lions and leopords and, later, savage natives as possible dangers to himself and Xury. In another incident, he kills a leapord in return for the kindness of the natives.

(b) The description of the island is given as the narrative develops and this description is integral to Crusoe's experiences and the development of his character.

(c) There is no attempt to provide a list of topical details of the island. In fact, a complete description of the island is not given and neither is there any other detail regarding Brazil except those related to Crusoe's life in that country. Thus, information is subordinated to character and event.

(d) In *Robinson Crusoe* chronology is used as a conscious device to dramatize the growth and development of the hero. Therefore, the novel has a dramatic structure which uses events to suggest mental and emotional conditions of the protagonist.

(e) Chronology, therefore, is not simply a device used to give the novel a unity of structure but is also contributes a thematic focus involving the character of the hero. Each event thus marks a development of Crusoe's character from his rebellion against parental authority and rejection of their advice regarding his 'station' in life — his 'Original sin'. This leads to this shipwreck which he later sees as a punishment for this transgression. On the island he goes through a series of experiences which finally makes him accept responsibility for his sin and his appeal to God to redeem him and thereby reconcile him to Christian faith marks his achievement of a social and moral education which the novel tries to emphasize.

(f) *Robinson Crusoe*, therefore, has a specific thematic coherence and an ideological emphasis which distinguishes it from the typical travel book or, for that matter, the contemporary adventure tales, the picaresque and the romance.

Unit 2(a): *Robinson Crusoe* and the Theme of Economic Individualism

Realist fiction generally uses two basic narrative methods :-

The Historical - mimetic method and the autobiographical - memoir narrative method. The first generally corresponds to the method of omniscient third-person narration in which the novelist is outside the text relating the events and actions objectively. While the second method uses a first - person narrative technique where the narrator recounts his experiences.

Robinson Crusoe uses the autobiographical - memoir method. This is evident the formal structure of the plot in which there is, as Ian Watt points out, a total subordination of plot to the pattern of the memoir - (this is one important contrast to the structure of the travel book). There is, therefore, the obvious use of the simple journal or diary form. But this method is not consistently used throughout the novel - there are departures often into soliloquy and the dramatic method narration.

More important is the fact that the novel emphasises the "primacy of individual experience" (Watt). In of the novel there are, therefore, a variety of scenes and events of an exotic and spectacular nature but all these are subordinated to the character participating in these events. Thus, quite evidently these scenes and events are used to express or externalize character or personality.

For instance, when Crusoe makes his escape from the captivity of the moor it illustrates his practical sense in devising and executing the scheme- thus the manner in which he is able to manage events.

Then, while Crusoe and Xury travel along the African shore, exotic and spectacular and dangerous scenes are depicted. Crusoe's basic sense of self preservation is suggested in the way he deals with the native and returns the help he receives from them by saving them from ferocious beasts. What is significant is that he is now in a position to establish control over events. This pattern of managing events to controlling them is repeated during his exile on the island. Events, thus dramatize consciousness and become the index of character development.

By emphasizing the importance of the individual, *Robinson Crusoe* expresses one of the basic postulates of the novel, which as a new genre, represented truth as subjective, private and individualistic. Moreover, the realism which characterizes the novel is evident not simply because it depicts the details of contemporary life. This realism also lies in the fact that the novel involves a definition of the self as a medium for a representation of reality. This definition of the self involves social and ideological terms. Thus, the individuality of character is shaped by his society and its values.

Circumstantial realism is thus a basic aspect of the novel, which aspires to reflect the contemporary world. However, personal experience is the basic category, the ultimate material for this reflection of the world.

RC, therefore, begins with the usual sociological definition of Crusoe's character. He is the third son of an immigrant family, whose father, a merchant, has "got a good estate", but he has not been bred to any trade and thus has a propensity for "rambling thoughts". "Something fatal in that propension of nature" makes him

choose a life of sea adventure against his parents' advice to settle "to business." Thus the very first sociological details indicate the direction in which Crusoe's character and career is going to develop.

What is significant about *Crusoe*'s wanting to go to sea is his reluctance to remain fixed in the economic and social position defined by his father, "the middle state or what might be called the upperstation of low life". Thus, his "fatal propension of nature" is actually his desire for social and economic mobility, which he states categorically at the end of chapter one, where *Crusoe* calls it the "undigested notion of raising my fortune." This desire for social mobility is, according to Ian Watt, the very basis of the spirit of capitalism which was growing in the eighteenth century. Thus, Watt defines the novel as an illustration of the fundamental social and ideological impulse of the age - namely economic individualism. For Watt, all Defoe's heroes pursue money which, in his *Review* Defoe called "the general denominating article in the world". Crusoe's next voyage, the one he calls "the only voyage which I may say was successful" had a purely economic motive. In fact, he travels purely as a gentleman merchant on a trip to Guinea where he makes a significant fortune. Similarly, the voyage from Brazil had the specific motive of slave trade which was then the most lucrative.

A necessary corollary of this economic individualism is — the devaluation of traditional forms of group relationship such as the family, the village, nation and even comradeship. Crusoe thus sells Xury, who had helped him in his escape from the Moors, for sixty pieces of eight (though he acquires a promise that the boy would be released in ten years if he became a Christian) ; on the island, however, he severely regrets this but here too he thinks of Xury as a servant who could have assisted him in his labours on the island in his labour. Crusoe's relations with Friday is also seen in utilitarian terms.

Romantic love and sex, therefore, play little part in Crusoe's life or in the novel. On the island when his isolation plagues him, he desires a male slave and with Friday he settles into a life of joyous contentment. Women are, therefore, treated as economic commodities. On the island. In Part II, of the novel, the colonists draw lots to choose their wives. The first to choose gets the "homeliest and oldest," of the five women but Defoe writes, she "proved the best wife in the parcel." Thus, the language of commerce qualifies personal and the marital relationship. Similarly, Crusoe gets married only after being financially secure and marriage is described in one of the most impersonal phrases in all literature as an experience "not either to my disadvantage or dissatisfaction". And soon after his wife dies, he abandons his family for another voyage.

Crusoe's experiences on the desert island can be divided into two broad phases. The first phase deals with his efforts at instinctive self preservation and the second phase is the period when he has mastered his environment, established control over his circumstances, nature and established his supremacy as colonizer and even ruler. The two phases can be divided by the central climax involving his encounter with the savages and his rescue of Friday, thereby ending his physical and even spiritual isolation.

The first phase is dominated by the basic impulses of economic individualism. Crusoe's control over nature and his circumstances gives him the spiritual and moral justification for his role as colonizer in the second phase which extends this control in economic and political terms.

The basic existential drive that dominates Crusoe after the shipwreck and his marooning is his instinctive sense of self preservation. This impulse is determined by the forces of necessity. In his *General History of Trade*, Defoe re-phrased the common proverb as "Necessity, which is the Mother, and Convenience, which is the Handmaid of Invention, first directed Mankind ….. to contrive, supplies and support of life". In *Robinson Crusoe*, the initial attempts of the hero to acquire support, life is qualified by this phrase. Crusoe's return to the shipwreck, after his initial period of desperation and despondency, is influenced by the desire to find the necessities which would make life possible. Defoe's statement is actually an echo of similar statements made by contemporary thinkers like Locke, William Temple and John Asgil, who observed that inventions were increased by the force of necessity to secure a living. Thus Defoe in his *Essay upon Projects*, expanded this idea suggesting that necessity destroyed sloth and fostered society through the creation of labour.

However, Crusoe's work, like rescuing resources from the wreck, his building of his tent and cave, his making of pots, taming goats, growing corn and baking bread- are all determined by their obvious utility value. This emphasis on the utility value of things is illustrated best in Crusoe's ironic panygeric on the gold and money he finds in the wrecked ship. The same sentiment qualifies Crusoe's agricultural activities later and also in his later realization that by owning the island he had much much more than his needs. Maxmillian Novak thus points out that *Robinson Crusoe elaborates the utility theory of value* basic to capitalism as treated by several economists. Defoe, Novak admits, was influenced following by the contemporary philosopher Locke, whose *Two Treatises on Civil Government*, explored this idea.

Just as Crusoe's demands and his produce are proportionate to his necessity and utility, it naturally implies that his labour is also proportionate to his needs. This, in fact, makes the *novel also an elaboration of the capitalist theory of labour*. Again Defoe took these ideas from John Locke's *Two Treatises* where Locke pointed out that value was not inherent in nature, but was created by human labour. This idea as also basic to the Puritan ethic which dignified labour with

the implicit suggestion that honest labour in the pursuit of wealth was a form of the imitation of Christ.

Yet, what is significant about the first phase of Crusoe's life on the island is the fact that it presents the primal conditions of man's labour relations with his product. In other words, *Robinson Crusoe*, in spite of its elaboration of capitalism and the *implicit division of labour, presents a state* in which *man is in direct and proportionate relation with his labour and its produce*. This, in fact, made *Karl Marx use the novel* as an *Utopian example of the primary and natural conditions of man*. *Crusoe's labour* is thus *not differentiated* and *does not suffer the division of labour*, which characterizes the economic individualism or economic specialization of capitalism.

He *achieves a sense of completeness* by the very needs of his natural circumstances which *forces him to make his own baskets and pots and also bake his own bread*. It is in these two aspects that *Robinson Crusoe* acquires an ambiguous implication. Thus, while elaborating the tenets of capitalism in its theory of utility and theory of labour, it simultaneously opposes and transcends these impulses by presenting a primary, natural and autonomous condition of man. Thus, in spite of the historical determination evident in Crusoe's novel, Defoe at the same time, presents Crusoe as a freer individual, who can transcend these tendencies in a pattern of action, which gives him absolute economic, social and intellectual freedom. It is in this significant sense, that acquires the characteristics of myth. He exemplifies the bourgeois myth of individualism and at the same time, becomes a symbol of natural man, Adam.

Unit 2(b): *Robinson Crusoe*: Spiritual Autobiography

The narrative structure of *Robinson Crusoe* can be divided into two broad strands of experience:-

(a) Crusoe's economic aspiration: his experiences on the island begin with his instinctual will to survive and ultimately lead to the accomplishment of mastery over nature, and the establishment of power and control over his circumstances.

(b) Complementing this development is Crusoe's religious conversion; this is a simultaneous process involving an acknowledgement of sin, repentance and acceptance of God's control and grace ; this constitutes his renewal into faith and acceptance of God's will and a divine pattern.

These two aspects are complementary parts of the controlling reality which is presented through the narrative. Both express dominant ideological impulses : the first, the ideology of growing capitalism, the second, the ideology of Puritanism. John Richetti describes Crusoe as a converter, turning an ideology to the uses of survival and autonomy by using what it gives and neutralizing its possessive effects.

What Defoe does in *Robinson Crusoe*, is to create situations and contexts in which the hero's experiences dramatise the basic ideological impulses of the age. In reality, what the narrative establishes is a situation in which Crusoe first survives disaster by sheer practical sense and a will to control and then to escape the destructive effects of isolation, that is for psychological survival he recognizes that he is part of a providential design and accepts divine control.

The autobiographical memoir narrative technique is historically suited to record this process

of spiritual conflict and renewal. The autobiographical mode not only records the objective, socio - historical and personal experiences of a protagonist but is also a record of his psychological, emotional and spiritual growth and development. From St. Augustine's *Confessions* through Rousseau's *Confessions* and Pascal's Pensee's to modern-day diaries and

autobiographies this is the general concern and focus. Defoe's memoir-narrative falls into the tradition of the confessional tradition which records therefore, Crusoe's psychological and spiritual conflicts and ends in the resolution of these conflicts.

The first significant illustration of the confessional nature of Defoe's memoir technique is seen when Crusoe tries to take stock of his condition after his marooning on the island. (It has to be noted that this comes after he has made initial arrangements for his security and survival). Thus, using the typical convention of economic individualism, he draws up in a book-keeping fashion, the exact nature of his situation on the island :

I new began to consider seriously my condition, and the circumstance I was reduced to, and I drew up the state of Affairs in writing, not so much to leave them to any that were to come after me, for I was like to have but few Heirs, as to deliver my thought's from daily pouring upon them, and afflicting my mind; and as my Reason began now to master my Despondency, I began to comfort myself as well as I could, and to set the good against the Evil, that I might have something to distinguish my case from worse, and I stated it very impartially, like Debtor and Creditor, the comforts I enjoy'd and the miseries I suffer'd, Thus, this stock-taking thus dramatizes Crusoe's total and desperate isolation. This, in fact, becomes a metaphor for his desperate emotional and psychologically insecurity and helplessness. Implicitly, therefore, Crusoe's turning towards God is a result of his solitary state.

The first significant event which seems to determine Crusoe's conversion comes early in his journal when he discovers ten or twelve ears of barley growing beside his cave and takes this to be a miracle. "……. that God had miraculously caused this grain to grow without any help of seed sown, and that it was directed purely for my sustenance on that wild miserable place." Later, however, this initial grateful

euphoria is reduced when Crusoe remembers that he had shaken a bag of chicken feed - "this was nothing but what was common." The mature Crusoe is still able to acknowledge the "work of Providence" and thank God that these "grains of corn" had remained "unspoiled" and also "that I should throw it out in that particular place, where, it being in the shade of a high rock, it sprang up immediately; whereas, if I had thrown it any where else at that time, it had been burnt up and destroyed.

"Thus just as Crusoe survives physically by a pragmatic co-operation with natural forces he survives on the psycho-spiritual level by learning to see God's presence in material and physical events and details. This event seems to mark the beginning for his active search for faith in a superior power. This marks a transition both in the narrative and the character, from a life of action to one of contemplation. Defoe, however, brings about Crusoe's conversion a little later when he is severely sick. This conversion is preceded by a nightmare.

The nightmare, however, does not precipitate Crusoe's religious crisis - in fact, it is simply a symptom of his bodily and spiritual confusion Crusoe himself admits that he is unable to understand the meaning of this dream. This naivete is a condition of autobiographical narrative where the hero is unlike the cunning and mature picaro. This is a necessary precondition for spiritual conflict and regeneration. The dream enables Crusoe to objectively by study his actions from his first transgression of parental advice and the series of later deviations which at least brings him to acknowledge guilt and, therefore, see his isolation as retribution. This is the second precondition of spiritual regeneration.

The event, which actually brings about the conversion is Defoe's search for tobacco and, thereby, finding the Bible (pgs. - 93 - 94) In this section of the novel, Crusoe's sickness is used functionally and dramatically for his achievement of self-knowledge.

Sickness, therefore, becomes a means for distancing himself from his physical and psychological self. Thus, by seeing himself as a character who has participated in a chain of events and circumstances, he is able to define his status and function in this chain. In other words, Crusoe, who had before been living an entirely self - contained existence is able to find a pattern and continuity in his experiences from his first act of "Original Sin" and thereby see himself as fulfilling a divine plan : (see pp - 92 - 94). Thus, while reading the Bible, the next day, he submits himself to God. Crusoe is thus converted to a petitioner. Thus, from an enterprising, pragmatic engineer of his circumstances, he becomes a supplicant.

What is significant is that it is only after his conversion that Crusoe is able to achieve a greater degree of control and a sense of completeness. It is after this that Crusoe turns from mere survival toward exploring and domesticating the island - converting it from a prison into a garden. (see pp. 100 - 102; 152, 153)

He discovers the more pastoral and luxuriant side of the island - his Garden of Eden. This, in fact, becomes a symbol of his new condition. This new condition is characterized by a synthesis of activity and passivity. He builds a villa in his garden to balance his fortress. He tames wild things, he controls his agricultural activity and devotes time to Bible reading and contemplation. Thus, having reconciled contradictions in himself, he sets about resolving contradictions thereby converting chaos into cosmos, establishing God in his creation.

This sense of completeness is also reflected in the formal aspects of the narrative:

(a) the journal/diary peters out and is finally abandoned for a more coherent narrative style. Previously, he had only secured fragmentary flashes of his past, regretting this or that. Now he is able to review his life, explain the causes of his wandering and fit his experiences into a pattern of repentance and renewal through God's mercy. Thus, his new psycho-spiritual control gives him an access to the Puritan world view with its allegorical symbols, emblems and metaphors (see pp - 132 - 133).

(b) Even the style and rhetoric becomes relaxed and leisurely. The description of his family of animals, his basket and pot-making of bread is noteworthy. There is a direct relationship between Crusoe's thoughts and actions ; Defoe uses a objective narrative method which comes close to the epic narrative style.

(c) The discovery of the footprint initially subverts Crusoe's equanimity and control. He reverts to the conditions of fear and siege. Gradually, however, he is able to adopt a more objective state of mind and recognize the irony of the situation. (see pp. - 156) It is to be noted, that just after the incident, Crusoe discovers the dead body of a boy from a shipwreck and laments grievously for his lack of human company and his isolation. Crusoe's final decision is to do nothing to leave it all to God, to obey the impulse and logic of circumstances, in his own words, to follow, "a secret hint …… a strange impression upon the mind, from we know not what springs."

The other incident which helps in this process is another dream (pp. 198 - 199). The dream expresses Crusoe's deepest desires - namely, freedom from his circumstances. (This he dramatized consciously earlier in his attempts at making a boat and his undertaking an unsuccessful trip around island. The dream also dramatizes his understanding that he has a divine purpose, namely to rescue a savage and thereby end his isolation.

(d) The actual rescue of Friday does not equal Crusoe's dream but the experience shows the synthesis of action and circumstances, which is the guiding pattern of the narrative of the novel. In the moment of Friday's deliverance, Crusoe is like the deity who delivered him : suddenly visible and mysteriously powerful. Moreover, he acquires at this moment a sense of divine purpose. Thus, in Friday's subsequent conversion to Christiarity he re-enacts his own conversion

and with Friday's help, acquires real political power by defeating the cannibals rescuing the Spaniards and later saving the English Captain and achieving the means of freedom from the island after establishing a colony on the island.

Robinson Crusoe is, thus, an allegorical reworking of the Christian myth of sin, repentance and renewal. Through this theme, Defoe dramatizes the Puritan metaphysics of damnation and election. The enduring power of the narrative lies in the fact that this religious ideological impulse is grounded in the specific circumstances and events which the protagonist experiences. Moreover, through his experiences, Crusoe is able to adapt the religious elements to achieve a certain autonomy of action that gives his story the universal significance of myth.

Unit 3(a): *Robinson Crusoe* as Allegory

An ALLEGORY is a narrative in which ideas such as patience, purity and truth are symbolized by persons who are characters in the story. Neville Coghill says that allegory has an elaborate technique of interpretation and can be compared to a musical composition in which one or more themes are introduced by the different voices in turn and then repeated in a complex design. The theme pursued, simultaneously, on several levels of meaning:

(a) *the literal sense of the story* - the theme is part of a narrative of incidents and experiences.

(b) *Allegorical sense* - the theme is seen as a transference of our own lives and situations and passions in personified or typical terms.

(c) *Moral sense* - the theme is illustrated in maxims of conduct illustrated by the narrative and relevant to our lives.

Robinson Crusoe follows the allegorical mode almost exactly:

(a) There is the literal level of the story involving Crusoe's adventures, defeats and recoveries.

(b) There is the allegorical meaning which involves his recognition of sin his repentance and redemption.

(c) There is the moral statement illustrated not only Crusoe's career but also directly through Biblical references and moral observations.

Allegorically, the novel can be seen as a version of the parable of the Prodigal son, references to which are clearly stated or implied in the text : (pp. - 9, 11, 23). Crusoe here is the prodigal, who ignores his father's advice and leaves home ; ruins himself not by wild living but by a "fatal propension" to roam; he faces disaster and apparent desolation; repents and returns to his father (now in the form of God); is forgiven and rewarded - God kills the fatted calf blessing him with the abundance of the island and restores him to favour and lordship.

Most appropriately, the novel can be described in the more abstract theological scheme. Crusoe is Everyman incriminated by the Original Sin; thereby committing folly and crime and condemned into further sin through ignoring the repeated opportunities for correction granted by God; yet, he is one of the Elect, chosen by God to be finally saved through his acknowledgement of guilt therefore, and repentance, becoming an illustration of the ways of God to men.

In Robinson Crusoe, the allegorical mode is used to define Crusoe's character:-

Crusoe epitomizes the dual tendencies of the Puritan character - the adventurous and the domestic ; In the beginning, Crusoe is dominated by the first impulse – the adventurous; however, as soon as this phase ends in disaster, the second tendency (domestic) is adopted - Crusoe's energies are directed towards making a home.

The irony is in the fact that - Crusoe chooses adventure when it is easy for him to be domestic and he is domestic when it would be normal for him to seek the help of chance and adventure.

The enduring richness of the novel is in Defoe's combining this opposition in the single character of Crusoe. It gives the novel its multiple perspectives – adventure and domesticity ; action and contemplation; material and abstract; primitive and civilized.

This multiplicity explains its modern appeal. Moreover, these multiple perspectives, help Crusoe achieve a transcendence from the effects of any one influence; thus, he acquires an autonomy of action - and emerges as a type of mythical hero having universal significance.

Unit 3(b): *Robinson Crusoe* and the theme of Colonialism

One of the central and most significant paradoxes of *Robinson Crusoe* is in the incident dealing with Crusoe's discovery of the footprint. (see pp - 153 - 54) (a) The central irony of the novel is immediately evident if these lines are placed with the earlier list of Evil and Good (pp. 65-67), that marks Crusoe's stock-taking of his initial condition on the island. The dominant situation emphasized in the column of evils is *solitude*; here Crusoe is terror-stricken by the first opportunity of resolving this evil; in fact, what is signified as evil in the stock-taking here becomes good and vice-versa. This paradox gives us the first textual situation for an exploration of the colonialist aspect of the novel.

Thus, Crusoe whose character is dominated by the controlling impulse of individualism, sees the footprint as an aggression against his self-contained personality : The footprint represents the metaphoric image of the 'other' and is seen a possible subversion of his inviolate self.

As we have observed, one of the basic characteristics of economic individualism is its reduction and even negation of personal and social ties: quite evident in the beginning and throughout the last section; this is the fundamental aspect which makes solitude the condition humane of the bourgeois capitalism.

Defoe himself was aware of solitude as the universal condition of man: in *Serious Reflections of RC* (1720), the first essay is called "On solitude" – this suggests Defoe's view as to the meaning of Crusoe's experiences.

(e) The problems of solitude seems to have been a personal reality and concern for Defoe he had very few friends, and hardly had any contact with contemporary literary figures. In 1706, Defoe complained in a pamphlet of "how I stand alone in the world, abandoned by those very people that own I have done them service; … how with …. no helps but my own industry, I have forced misfortune, and reduced them ….. how, in goals, in retreats, in all manner of extremities, I have supported myself without assistance of friends or relations." Defoe sees in *Robinson Crusoe* a similar meaning; in the Preface to the novel he summarizes the themes as "Here is invincible patience recommended under the worst of misery, indefatigable application and undaunted resolution under the greatest and most discouraging circumstances."

The central irony in *Robinson Crusoe* lies in the fact that what was considered as an evil in the beginning of the novel is seen later as a threat which makes solitude itself a metaphor of utopian idealism and the image of the inviolate individualism. Crusoe's reaction to the footprint dramatizes this instinctual rejection of an intervention into his inviolate utopia of solitude; he sees the footprint as an aggression and subversion of his individualist utopia, which is a major symbol of his will to control his will to power; the footprint, therefore, implies a threat to his power on the island. Thus, Crusoe's first reaction is to retreat into the symbol of his power and

security his fortress and cave. He takes up and embattled position of constant surveillance; even regrets not having produced extra corn for this crisis (note the utopian ideal of production according to necessity is immediately rejected); even this religious and spiritual balance is disturbed when his power is in possible danger (pp - 169 - 172). The footprint thus becomes a metaphor which constitutes a criticism of the associate and a historical nature of Crusoe's Island.

Unit 4: Textual Analysis

In what is considered to be the first important study of the colonial encounter, O Mannoni in his book *Prospero and Caliban*, calls *Robinson Crusoe* the first The Psychology of Colonization model of the colonial encounter. Referring to this paradox of solitude in the novel, Mannoni says that Crusoe's pathological terror expresses the "massive misanthropic neurosis", which characterizes the European mind and more specifically the colonialist attitude in the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries. According to Mannoni, "the personality of the colonial is made up, not of characteristics acquired during and through experience of the colonies but of traits …. already in existence in a latent and repressed form in the European psyche, - traits which the colonial experience has simply brought to the surface and made manifest".

Edward Said also confirms this. He points out that concept of the Orient is a European construct; that this is based on a whole tradition of literature dealing with the Orient including romance and fiction, history and scientific research and finally, the travelogue and, tourist literature which Said says has been "producing" the Orient. This production of the East, Said says, operates on two major impulses: (a) representing the Orient in order to confirm and justify Western superiority and progress and (b) therefore, to structured the orient within Western ideas and tendencies of power and control which is, in turn, justified by the ideology that European imperialism is ultimately a benefaction on the inferior colonised state. The colony, thus becomes "the white man's burden", where the white man performs his moral responsibilities with control and power, ultimately turning the colony into another version of the West.

Robinson Crusoe has most of the features of this colonial model. As we first pointed out, *Robinson Crusoe* does not belong to the tradition of travel literature which often is a sociological and demographic work on the colonies; in fact, the realism of the novel argues against its consideration as travelogue; there is very little information about the island or its inhabitants. Colonial literature does not give information about this. In reality, what the novel turns out to be - is an autobiographical record of the white man's existential and spiritual experiences. This, in turn, is a dramatization and re-enactment of the main ideological impulses of Europe : growing capitalism supplemented by the Protestant ethic ; in other words, as Mannoni says, Crusoe's island actually becomes a microcosm of Europe in the eighteenth century. The central metaphor of this economic and Puritan ideology is solitude - what Watt calls the "monitary image" of man. This is basic to economic individualism which is marked by an extreme solipsism - a pathological condition of being imprisoned within the self. Crusoe turns to God to escape this bondage within the self, but the controlling irony of his spiritual conversion lies in the fact that now Crusoe uses religion, to justify his self-containment, his solitude. Solitude, therefore, becomes the metaphoric condition suggesting self knowledge, self-control and thus an assertion of power. Thus, in actuality, what *Robinson Crusoe* explores are class and power relations. Crusoe's 'original sin' of running away which is past of the economic individualism, is actually his rejection of hierarchical class restrictions of Europe- considered limitations of the self. He also embodies the economic and social ambitions of the middle class. Defoe, therefore, is actually creating on the island a fictional space for the enactment of the basic facts of bourgeois

ideology and consequently re-stating the doctrines of control and power which is integral to it; thus, inspite of the utopian conditions of the island, the latent contradictions of this situation are dramatically foregrounded with the discovery of the footprint and with the introduction of Friday, the utopia dissolves into the typicality of the colonial, power situation of the master and the slave. The conversion of Crusoe from the dominated to one who dominates, is complete.

In *Robinson Crusoe*, Defoe dramatizes the colonial mind through the very psychological metaphors which are emphasized in the narrative. Thus, the dream in which Crusoe sees himself resulting a native typifies the basic colonialist attitude towards the native.

a) the dream radically situates the native in the position of the dominated by placing him in the context of danger. This, not only reduces the native to the stature of the inferior/rescued but emphatically ratifies the domination of the white man/Crusoe.

b) What is significant about this dream is the wish-fulfillment that it unconsciously dramatizes - that the native would be his "servant" and, therefore, act as his "pilot" to "venture to the mainland".

c) This unconscious desire is ratified in Crusoe's conscious "conclusion" where he actually determines to "get a savage in my *possession*". Human company which Crusoe so desperately desired to resolve his solitary confinement, is therefore, reduced to its utilitarian denomination like the other objects of Crusoe's castle by this term of conspicuous consumption and his desire that this "possession" be acquired in a context of "blackmail" - "and, if possible, it should be one of their prisoners whom they had condemned to be eaten and should bring hither to kill ….". This is the classic typology of power that is basic to the colonial situation.

d) With minor deviations, the dream is actuated in the real circumstances of Friday's rescue, but what is important is the divine justification that Crusoe adds to this. Thus, what Crusoe had earlier seen in utilitarian terms, is redefined in terms of Christian benevolence and altruism, - the savage, therefore, becomes the white man's burden, his moral responsibility : "It came now very warmly upon my thoughts, and indeed, irresistibly, that now was my time to get a servant, and perhaps a companion, or assistant, and that I was called plainly by Providence, to save this poor creature's life." This redefinition of the premises, which characterizes the native, - is basic to the colonialist discourse which Said says, involves a constant production of knowledge of the colonized for a "western style of dominating, restructuring and having authority over the Orient."

e) This is further illustrated in Crusoe's description of Friday, which clearly has racist implications. Thus, Friday is given features which separates him from the other savages : "he had all the sweetness and softness of a European in his countenance …. his hair was long and black, not curled like wool; his forehead very high and large, and a great vivacity and sparkling sharpness in his eyes. The colour of his skik was not quite black, but very tawny, and yet not of an ugly yellow nauseous tawny, as the Brazilians and Virginians, and other natives of America are but of a bright kind dunolive colour, that had in it something very agreeable, though not very easy to describe." (pp. - 205 - 206).

f) What this description actually marks is a specific representation of the native in agreeable terms. In other words, it involves a deliberate restructuring of the native by the simple use of a contrast. Thus, Friday is distinctive in the sense that though he is a native, his features denote that he is not the typical savage. And it he is not this type, he is nearer to the European. The contrast, therefore, yields a redefinition, - but this redefinition is encoded within the values and beliefs of Europe. Friday is thus produced as a Western version of the native. This representation marks an important colonialist intervention in the novel. By distinguishing Friday from the other natives what Defoe does is to categorize the native into the typical colonialist structures of the

cannibal/savage and the slave. This is fundamental to the literary tropes of colonial literature and has its beginnings in Shakespeare's *The Tempest* in the characters of Caliban and Ariel and features regularly in later colonialist writing, particularly in Rudyard Kipling, who also categorizes the native into the "half devil, half child."

g) The logical conclusion of this strategy, therefore, is to convert the native to the values and beliefs of the European colonizer. Thus, Friday, whose name is arbitrarily imposed on him and who is taught the language of servitude – 'Yes Master, No Master' is made to engage himself in a Christian discourse with Crusoe, in a remarkably short time. (pp. 216-218). Friday's conversion to Christianity (which Crusoe obviously interprets as part of his divine purpose) thus, characteristically begins with a rejection and subversion of Friday's native religion:

"I endeavoured to clear up this fraud to my man Friday, and told him, that the pretence of their old men going up to the mountains to say 'O!' to their God Benamucke, was a cheat; and their bringing word from thence what he said, was much more so, that if they met with an answer, or spoke with anyone there, it must be with an evil spirit; and then I entered into a long discourse with him about the devil, the original of him, his rebellion against God, his enmity to man, the reason for it, his setting himself up in the dark parts of the world to be worshipped instead of God …. " (pp. - 217) The reason for quoting this passage is to show certain syntactical and *verbal connections*. Not only is Friday's God dismissed as a cheat, but he is also defined categorically as an evil spirit and finally equated with the devil. Edward Said says that this is typical of Western colonial subversion in which alien religions are not only characterized as Pagan, but also as versions of anti-Christ. This creation of the antithesis is a deliberate assertion of power which is encoded within the discourse of religion. Friday's conversion, therefore, is not simply a reenactment of Crusoe's own conversion earlier, but (a) reinstatement of Western ideas of psychic and civil order; (b) an affirmation of the superiority and civility of the colonizer and (c) the primary strategy for establishing control and power over the native.

In *Robinson Crusoe*, in the true tradition of colonial discourse, Friday is totally assimilated into the European model of civility and culture. This in reality, becomes a total *negation of his identity*, which is completely subsumed within the codes and values of Europe. Friday, therefore, becomes a "major symbol announcing the victory of the colonialist project and he is a production of Crusoe's civilized self, as a text, which reaffirms European superiority and order."

h) The irony, however, is in the fact, that it is not Friday, or the savages who constitute the real threat in Defoe's novel but the white man who is reduced to behaving like the savage. It is in the incident of the mutiny on the British ship that the novel is radically problematized as illustrated in the conversation between Friday and Crusoe when they observe the mutineers. "I was perfectly confounded at the sight, and knew not what the meaning of it should be; Friday called out to me, in English, as well as he could, 'Oh, Master ! you see English mans eat prisoners as well as savage mans.' "Why", said I, "Friday do you think they are going to eat them.?" "Yes" says Friday, "they will eat them." "No, no", said I, "Friday, I am afraid they will murder them indeed; but you may be sure they will not eat them." (pp. – 271 – 272).

i) Crusoe's rout of the mutineers and his rescue of the English captain is conducted on the dual strategies of observation and secret supervisions. Like Prospero in *The Tempest*, he projects himself as having magical powers, almost a deux ex 23achine, who ultimately reveals himself as the governor of the island.

j) This is symbolic in one sense of Crusoe's assumption of formal political power.

Crusoe's Eden, his capitalist utopia is thus politicized with all the formal hierarchies and contradictions of a European state. For, with the coming of the mutineers and later in The Farther Adventures of Robinson Crusoe, with the arrival of the Spaniards, Crusoe's island acquires the character of a regular colonial settlement whose colonists owe him allegiance and whose laws and holdings he formulates and divides.

The colonialist analysis of Robinson Crusoe therefore, gives us a comprehensive reading of the novel for it dramatizes the economic and religious beliefs of Europe in the eighteenth century; that these actually dramatize the colonialist attitude and encounter by specifying certain precise representations of the colonizer and colonized in relationships of power, that this involves the central theme and purpose of the novel representation, therefore, is European ideas and values, which aggressively reaffirms European superiority and justifies colonialism.

Suggested Reading

1. J. R. Moore, Daniel Defoe : *Citizen of the Modern World (1958)*.
2. David Blewett, *Defoe's Art of Fiction (1979).*
3. Harold Bloom, *Daniel Defoe : Modern Critical Views (1987).*
4. A.W. Seccord. *Daniel Defoe, his Art and mind (1948).*
5. Maxmillian Novat, *Economics and the Fiction of Daniel Defoe (1962).*
6. Maxmillian Novat, *Defoe and the Nature of Man (1963)*
7. John Richetti, *Defoe's Narratives (1975).*
8. John Richetti, *Daniel Defoe (1987).*
9. Max Byrd (ed) : Daniel Defoe : A Collection of Critical Essays (1976)
10. Frant H. Ellis (ed) *Twentieth Century Interpretation of Robinson Crusoe'. (1969)*
11. George A Starr, Defoe and spiritual Autobiography (1965).
12. Michael Shinagel (ed) *Robinson Crusoe. Norton Critical Edition (1975)* [All page references are given from the 1994 reprint of this edition].

Assignments

1. Write an essay on *Robinson Crusoe* as a travel book.
2. Discuss *Robinson Crusoe* as a reflection of the economic ideas of the eighteenth century.
3. Comment on *Robinson Crusoe* as a spiritual autobiography.
4. Analyse *Robinson Crusoe* as an allegory.
5. Examine *Robinson Crusoe* as a novel which justifies colonialism.

Block II: *Oroonoko* by Aphra Behn

Unit 5(a): Life of Aphra Behn
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Introduction

I will here be discussing about a seventeenth century novella titled *Oroonoko; or The Royal Slave* written by the first woman to earn her living by writing, Mrs Aphra Behn. For the sake of convenience and also because that is how she is popularly known, I will henceforth in the module be mentioning the author by her name without the 'Mrs'. Also the title of the work will be mentioned only as *Oroonoko* in place of the full title. Since not much information is available on the author's life as also critical analysis of the text, my discussion will necessarily deal more textual reading based on the available critical material here. The sources of the critical material that I have made use of, will be given at the end. However some material had been gathered in an unorganized manner and I do not have the proper sources recorded. For such sources only a good guess is all that I can offer. However it is to be noted that it is expected that all candidates have a copy of the text when consulting the discussion of the text in this module.

Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko* is said to have heralded many different trends in the novel tradition. It is credited with pioneering the anti-colonial theme and the realistic trend as also the use of minute details in narrative descriptions.

Unit 5(a): Life of Aphra Behn

Mrs Aphra Behn's (1640-1689) early life is shrouded in obscurity. It is assumed that she was probably born in 1640. It is also hypothesized that she was born to Bartholomew and Elizabeth Johnson of Kent. One of the most important figures of twentieth century literature, Virginia Woolf in her *A Room of One's Own* (1929), acknowledges Aphra Behn as being the first woman to write professionally. Information regarding Behn's education or how she got introduced to literary and theatrical circles remain little-known. She is said to have visited Surinam, then a British colony, with her family between 1663 and 1664. On her return to England the following year she married Behn, a city merchant probably of Dutch descent, who died within two years. Charles II employed her in 1666 to work as a spy in Antwerp in the Dutch War. This scandalous woman writer of the seventeenth century and a well-known royalist was nevertheless buried in Westminister Abbey, on her death on 16 April 1689.

Unit 5(b): Literary Career of Aphra Behn

She is regarded to be the second most prolific and popular playwright of the seventeenth century, preceded by none other than the very popular Restoration dramatist John Dryden. Her first play *The Forced Marriage* was performed in 1670 by the Duke's Company. She went on to write at least eighteen plays, as well as several volumes of poetry and numerous works of fiction that were in vogue for decades after her death. Her most successful play, *The Rover* was produced in two parts in 1677 and in 1681. Her novella *Oroonoko; Or, The Royal Slave* (1688) is the work for which she is recognized internationally and which has made her name survive through centuries.

Unit 6(a): Publication History and Historical background to *Oroonoko*

(i) Publication History of *Oroonoko*

Oroonoko; Or, The Royal Slave, the work that has given Aphra Behn international recognition and fame, was published in 1688. This was the first literary work in English that grappled with the issue of the global interactions in the modern world. It is necessary here to discuss the historical context of this global interaction and slave trade that is at the centre of this work.

(ii) Historical Background to *Oroonoko*

While narrating Oroonoko's journey from West Africa to the Caribbean, Aphra Behn describes the hero's travel from Africa to Suriname, a place in the north of South America. This journey also represents the interactions between the three continents of Britain, Africa and America. There is supposed to have been an economic, political, and cultural interaction between these lands based on ''the triangular trade'' that is said to have existed amongst them. There already existed a long history of British colonization of America and also of Europeans trading in African slaves But what is interesting is that due to this ''triangular trade', there was forced transportation of a labour population from one continent namely, Africa, to facilitate industry in another continent, that is, America, and the produce of this industry was for the consumption of another continent, namely Europe. The start of this triangular trade and the increased exploitation of African slave labour in the Caribbean necessarily followed from a particular development. This was the discovery by the English colonizers in the Caribbean in the mid-1640s that sugarcane could be successfully grown and processed rather than the unsuccessful cultivation of cotton and tobacco. This shift to sugarcane farming led to a crisis in labour supply that led to more and more African slaves being brought in from Africa. It is interesting that during the 1660s, the years depicted in *Oroonoko*, the African population in these islands was roughly equal to the entire white population and by 1690, that is around the time when *Oroonoko* was published, blacks in fact outnumbered whites by an approximateration of three to one. This rampant increase in slavery was not so rapid in the North American colonies. This swift conversion to slave labour resulted in the Dutch take-over of Suriname, a colony on the coast of Guiana, and the place where the narrator meets Oroonoko when he lands there as a slave. This is the first work in English to depict this inter-continental trade and interaction that existed during this time and also to criticize the treatment of slaves in these lands. Further it needs to be noted that a woman writer achieved this and that too in the seventeenth century.

Unit 6(b): Plot Analysis

As the title of the novella suggests, the story is about an African prince named Oroonoko. The whole story is narrated in the form of a flashback. This is the story of Prince Oroonoko as told to the narrator who he met when he was a slave in Guiana. The old King of Coramantien, on the Gold Coast, had no son for all had died in the battlefield. The only surviving successor to this old King was a grandson, the son of one of the thirteen sons of the King. This old King had several black wives. However this sole surviving successor to the throne, Prince Oroonoko, was trained by one of the oldest generals of the King's army and by the time the Prince reached his seventeenth year, his name had spread far and wide ''as one of the most expert captains and bravest soldiers''. Very soon the Prince started to win battles for the King, with the old general by his side. On one such occasion, trying to save the Prince, the General is fatally wounded on the battlefield, and Prince Oroonoko is declared general in his place. On his return to his native land, Oroonoko decides to visit Imoinda, the only daughter of the slain general and his mentor. When ''this gallant Moor'' meets the ''fair Queen of Night'', Imoinda (this is how the author describes them both), they fall in love with each other and after several meetings both decide to take the other for a life partner, with the blessings of Prince Oroonoko's grandfather. On the other hand, having heard of this great beauty Imoinda, the old King who had many wives and many concubines in his *otan*, had his heart

set on this young beauty who had sparked a thousand tender thoughts in his old heart. Having received information of a probable relationship between this beauty and his own grandson, the King in a rage sends her the royal veil, that was an invitation that the King wanted her for his ‘‘use’’, and an order that no one dared disobey Imoinda, however, has to be forcibly brought to court where she cries and begs the King to set her free but to no avail. The King uses his powers over the pleading girl and when Oroonoko gets to hear what has happened on his return from his expeditions it is too late. After a long period of silent suffering in agony Oroonoko decides to take the help of one of the old Queens who was now in charge of Imoinda, Onahal, and meet Imoinda just once. His loyal follower Aboan and Onahal thus arrange for a meeting between the estranged lovers. The King however gets to know of this meeting and arrives there just after Oroonoko's friends forcibly makes him escape. As a punishment, the furious King orders that both Onahal and Imoinda be sold as slaves and sent to a different land. With the passage of time Oroonoko forgot exonerates the King for what he had done to Imoinda, and gradually gets back to his normal life. However he promises never to take a woman for his wife ever again. The captain of an English ship, arrives on the shores of Coramantien, who knew Oroonoko, on one of his visits and stays with Oroonoko and enjoys his hospitality. It was Oroonoko’s ability to converse in both French and English, due to his French tutor who had tutored Oroonoko not only in the languages but also the civilized ways of European life, that facilitated his friendships with such non-African people.

However, on the pretext of offering to return the hospitality shown to him, the captain of the English ship drugs Oroonoko and his men and then sails off to the far away lands on the coast of America with these youths bound in chains. All these young men are then sold off to various plantations as slaves. Oroonoko, the royal prince of an African land, is then sold off to a Cornish gentleman named Trefry, the overseer of the Parham plantation in Surinam. Once on the plantation, Oroonoko is given a new name - Caesar. Soon Oroonoko becomes friendly to Trefry and his ‘noble mien’ and ability to converse in English and French, results in him being treated differently from the other slaves. His friend Trefry once takes Oroonoko, now called Caesar, to meet a woman named Clemene, renowned for her beauty, who lived in absolute seclusion and was reputed to have rejected all men on the plantation. To Oroonoko’s utter amazement Clemene is none other than Imoinda. On listening to their story, Trefry and the narrator, impressed by this gallant and beautiful prince soon become his friends and arrange the marriage of Oroonoko and Imoinda. The lovers separated in their own land by their own people are finally united in captivity and by their white masters. It is when Imoinda is pregnant that Oroonoko realizes how desperately he needed his freedom. He did not want his children to be born as slaves and he requests his friends on the plantation, Mr Trefry and the narrator, to arrange for their freedom. In spite of repeated requests that it would be arranged once the Governor arrived, they fail to attain their freedom. This is when, having befriended other slaves Oroonoko decides to rebel against the slave masters. They first run away to the forest to fight from there. However, the other slaves return to captivity fearing the defeat of the rebellion, and Oroonoko is left alone feeling dejected and betrayed. In mortal fear yet refusing to let his wife and child spend the rest of their lives as slaves, Oroonoko first kills Imoinda and then mortally wounds himself. He is then captured and brutally murdered to teach the other slaves on the plantation never to rise in revolt against their masters.

Imoinda and Oroonoko, the ‘royal’ slaves, thus die in captivity. Oroonoko’s slaying his wife and unborn child is a way of protesting against the slave trade of the times.

Unit 7: Themes

(i) Attitude to Slavery, Racism in *Oroonoko*

Aphra Behn’s seventeenth-century tale of an African prince’s forced from a life of royalty to a life and his eventual death is, nevertheless, recognized of a slave as one of the earliest attempts in literature to comment against slavery. I will here first try to point out the various reasons for which this work might be cited as an anti-slavery document; for, in spite of such attempts to criticize the slave trade, Aphra Behn’s own racist attitudes tend to seep through.

This will be dealt with in the last segment of this sub-section.

The statements made in the text that would count as anti-slavery comments are:

(a) In *Oroonoko*, Aphra Behn seemingly possesses a conflicting attitude toward the institution of slavery and of racism stet. While trying to point to the negative aspects of slavery on the one hand, she also cites certain racist viewpoints, on the other. The author reveals her deeply rooted cultural bias and racism in

fictionalizing and romanticizing the lives of slaves on the plantations and displays a rather non-committal attitude towards slavery.
(b) In her unusual choice of an African Prince for a heroic romance, she tries to beautify and valorise the Africans. She constantly uses epithets like ‘‘gallant Moor’’ and ‘‘fair Queen of Night’’- when describing them, attempting to show that the ‘‘negroes’’, as she calls them in the text, could be just as noble, virtuous, passionate, heroic and just as worthy of literary praise and human compassion. It is important to note here that never before in English literature had any attempt been made to portray Africans in such a favourable light.
(c) In various ways the author points to the white man’s flaws whether it is in his cruelty towards the slaves or in the treacherous way in which Oroonoko and his men are taken slaves. In fact, the aurhor notes that according to come, the way in which the captain of the English ship drugs Oroonoko and his men on the pretext of extending hospitality, might be commended as an act of bravery. But the author strongly condemns it as an ignoble act of treachery and allows the reader to judge such an act. Through the sufferings of Oroonoko and Imoinda on the plantation in Surinam, Behn highlights the excessive cruelty of the colonial ruler while constantly referring to the sense of honour and the virtues' of the lovers. Through the character portrayals of Oroonoko and Imoinda depicted in all their honesty, loyalty, virtuosity and strength, Aphra Behn allots these ‘slaves’ an almost immortal status.
(d) Alongside the portrayal of such ‘noble’ slaves is the character portrayal of white Christian villains like the captain of the English ship, whose deeds have already been discussed. The other group of such villains comprises the white men on the plantation who torture and torment Oroonoko as he is a slave and has dark-coloured skin.
(e) The most scathing anti-slavery comment is made when Oroonoko speaks to the other natives on the plantation and tries to rouse them in a rebellion against slavery, in an attempt to break free from the shackles of bondage. Oroonoko questions his fellow slaves ‘‘Shall we render obedience to such a degenerate race who have no one human virtue left to distinguish them from the vilest creatures?’’ Aphra Behn could not have made a stronger statement than allowing her slave hero a voice to speak against the establishment.
Even after such commendable efforts of Aphra Behn to take a stand against slavery, she constantly exposes her racial bias when referring to the African characters as ‘‘negroes’’or as members of the ‘‘dark continent’’.
(a) While describing the African characters, especially their physical beauty, the author never forgets to mention that there was ‘‘nothing in nature more beautiful, agreeable, and handsome’’ like these dark-skinned people except ‘‘their colour’’.
(b) Among the other blacks, Oroonoko is an exception. His looks are not like the usual looks of the negroes. The prince had been ‘‘civilized in the most refined schools of humanity and learning’’ by his French tutor. As the prince was trained in the European ways of life and language, hence his appearance is different and more engaging than that of his countrymen. Moreover, Oroonoko’s education in European manners also make him acceptable to the English people evident in the number of English friends which includes the narrator.
(c) When Oroonoko chooses to rebel against his slave masters, even the narrator who has all along represented herself as a confidant and friend of Oroonoko’s, is scared. She feels her life too might be in danger exposing her inherent mistrust of anyone black. At that point Oroonoko becomes one with the other members of his race and all good things that have been said about him are instantly forgotten.
(d) Behn tends to romanticize slavery and life on the plantation rather than choose to confront most of its harshness. The struggles of Oroonoko and Imoinda are made to seem heroic and beautiful instead of bring shown as the sorry plight of victims of a really harsh and cruel reality. Their valour and virtue are highlighted so that it helps in disguising not only the narrator’s prejudices but also the cruelties inflicted on the slaves.
(e) Such romanticizing serves Behn’s purpose which appears to entertain the Restoration aristocracy by rendering Oroonoko’s life the stature of tragedy and a heroic romance. The historical importance of the work lies in the fact that *Oroonoko* emphasizes those emotional experiences that were often suppressed or distorted in the historical descriptions, debates and documentary records of the period. Aphra Behn on the other hand exposes the conflicts and turmoil that other records buried.
(f) Behn the colonizer indirectly accuses the African King and Oroonoko’s own people for causing the separation of the lovers. The lovers, Oroonoko and Imoinda, are reunited on the plantation where both

are slaves, thus hinting that while their own people had separated them, the colonial rulers brought them together.
(g) The narrator also tries to justify slavery on the ground that it is an economic requirement. Neither is there any criticism of the way in which the slaves are treated nor is there any direct attack on the institution of slavery itself.
(h) Oroonoko, who as a character is supposed to act as the mouthpiece against slavery, is himself shown to be trading in slaves. When the slaves who had fled from the plantation with Oroonoko betray him and return to captivity, Oroonoko mentions that they were ‘‘by nature slaves...[who were] fit to be used as Christians’ tools’’. Nevertheless, Behn’s *Oroonoko* is an early attempt at exposing the evils of slavery whether through the criticism of Western civilization or through the ennobling and humanizing of an African. And this brave endeavour by a woman writer in the seventeenth century is no mean effort and should be accorded its due commendation.

(ii) Gender Issues in *Oroonoko*

Oroonoko is the story of the royal slave from the point of view of the middle-class mistress of a colonial power. Interestingly, the black, male protagonist can only find a voice through the white, female narrator. In the text women, both blacks and whites, have less power than the men. However the black female slaves have the least power of all. These women are never consulted but expected to do whatever their men-folk ask them to do or go wherever they are asked to go. Even the white women represented by the narrator, her mother and sister have some influence, but when important decisions are taken they are not consulted. For example we might cite the instance when the decision to punish Oroonoko is taken, the narrator is not only not consulted she is not even informed of the decision and the punishment is executed while she is away. The way in which Africans used women as commodities is highlighted by the number of Queens and concubines that the old King is said to have and also the way in which they are discarded once they grow old. The way in which Imoinda is forced to accept the old King’s proposal and entertain the King also throws light on this aspect. While pointing to this negative aspect in African culture, the author refrains from highlighting the almost similar treatment of women in her culture. In fact we hardly get to see too many of the women of the ruling class. Again the ‘beauty’ of the dark-skinned women is often contrasted with the beauty of the women of the European races.

(iii) *Oroonoko* as a Romance

The second important theme in this novella is that of romance. Oroonoko is portrayed as a hero who is adept in the art of warfare, is often referred to as the ‘‘gallant Moor’’, is honest, loyal, faithful. In fact not a single flaw in his nature is mentioned ‘‘except the color’’. He is the perfect hero. The story is focussed on the love story between Oroonoko and Imoinda. At their first meeting after the death of Oroonoko’s mentor the old general who was also Imoinda’s father, both fall in love with each other. Though they decide to get married they wait to get the permission from the old King who is Oroonoko’s grandfather. During this period Imoinda, despite her protests and tears is forcibly taken away by the King to satisfy his lust. The love between the hero Oroonoko and the heroine Imoinda is put to test here. Whereas the furious Oroonoko would have rebelled against the King for his deed, his respect towards his grandfather and the monarch of the land stops him from taking any drastic step. But the love story has to reach its climax. So Oroonoko goes to meet Imoinda in the palace, spends the night with her, the knowledge of which enrages the King who then punishes Imoinda by ordering her sale as a slave carried to some fat off land. To this same far off land, Surinam, Oroonoko is also brought as slave and the two lovers finally meet after years of separation and a lot of pain. It is probably hinted that actually the sympathetic colonial rulers and slave masters bring the two lovers together and get them married, while their own people had separated them. To make the love story a tragedy and thus immortalise it, both the lovers are killed. Even their killing is pathetically rendered. Thus the novella is given the status of a heroic romance as well as a tragedy.

Unit 8(a): Genre and Structure

Aphra Behn’s *Oroonoko* is a ‘novella’ which is a work of fiction that is shorter than a novel but longer than a short story. Certain critics claim the text to be a memoir and a travel narrative, since it is based on Aphra Behn’s resit to the colony of Surinam, later known as Dutch Guiana. It is also sometimes said to belong to the genre of a ‘biography’ since it is said that it is the biography of Oroonoko as told to the narrator, whom he met on the plantation where he spent the last few years of his life as a slave.

Unit 8(b): Narrative Style, Technique and Characters

Oroonoko has no chapter divisions. The text is in the form of an oral tale being told by the narrator therefore it is in a single framework. I will discuss here the narrative style and technique used in this novella.

Narrative Style and Technique

(a) In her search for a prose form appropriate to stories with contemporary rather than purely heroic settings and themes, Behn wrote her fictional works in a conversational tone. *Oroonoko* is thus strewn with personal references like ‘‘I have already said’’or ‘‘I forgot to ask how’’, making the narrative resemble an ongoing conversation with her readers. This also lends her tales an ordinary tone than the formal tone that is usually evident in earlier prose forms.

(b) In order to lend authenticity to the work, the narrator is made the witness and interpreter mof the events in the story, thus also making her a part of the narrative as one of the ‘characters’. At the start itself the narrator mentions, I was myself an eye-witness to a great part of what you will find here set down; and what I could not be witness of, I received from the mouth of the chief actor in this history, the hero himself, who gave us the whole transactions of his youth. While such authentication adds to the interest of the story, the role of the narrator as interpreter allows her to add the colonial aspect. The colonial attitudes to race could not have been those of Oroonoko or, for that matter, the black hero’s version, these were the narrator’s opinions and therefore the ‘authenticity’ of the hero’s version of the tale is anyway discredited. Also the various ways in which Behn tries to make her narrative authoritative is to credit her work with literary merit even though it comes from a ‘‘female-pen’’, which was a major hurdle for this seventeenth-century woman writer.

(c) Such authoritative presence of the narrator precedes the figure of the omniscient narrator in the fiction to follow like those of Henry Fielding, Jane Austen and George Eliot.

(d) *Oroonoko* is regarded as one of the first realistic prose narratives in English literature. It contains a number of elements that are new: the conversational narrative style, the narrative authority who is recognizably female, and a plot that focusses on the love story of two black slaves. There is a shift in locale to the New World, and an analysis of slave trade in the British colony of Surinam.

(e) By choosing a female narrator to narrate the story of the educated black African prince, Behn’s narrative privileges the authority of Western written discourse over African oral discourse.

(f) Some critics point to the commodification of the Royal Slave’s story through Behn’s narrative, by the authoritative female narrator’s rendering of the story.

(g) It is the narrative that exposes the Eurocentric bias, as discussed in the ‘theme’ section.

(h) The authoritative narrative was necessary due to the patriarchal culture that Behn was forced to contend with in which female authorship was viewed as suspect. Therefore Behn’s narrative had to demonstrate complete command of the novel’s subject matter — Oroonoko and Imoinda and their lives.

(i) Behn’s narrative strategies are representative of the ways in which the British imagined and represented the New World during the Restoration and early eighteenth century. The British were struggling to strengthen their presence in America during these years and simultaneously trying to make meaning of their experiences there. This results in the confused attitude as evident in the text--- the constant reinforcement of authority through the narrative, the imposition of colonial power over the black slaves which is nevertheless sympathetic and ‘friendly’.

Characters

The various characters in the story are:

i) The first-person narrator who is the daughter of the Lieutenant-General of Surinam, who also would have been honoured with the responsibility of an additional thirty-six islands had he not died at sea. This narrator is the self-confessed author/narrator of the story.

(ii) Prince Oroonoko is the hero of this tragedy, and also the one who apparently has supplied the narrator with the details of the story. Oroonoko is renamed as Caesar when he is a slave on the plantation.

(iii) The King of Coramantien, the old King who is also Oroonoko’s grandfather.

(iv) Imoinda is Oroonoko's, beloved, a noble beauty and daughter of the old general who was Oroonoko’s mentor. Imoinda is renamed as Clemene on the plantation where she too is a slave.

(v) Oroonoko’s followers include Aboan, Jamoan.

(vi) Onahal is the old discarded Queen of the King of Coramantien, in whose charge Imoinda is put, and who helps Oroonoko and Imoinda to meet in the palace as a punishment for which she is sold off as a slave.
(vii) Trefry is the friendly plantation overseer of the Parham plantation where Oroonoko arrives as a slave.

Suggested Reading

1. Aphra Behn *Oroonoko; Or The Royal Slave*
2. Janet Todd (ed.) *Aphra Behn.*
3. Dale Spender *Mothers of the Novel. 100 Good Women Writers Before Jane Austen*.
4. Angeline Goreau *Reconstructing Aphra. A Social Biography of Aphra Behn*.

Assignment

Essay Type Questions

ESSAY TYPES

1. Describe Aphra Behn's attitudes to race and slavery as expressed in her novella *Oroonoko*.
2. What role does race and gender play in Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko*?
3. Would you regard *Oroonoko* as an anti-slavery novel? Give reasons for your answer.
4. Comment on the importance of *Oroonoko* in the history of English literataure.
5. Discuss the narrative style of *Oroonoko*.
6. Discuss *Oroonoko* as a romance.
7. Discuss the historical background against which *Oroonoko* was written.

SHORT TYPES

1. Who is the author who credited Aphra Behn for being the first professional woman writer?
2. Where did Virginia Woolf applaud Aphra Behn for being the first professional woman writer?
3. Give the new names that Oroonoko and Imoinda received on the plantation?
4. Name any two other famous works of Aphra Behn?
5. Who were the two characters who helped Oroonoko to meet Imoinda in the palace?
6. How and for what 'crime' were Imoinda and Onahal punished?
7. How was Oroonoko taken as a slave?
8. Where was he sold off as slave and to whom?

Block III: Eighteenth Century Periodical Literature

Unit 9: Growth and Development of Periodical Literature in Early 18th Century Britain
Unit 10 (a): Introduction to *The Spectator*
Unit 10(b): *The Spectator* No 2
Unit 10 (c): *The Spectator* No 10
Unit 11: Introduction to Samuel Johnson and *The Rambler* essays
Unit 12 (a): *The Rambler* No. 4
Unit 12 (b): The Rambler No. 60

Unit 9: Growth and Development of Periodical Literature in Early 18th Century Britain

In London between 1709 and 1714, Joseph Addison and Richard Steele published a series of fashionable and influential periodical papers, *The Tatler* and *The Spectator*. The earlier paper, *The Tatler*, was edited, and largely written, by Richard Steele, but included contributions from other authors, especially Addison, as well as correspondence from readers. *The Tatler* appeared on April 12, 1709. The first few numbers were distributed free of charge; after that, each issue cost one penny. Steele continued publishing *The Tatler* three times a week until Tuesday, January 2, 1711, when the last number appeared.

Printed in double columns on folio half-sheets of foolscap, with advertisements at the end, *The Tatler* took the standard form of the periodicals of the day. It stated as its explicit purpose the reformation of manners and morals. Steele outlines the goals of the paper in his dedication to Arthur Maynwaring, an important figure in the Whig political party, with whom both Steele and Addison were allied: "The general Purpose of this Paper, is to expose the false Arts of Life, to pull off the Disguises of Cunning, Vanity, and Affectation, and to recommend a general Simplicity in our Dress, our Discourse, and our Behaviour". And while, especially in its earlier numbers, *The Tatler* also includes more strictly news-oriented articles on current political, military, and financial events, the ethical and social focus of the paper is prominent from the start.

Although the last number of *The Tatler* appeared in January 1711, probably as a result of political pressures on Steele, this by no means marked the end of his — or Addison's — career in journalism. On March 1, 1711, the first number of *The Spectator* appeared. Whereas the editing and writing of *The Tatler* was done primarily by Steele, the production of *The Spectator* was more evenly split between the two men; this was to be a collaborative venture. Because of Addison's greater involvement, *The Spectator* came out six times a week, twice as often as *The Tatler*. The first series of *The Spectator* ran from March 1711 until December 1712 (Nos. 1-555). From June to December 1714, Addison, together with Eustace Budgell and Thomas Tickell, edited a second series, which appeared three times a week (Nos. 556-635).

Dropping those reports of current political, military, and financial news that had played a part, if an ever-diminishing one, in *The Tatler, The Spectator,* largely consists of a series of self-contained, thematically unified essays. This format allows *The Spectator* more scope for the sociocultural and ethical criticism that proved the great strength and irresistible draw of *The Tatler*. The papers address a primarily urban audience made up of men and women in those midlevel economic and social positions that have come to be grouped under the rubric "the

middle class." Taking as their subject the polite conduct of life in all its arenas, public and private, domestic and professional, social and familial, these periodicals were crucial agents in the definition of the cultural, social, and ethical ideals of that class.

The task the papers set themselves is to reform the sensibilities — aesthetic, sartorial, social, and sexual — of each man and woman in the reading audience so that he or she, guided by the principles of good sense, decorum, and benevolence, would then do, say, like, and buy the right thing. *The Tatler* and *The Spectator* wanted to enter into the daily lives of their readers and reshape them. Revealing a very modern concern with how people spend their money and their leisure time, they do not preach against consumption and pleasure per se; rather, they seek to manage these human desires in ways they consider rational, progressive, and useful, both to the individual and to the society at large. At once educational and recreational, the papers are the precursors to today's life-style magazines. *The Tatler* and *The Spectator* serve as guides, leading readers through the vast array of moral, cultural, consumer, and social choices that accompanied their relationships with one another and themselves, with the financial and commercial markets of their day, and with contemporary entertainments and pastimes. Mediating between the day-to-day social and material lives of their readers and the more universal and permanent values of good sense, honesty, modesty, decorum, and good taste, the papers attempt to secure a fixed significance for the everyday.

The success of the project depended on making the papers attractive to readers and available to the largest possible audience. These criteria are at once satisfied and complicated by the papers' status as popular, prestigious, indeed, even fashionable commodities in the market of public opinion. *The Tatler* and *The Spectator* exist within modern conditions of commodification and commercialization, which not only mark their content (the Royal Exchange, lotteries, fashions, commercial entertainments) but define their nature and shape their approach. *The Tatler* and *The Spectator* ultimately seek to manage the world from a perspective at once in and out of the world. And to be sure, the papers, like Mr. Spectator himself, exist both inside and outside the world of commerce.

Writing at a time when cultural standards and codes of conduct were the object of much public attention, *The Tatler* and then *The Spectator* formulated signature critical styles marked by light irony and playfulness. The criticisms and prescriptions Steele and Addison advanced in each were mediated by a fictional, gently satiric persona. In *The Tatler*, Steele and Addison speak through one Isaac Bickerstaff, while *The Spectator* takes its name from Mr. Spectator, its central spokesman. Both Bickerstaff and Mr, Spectator are somewhat eccentric, self-mocking characters; their temperately satiric irony sets the witty, urbane tone. This distinctive approach can be usefully compared to that exemplified by the Society for the Reformation of Manners and Morals, one of the most active institutions for the correction of morality at the time. The Society looked mostly to the lower classes and concentrated on sexual transgressions and drunkenness. Though no less devoted to standards of moderation and probity, *The Tatler* and *The Spectator* detect vice and folly in a greater range of activities and across a different spectrum of social classes. The scope of their reform is consequently broader and their attitude more worldly and liberal than that of the Society.

AUDIENCE: NEW MANNERS FOR NEW CLASSES

The eighteenth century witnessed the rise of the middle class in England. Social historians differ in their estimates of the size and constituency of this emergent middle class and in their assessment of its relation to other contemporary classes (titled nobility, gentry, wage laborer) and to the twentieth-century middle class. In his study of the origins of the English novel, Michael McKeon emphasizes the contradictory and mutating qualities of middle-class ideology and consciousness. The history of the middle class, writes McKeon, is marked by the presence of a simultaneous impulse "to imitate and become absorbed within the aristocracy, and to criticize and supplant not only aristocracy but status orientation itself." With, in McKeon's words, the "hindsight of modern scholarship," what we can identify as a specific middle-class orientation did not emerge as a consciously held class identity but was the result of an earlier series of attempts to reform aristocratic elite culture. Kathryn Shevelow argues that "we can use the notion of 'middle class' to designate a particular representation of cultural values, beliefs, and practices that existed prior to, or simply apart from, their eventual conceptual coalescence into a social category". Nor was the ideological work that went into the formation of what we see as "middle-class consciousness" conducted only in relation to aristocratic elite culture. As Peter Stallybrass and Allon White argue, the middle ground of bourgeois standards of taste and culture was often carved out through negotiation with "high" elite culture and "low" popular culture. In their work on eighteenth-century authorship, they show that in bourgeois discourse these "high" and "low" cultural forms are often identified with one another and the excesses of each rejected. biggest portion of their audience came from Britain's growing professional bureaucracy and its commercial and financial classes; however, there is also evidence of aristocratic, and even working-class readership. But it may be safely put that middling and professional classes — clerks, commissioners, tradesmen, bankers, stock company directors, insurance financiers — begin to assume a dominant role in the nation's socio-cultural as well as eco-political life.

Coming at this very juncture, *The Tatler* and *The Spectator* are concerned, then, not simply with championing the commercial classes but with advocating a more liberal and even "noble" use of wealth than that pursued by the typical avaricious "Cit." They formulate an identity for the businessman that combines the best features of the commercial and the noble classes. This involves polishing and refining the conduct of the middle classes and purging the elites of the habits of vice and folly. In the literature of the time, the possession of wealth is not viewed as an evil in itself, but as an advantage easily corrupted if not properly employed. The "use of riches" theme becomes a standard topic in social satire. Many men and women were ready to take these lessons to heart. Climbing up the ladder of prestige on the rungs of commerce, finance and politics, they were eager to acquire the social prestige and cultural polish that had traditionally been the province of the aristocracy. Thus, in the decades surrounding the turn of the eighteenth century, status based social prestige is being challenged by class-based claims, when the progeny of wealthy traders demand cultural capital and urbanity becomes one of the characteristic features of truly cultured gentlemen.

But this glittering beau monde of fans and fancy dress, of card games, gossip, masquerades, duels, and sexual intrigue was also discredited by those, usually outside the elite, who felt that it was morally deficient and thus no model on which to base new standards both fashionable *and* decent. The set of follies castigated by the papers — ostentation, vanity, snobbery, self-interest, insincerity, moral laxity, slavish devotion to fashion and to the modish world's empty forms- is most immediately traceable to the libertine court society of Charles II (1660-88). Preserved in

the drama of the Restoration stage, with its ceaselessly witty, often ruthlessly self-serving libertine
heroes and heroines, this court culture set the standard for fashionable society in the last decades of the seventeenth century. But as envisioned by Addison and Steele, genteel culture is inextricable from the fairly prosaic standards of moral virtue: modesty, benevolence, temperance, honesty, chastity before and within marriage. A fashionable society must also be a decent society. Within the flamboyant, high-style, sexually libertine culture that had carried the standard of fashion since the Restoration, these mundane, bourgeois virtues were antithetical and irrelevant.

COFFEEHOUSES, PERIODICALS, AND THE PUBLIC SPHERE

There was at this period a growing (though still tiny) literate public with enough cation, money, leisure, and interest to make reading a part of their daily lives. The success of popular journals like *The Tatler* and *The Spectator*, at once "improving" and entertaining, bears testimony to a public who not only could read but chose to read in their free time. The growing role of literature as a popular pastime is reflected in the rise of the modern novel and the blossoming of the periodical press.

By the early eighteenth century the writing and printing of books and periodicals were a well-established business. The older system of literary patronage, in which aristocratic supporters provided authors with financial and social backing, was giving way to a more purely commercial mode of operation. Addison and Steele take their rightful places within the emerging profession of commercial writers. But the lucrative popular press provoked considerable reaction from those who saw it as an agent of cultural corruption. This reaction typically took the form of the 'Grub-Street hacks', desperate, unskilled men who wrote to earn enough money simply to scrape by, with no thought of the value or quality of their work. But at the same time, considerable counterclaims were being made for the high quality and respectability of the popular press. Through the commercial culture industry that developed during this time, writing and printing themselves assume the status of middle-class professions.

An institution central to the organization of public life in early eighteenth- century London, the coffeehouse is closely affiliated with the authors, audience, aims, and accomplishments of popular periodicals like *The Tatler* and *The Spectator*. In its initial number, *The Tatler* confirms this connection by announcing its various departments:

> "All Accounts of Gallantry, Pleasure, and Entertainment, shall be under the Article of White's Chocolate-house; Poetry, under that of Will's Coffee-house; Learning, under the Title of Graecian; Foreign and Domestick News, you will have from St. James's Coffee-house; and what else I have to offer on any other Subject, shall be dated from my own Apartment."

The Tatler's relationship to the coffeehouse is double-faceted: not only was it generated from these public resorts of business and talk, it was also largely read there. Papers like *The Tatler* and *The Spectator* were written to be talked about. The essays enter a cultural debate that was highly oral and social rather than textual and academic, and coffeehouses were the chief sites of this debate. Some functioned as clearinghouses for the latest military, political, or economic news;

others, like Man's, were fashionable resorts where beaus met to pose and gossip; still others, like Will's, were oriented around literary culture and served as critical tribunals. Coffeehouses were crucial arenas for the formation and expression of public opinion about plays and poetry, politics and finance, dress and manners. An author's reception at Will's could make or break a reputation. The formulation of public opinion is the first object of the papers. So it is in the coffeehouse culture that *The Tatler* locates its origins, its aims, and its audience.

First established in London in the mid-seventeenth century, coffee-houses multiplied at a remarkable rate; by the end of the century there were more than two thousand of them in the city. The coffeehouse and the popular periodicals patrons read and discussed there are two institutions central to that arena of discourse and identification Jiirgen Habermas calls the "bourgeois public sphere." Habermas's bourgeois public sphere is at once a symbolic space and a literal space for the production of that set of ideological and social ideals we have come to identify with the polite middle class. It encompasses both the public discursive spheres of the newspaper and the coffeehouse and the set of normative principles defined in these arenas. Ideally an open forum of rational discussion, the bourgeois public sphere emerging in early eighteenth-century England served a number of significant functions: it was an arena of social identification for individuals; it provided standards for interaction and public discussion; it established rationales for ever more secularized and commercialized modes of cultural production; and it stood as a place outside official state power from which criticism "against the state could be launched.
Through the networks of institutions like the press and the coffeehouse a new notion of the "public" arose, one that was composed of private individuals who came together to debate and negotiate matters of public concern, to formulate "public opinion." Represented to itself through the press, this new "public of the now emerging *public sphere of civil society"* becomes aware of itself as a source of authority and validation separate from, and even opposed to, state authority. Operating "as a forum in which the private people, come together to form a public, readied themselves to compel public authority to legitimate itself before public opinion," the public sphere had political uses.

Public opinion also developed around ethical, social, and aesthetic-cultural issues. The public sphere is first and foremost a critical arena where individuals take part in a debate about the principles, interests, aims, and standards that ought to govern their political, social, ethical, and aesthetic-cultural lives. Largely through publications like *The Tatler* and *The Spectator,* the public sphere becomes the "place" where the cultural and social norms of bourgeois modernity are instituted. By identifying themselves with these sets of norms, and so internalizing them, the bourgeoisie establishes its own social identity.

SEXUAL DIFFERENCE, SOCIAL SPHERES, AND GENDERED IDENTITY

The Tatler and *The Spectator* are intent on cultivating an audience who will act in ways suitable to the genteel and rational exchange of the coffeehouse, but they are also concerned with conduct and employment in the more private sphere of the domestic household. Designed for consumption both in the male-oriented, public and social venues of the coffeehouse and club and at the tea tables presided over by the ladies of the house, these papers undertake the direction of both public and private life. As Shevelow explains, the popular periodical performed an important transaction between the public and private spheres In the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, the social geography was changing. As Ellen Pollak outlines in her

discussion of the eighteenth-century feminine ideal, upper- and middle-class women increasingly withdrew from the arenas of economic productivity into the domestic realm of consumption, partly in emulating their aristocratic superiors. Ensconced in the home, sequestered from the "corrupt" worlds of politics, finance, and commerce, women become "the embodiment of moral value" that infuses domestic space. Women star to take on the role of angels in the house, custodians of moral and spiritual life.

What emerges in the eighteenth century is an increasingly polarized separation of spheres: public/social/masculine versus private/ familiar/feminine. The way this separation is naturalized depends on an early modern shift in the understanding of sexual difference, on the notion that the masculine and the feminine are themselves polar opposites and-that this opposition is rooted in natural difference. Gender, the cultural marks of maleness and femaleness, is increasingly seen as biologically innate rather than socially secured.

Before the modern period, the dominant identity category was not gender but status. In the old aristocratic order, a person is first and foremost either a noble or a commoner. But as economic-oriented class differences begin to challenge the hold of status on social prestige, the system of cultural differences that define identity finds its fixed point in gender. This model of sexual difference, and its attendant anxieties and preoccupations, is fully at work in *The Tatler* and *The Spectator*. Female readers are addressed first *"as women*, with class associations more vaguely assumed in the rhetoric directed toward them" (Shevelow). This is yet another way the popular periodicals reached an audience that cut across class and status lines: their address to the "ladies" speaks to women in the commercial and professional classes, the gentry, and the aristocracy. According to the ideology of gender at work in *The Tatler* and *The Spectator,* women form a distinct social category defined solely by their innate female nature. This inherent and inalterable feminine nature could find its proper expression and direction only within the domestic, private sphere. The good female characters are those who cheerfully confine themselves to the concerns of their families. Excessively worldly women whose interests and occupations range beyond the private household represent a kind of "bad femininity," which the papers do their best to discourage. These badly feminine women think more of card games and masquerades than of household tasks; they are preoccupied with public social display rather than the well-being of their family circle; immodest, even exhibitionist, they strive after social power and pose the threat of sexual autonomy.

If their natural frailty makes them more vulnerable to such misguided affections, women's nurture and upbringing also does little to strengthen their character. Bickerstaff and Mr. Spectator object to conventional female education because, they claim, it promotes aspirations toward social status achieved through self-display. Advocates of female modesty and retirement from the public world, Addison and Steele promote a program of female education that cultivates attention to internal beauty and to a woman's strictly domestic, familial social obligations.

Female nature is innately frivolous and unstable. Since these qualities are understood as natural and inalterable, the schemes of female reform and education proposed in the papers encounter a problem. For even as they are being enlisted as symbols of the realm of domestic virtue, women are also understood to lack the native stability that would most effectively allow them to resist the sway of the world's temptations. Women seem naturally flawed in ways that threaten the

realization of what is being defined as their natural character. Jane Spencer remarks on this contradiction: "It seems that eighteenth century women needed a good deal of educating into their 'inborn,' 'natural' feminine qualities".

COMMERCE, TASTE, AND CULTURE

The critical stance of *The Tatler* and *The Spectator* is largely determined by an increasingly commercialized British society. Colonial expansion, as well as financial, commercial, and technical innovation, was providing more things at better prices to greater numbers of people. The blueprint for the mass commercial exploitation and mass culture that were to develop more fully in the nineteenth century were laid down in the eighteenth century. Eighteenth-century cultural commentators remark again and again, with dismay, amusement, and scorn, on their contemporaries' obsession with getting and spending. *The Tatler* and *The Spectator* paint a picture of a society in which almost all social practices and institutions are colored and shaped by commercial, rather than more purely ethical, values. These papers are anxious to separate the faulty values that drive commerce — self-interest, novelty and impermanence, profit and loss — from their own stabilizing ethic of rational benevolence, community, and common sense. This ethic is promoted as an antidote to the selfishness, the superficiality, the ephemerality, the frippery, and the foolishness of modern life.

The Tatler and *The Spectator* are eager to establish a sphere of value and identification outside the commercial marketplace, where taste and culture are bought and sold with little regard to any standard higher than the latest fashion. As they conceptualize and represent this place, *The Tatler* and *The Spectator* go far in articulating the modern realm of culture: an aesthetic and ethical arena for the improvement of human nature responsive to criteria other than status, wealth, and fashionability, which mark the commercial ethic. Leslie Stephen calls Addison the prophet of this what is now called Culture.

This promised land of "Culture" of which Addison is the "prophet" has most commonly been associated with his realm of the imagination. In *Spectator* Nos. 411-21 Addison provides a kind of blueprint for the operation of the mental and affective faculties associated with what we now call aesthetic pleasure (see pp. 387-96). These pleasures, like Mr. Spectator's own most characteristic faculty, are visual; the pleasures of the imagination are first the pleasures of looking, either literally or imaginatively. Addison's imaginative vision and its pleasures stand as a kind of superior alternative to the pleasures of material acquisition they so closely mirror. Thus, we can clearly see how the principles of access and privilege that govern the bourgeois public sphere overlap with those of the aesthetic realm of the imagination. Wealth and status are immaterial in truly rational and polite discourse. All one needs is a commitment to a shared standard of universal human reason. Similarly, the aesthetic pleasures are not only independent, they are superior to the satisfactions of material wealth and ownership.

The emergence of modern categories of culture and taste occurs alongside the commercial saturation of everyday London life. In relation to the development of ideas about the cultural aesthetic, the commercialization of literature (with its attendant commodification of knowledge) and of entertainment and leisure are the most relevant. The eighteenth-century man or woman about town could choose from a growing variety of public and commercial forms of entertainment and "culture": plays, operas, acrobatics, puppet shows, waxwork shows,

masquerades, pleasure gardens, collections of curious and novel things in museums, public houses, and retail shops. This is the age of the first great entrepreneurs of leisure. But if anything that sells gets published or staged, then how can a standard of taste be maintained? The answer lies in the power of choice exercised by those who buy. Clearly, this audience must be educated to choose what is tasteful and correct.

Unit 10 (a): Introduction to *The Spectator*

The Spectator was a periodical published in London by the essayists Sir Richard Steele and Joseph Addison from March 1, 1711, to Dec. 6, 1712 (appearing daily), and subsequently revived by Addison in 1714 (for 80 numbers). It succeeded *The Tatler,* which Steele had launched in 1709. In its aim to "enliven morality with wit, and to temper wit with morality," *The Spectator* adopted a fictional method of presentation through a "Spectator Club," whose imaginary members extolled the authors' own ideas about society. These "members" included representatives of commerce, the army, the town (respectively, Sir Andrew Freeport, Captain Sentry, and Will Honeycomb), and of the country gentry (Sir Roger de Coverley). The papers were ostensibly written by Mr. Spectator, an "observer" of the London scene. The conversations that *The Spectator* reported were often imagined to take place in coffeehouses, which was also where many copies of the publication were distributed and read.

Though Whiggish in tone, *The Spectator* generally avoided party-political controversy. An important aspect of its success was its notion that urbanity and taste were values that transcended political differences. Almost immediately it was hugely admired; Mr. Spectator had, observed the poet and dramatist John Gay, "come on like a Torrent and swept all before him."

Because of its fictional framework, *The Spectator* is sometimes said to have heralded the rise of the English novel in the 18th century. This is perhaps an overstatement, since the fictional framework, once adopted, ceased to be of primary importance and served instead as a social microcosm within which a tone at once grave, good-humoured, and flexible could be sounded. The real authors of the essays were free to consider whatever topics they pleased, with reference to the fictional framework (as in Steele's account of Sir Roger's views on marriage, which appeared in issue no. 113) or without it (as in Addison's critical papers on *Paradise Lost,* John Milton's epic poem, which appeared in issues no. 267, 273, and others).

Given the success of *The Spectator* in promoting an ideal of polite sociability, the correspondence of its supposed readers was an important feature of the publication. These letters may or may not, on occasion, have been composed by the editors.

In addition to Addison and Steele themselves, contributors included Alexander Pope, Thomas Tickell, and Ambrose Philips. Addison's reputation as an essayist has surpassed that of Steele, but their individual contributions to the success of *The Spectator* are less to the point than their collaborative efforts: Steele's friendly tone was a perfect balance and support for the more dispassionate style of Addison. Their joint achievement was to lift serious discussion from the realms of religious and political partisanship and to make it instead a normal pastime of the leisured class. Together they set the pattern and established the vogue for the periodical throughout the rest of the century and helped to create a receptive public for the novelists, ensuring that the new kind of prose writing—however entertaining—should be essentially serious.

Brief Biographical Details of Joseph Addison and Richard Steele

Joseph Addison was born at Milston, Wiltshire, England in 1672. At the age of 14 he began attending the renowned Charterhouse School, whose alumni included the renowned John Wesley and the novelist William Makepeace Thackeray. It was here at Charterhouse that Addison acquainted Steele. From here Addison went on to Oxford where he completed his M.A. In 1695 he composed *A Poem to His Majesty*, addressed to William III. This composition earned him the attention of influential politicians who saw much potential in this young scholar. He was granted a pension of 300 Pounds, enabling him to travel on the Continent. On his return to London Addison fell in with the Kit Kat Club, an association of political and literary figures whose members included Richard Steele, playwright William Congreve, architect Sir John Vanbrugh and future Prime Minister Sir Robert Walpole.

In 1708 Addison was elected to the Parliament. The same year he became the equivalent of Secretary of State for Irish Affairs. While in Ireland he began contributing to Steele's paper *The Tatler*. The last *Tatler* appeared on 2 January 1711, by which time Addison had authored 40 out f 271 issues. Two months later he and Steele launched *The Spectator*. Addison continued to write poetry and plays (including an acclaimed tragedy *Cato*). After marrying well (to the Dowager Countess of Warwick), Addison died at the age of 48 on 17 June 1719. He is interred at Westminster Abbey.

Sir Richard Steele was born at Dublin, Ireland in 1672. His father, who had been an attorney by profession, died when Richard Steele was only five years old. His uncle paid for his education , sending him to Charterhouse. From there he went to Oxford, but left without attaining his degree, to start a career in the army. He attained the rank of a captain before leaving the army in 1705. Steele's personality can best be summarized by the phrase "Good Time Charlie". He was convivial, generous to a fault and a lover of food and drink. His dissolute lifestyle led him into debt on several occasions. Partly due to this reason he chose to marry a wealthy widow. In 1714 he was made Governor of the Drury Lane Theater. He obtained Knighthood in the year 1715. Steele's health deteriorated due to his intemperate habits and he passed away in the year 1729.

The Roger de Coverley Papers

The Sir Roger de Coverley papers are often said to be the precursor of the modern English novel. And in a very real sense they are. There are, to be sure, crude specimens of prose fiction in the preceding century that may perhaps dispute this title, though most of them, like the long-winded romances that found place in the library of Sir Roger's lady friend, were of French origin or pattern. But these romances, while they supply[Pg 30] the element of plot and adventure most liberally, were deficient in genuine characters. There are no real men and women in them. Moreover, they made no attempt to depict contemporary life as it was. But Sir Roger de Coverley is no personage of romance. He is a hearty, red-blooded, Tory gentleman who lives in Worcestershire. He has no adventure more striking than might naturally befall a country squire who comes up to London for the season once a year. There were scores of just such men in every shire in England. His speech, his habits, his prejudices are all shown us with simple truth. And yet this is done with so much art and humour that Sir Roger is one of the most living persons in our literature. He is as immortal as Hamlet or Julius Cæsar. We know him as well as we know our nearest neighbour; and we like him quite as well as we like most of our neighbours.

Now this was something new in English literature. Sir Roger is the earliest person in English imaginative prose that is really still alive. There are men and women in our poetry before his day—in the drama there is, of course, a great host of them; but in prose literature Sir Roger is the first. Furthermore, the men and women of the drama, even in that comedy of manners which professed to reflect most accurately contemporary society, were almost always drawn with some romantic or satiric exaggeration; but there is no exaggeration in the character of Sir Roger. Here was the beginning of a healthy realism. It was only necessary for Richardson and Fielding, thirty years later, to bring together several such genuine characters into a group, and to show how the incidents of their lives naturally ran into plot or story—and we have a novel.

The original suggestion for the character of Sir Roger seems to have come from Steele, who wrote that account of the Spectator Club (*Spectator*, No. 2) in which the knight first appears. But it is to Addison's keener perception and nicer art that we owe most of those subtle and humorous touches of characterization which make the portrait so real and so human. There is more of movement and incident in Steele's papers, and there is more of sentiment. It is Steele, for example, who tells the story of the Journey to London, and recounts the adventures of the Coverley ancestry; it is Steele, too, who has most to say of the widow. But in the best papers by Addison, like the Visit to the Abbey or the Evening at the Theater, there is hardly a line that does not reveal, in speech, or manner, or notion, some peculiarity of the kindly gentleman we know and love so well. If Steele outlined the portrait, it was left for Addison to elaborate it. Moreover, a careful reading of the papers will show that Steele's conception of the character was slightly different from Addison's. Steele's Sir Roger is whimsical and sentimental, but a man of good sense; not only beloved but respected. Addison dwells rather upon the old knight's rusticity, his old-fashioned, patriarchal notions of society, his ignorance of the town, his obsolete but kindly prejudices. The truth is that in Addison's portrait there is always a trace of covert satire upon the narrow conservatism of the Tory country gentleman of his day. Addison's Sir Roger is amiable and humorous; but he does not represent the party of intelligence and progress—he is not a Whig.

Yet there are no real inconsistencies in the character of Sir Roger. His whimsical humor, his sentiment, his credulity, his benevolence, his amiable though obstinate temper, are all combined in a personality so convincing that we must always think of him as an actual contemporary of the men who created him. He is the typical conservative English country gentleman of the Queen Anne time, not taking kindly to new ideas, but sturdy, honest, order-loving, of large heart and simple manners. To such men as he England owes the permanence of much that is best in her institutions and her national life. As one walks through Westminster Abbey to-day, listening to the same chattering verger that conducted Sir Roger—he has been going his rounds ever since—one almost expects to see again the knight sitting down in the coronation chair, or leaning on Edward Third's sword while he tells the discomfited guide the whole story of the Black Prince out of Baker's Chronicle. If, indeed, we try in any way to bring back to imagination the life of that bygone age, Sir Roger is sure to come to mind at once, at the assizes, at Vauxhall, or, best of all, at home in the country. He is part of that life; as real to our thought as Swift or Marlborough, or as Steele or Addison themselves.

Unit 10 (b): *The Spectator* No. 2

The second issue of *The Spectator* was published on Friday, March 2, 1711. This particular entry, like many others, begins with a quotation, originally written in Latin by Juvenal-"**Ast Alii sex/ Et plures uno conclamant ore**". Translated in English, it reads: "The other six, however, unanimously cry out to the mouth of one". This epigraph gives a hint of the subject matter to be broached in the essay. In this particular periodical essay by Richard Steele the members of the eponymous 'Spectator Club' are introduced to early 18th century readers. Notably, each of the characters represented a particular section of contemporary English society. But this introduction to the characters is not accomplished in a dramatic fashion. On the contrary, Steele gives a humorous description of each character revealing the quaintness of one or the idiosyncrasy of another. In this endeavour he makes use of the range and diversity of English rhetorical figures to the fullest.

The first in his list is Sir Roger de Coverley-a country gentleman of 'ancient descent'. He is well known to all the residents of Worcestershire. They know the qualities inherent in him thoroughly. His primary quality is that of gentility, which rouses among readers the expectation of adherence to a set code of behavior, sanctioned by tradition. But in the same breath, Steele refers to the presence of certain 'peculiarities' that Sir Roger is possessed of. Notwithstanding these peculiarities in his behavior, nobody considers them as serious drawbacks, since his virtues outdo the peculiarities. In fact, the essayist is of the opinion that the aforementioned "singularities" in the behavior of Sir Roger are nothing but manifestations of his "good sense". Sir Roger himself does not feel the urgency to rectify his behavior, since he considers the conventions of society, "the manner of the world" to be at fault. But whatever he does, is done with a purity of heart, unconfined by the conventions of the world. Therefore, his readiness to help fellow beings please all without exception. A country-gentleman, Sir Roger visits London from time to time, in keeping with the modes of 18th century life and manners. On these occasions, he takes up residence the fashionable Soho Square locality of London, which further proves his innate joviality of spirit. While the initial description of Sir Roger seems to be suffering from a hint of dullness, Steele enlivens his description by bringing in a purported history of failed romantic interest, in the past life of Sir Roger. Steele mentions that in his youth Sir Roger had been smitten by the beauty of a widow from a neighbouring county. But courting of the lady had come to naught. Steele claims with authority that it was this very incident which had shaken to the core the jovial young gentleman that Sir Roger in his youth had been, altering his habits and disposition forever. Steele recounts how the heartbreak took Sir Roger close to one and a half years to get over with. The permanent scar it left on his psyche manifests itself to this date in his curious sense of dress, as he continues to wear the outmoded coat-and-doublet which had been in fashion during the year he was wooing the aforementioned lady. While the readers are still in awe of Sir Roger's unwavering dedication, the narrator nonchalantly informs us that since the incident dented his confidence, Sir Roger's desires have become so much humbler that he often indulges in casual liaisons with beggars and gypsies. Such indiscriminate commingling with social inferiors is unexpected from a gentleman belonging to the stature and repute of Sir Roger. Moreover, in the rigid class hierarchy of England, such behavior would have been considered especially reprehensible as it attempts to unnaturally bridge the carefully-maintained gap between the gentry and the populace. Sir Roger, truthful as he is, makes no secret of the fact, but his virtues are so strong that his friends laugh them away. His amicability, humor and humility make him a favorite everywhere.

Steele then goes on to describe the second member of the Club citing his seniority as the rationale behind the order of arrangement. The epithets Steele employs to designate him are

worthy of attention-'esteem', 'authority', 'probity', 'wit' and 'understanding'. A careful analysis of the terminology reveals the fact that Steele continues with the characteristic of gentility which Sir Roger had also shared. This second member is a lawyer by profession and this obvious reason prevents Steele from revealing his name. This unnamed second member's character is another study in contradictions- he is an esteemed lawyer but his interests lie in Philosophy and drama. While those embroiled in the province of law are considered the epitome of worldliness, this second member of the Spectator Club represents a curious blend of worldliness and refinery, by cultivating philosophy and drama, sans profit motive. The legal experts from antiquity (such as Longinus and Aristotle) are well known to him, but he hardly ever discusses legal experts of renown (such as Littleton or Cooke). However, Steele cautiously reminds that his fascination for Philosophy and Drama does not, in any way, come in the way of his professional acumen, exemplified by his knowledge of the 'Orations of Demosthenes and Tully'. Society at large has no knowledge of his Wit, since he does not go about parading them. It is only the circle of his intimate friends that acknowledges the range and variety of his Wit. Commenting on his taste for books, Steele finds it "a little too just for the age", hinting at a level of frankness and virtuosity in this unnamed lawyer, which is rare in contemporary society. Moreover, his infallible punctuality (as testified by the regularity of his habits and haunts) makes him an oddly likeable character. He is also an impressive conversationalist, precisely because of the fact that his interests are not matters of business. Being highly placed and looked upon with respect, his presence in the theatre-house is noted by the actors on stage, who try to give their best and thus impress him.

The third member of the Club is an illustrious merchant by the name of Sir Andrew Freeport, who is as opinionated as the previous two. However Steele characterizes him as an industrious, tireless and highly experienced individual. In short, he is the epitome of the British entrepreneur in the 18th century. Contemporary England thrived due to its scientific and technological innovations which resulted in quicker and greater production. The annexation of foreign lands under the British crown assisted this process. However, Steele opines against any attempt at territorial annexation through war and believes that it were more smoothly done through union of commercial interest. Subtly, Steele presents the English trader of the day as an exemplary, calm and composed individual who is not trigger-happy. On the contrary, he is a lover of peace who intends to untangle the knots of his life through common-sense and rationality. He prefers diligence to valour and his speech abounds in aphorisms of frugality. The narrator is all praise for Sir Freeport's strongly held convictions, his unaffected nature and his cool-headed practical approach to things in life. Besides, making acquaintance with him is a pleasing experience since

The person described next is Captain Sentry. Like the two earlier character sketches, Steele once again gives a summary of the chief characteristics of the person whose character sketch he is setting out to present. In the case of Captain Sentry the defining features that distinguish him from the rest are "bravery, perception and humility. His modesty overpowering as he attempts to evade public attention. Steele describes Captain Sentry as having been earlier employed in the army in a rank no less than that of Captain. During his years of service, Steele recounts, the Captain had given several proofs of his mettle However he willfully gave up the soldier's profession since he couldn't master the art of court intrigues so necessary for making progress in that field. Steele, on behalf of the Captain, laments that nothing in British society is obtained through honesty and perseverance. Presently he looks after his own small estate and he is also the next heir to Sir Roger. Though Captain Sentry hates exhibiting his good qualities, he believes in the maxim: "It is civil cowardice to be backward in asserting what you ought to expect, as it is

a military Fear to be slow in attacking when it is your Duty." The narrator exhorts this outspokenness in the manner of this ex-soldier.

While the characters described so far (notwithstanding their idiosyncrasies) are steadfast in one way or another, the next-an aged gentleman named Will Honeycomb, is the very embodiment of the fashionable rake. Steele humorously mentions this aspect when he says: "But that our Society may not appear a Set of Humourists unacquainted with the Gallantries and Pleasures of the Age, we have among us the gallant Will Honeycomb". Though belonging to the upper strata of society and most obviously a gentleman, the epithet "gallant" sticks to the person of Mr Honeycomb. Steele's penchant for naming characters broadly on the basis of their predominant humour is observable in this instance, too. An easy inheritor of wealth, Mr Honeycomb seems to have resisted the strains of ageing, as he continues to look handsome. Steele classifies Mr Honeycomb as a member of that group of gentlemen who command respect and popularity among the female coterie. As observable with old men and women worldwide, Mr Honeycomb can recount incidents and facts from his distant youth. Since he is a rake, Steele humorously posits, he can recount the origins of specific fashions. He is candid about his several affairs. While other old men of his age keep referring to politics, he keeps referring to fashions. The narrator comments with a sly innuendo: "…his Character, where Women are not concerned, he is an honest worthy Man." Whenever he participates in conversation, his manner of speaking and the subjects he brings up serve to enliven the conversation. His several anecdotes reveal how certain society ladies of his youth, now better-known as the "Mother of the lordsuch-a-one", etc, were smitten by the gallantry of some lord from his distant youth. Such conversations might prove to be extremely uncomfortable for ladies now commanding respect and in their maturity.

The last person named is a rare visitor and belongs to the clergy. He does not assert himself like the members described so far. On the contrary, he lends a keener ear to listen to what the others have to say. But once he gets his opportunity to speak, he speaks with authority and earnestness. His discourses mainly concern divinity, which is in sharp contrast to the other members who delight in worldly affairs.

Unit 10(c): *The Spectator* No 10

The 10th entry in the *Spectator* papers, composed by Joseph Addison, was published on Monday, 12th March, 1711. Like most of the other essays in *The Spectator*, this particular entry also commences with an epigraph-this time from Virgil: "Non aliter quàm qui adverso vix flumine lembum/ Remigiis subigit: si brachia fortè remisit" which when translated into simple English, reads-"Boat rowing against the stream with a different well as those who do not/ Oars: if the forces of chance".

This essay talks about the neoclassical idea of culture and the very aim with which *The Spectator* functions. Addison begins by giving a thorough estimate of the handsome sales figures of his newly begun periodical. Besides giving us a hint of *The Spectator*'s success soon after it was begun, this intial description also tells us a lot about the popularity of periodical publications among the general public in Addison's day. Grateful to all those who subscribe to his paper, he promises to make their reading a pleasurable experience. His vanity is to be seen in the manner in which he describes his readers as superior to "the thoughtless Herd of their ignorant and unattentive Brethren" .Addison suggests that while those who do not subscribe to his paper occupy their time with fruitless endeavours and thoughtless activities, those who do subscribe to

his paper substantially add to their store of 'cultural capital'. Explicitly Addison states that he aims to "enliven Morality with Wit, and to temper Wit with Morality". Thus Addison can be seen here an interventionist, who attempts to engineer morality among the reader-cum-citizens of the day. But being a shrewd writer he understands that such an attempt must be made in a subtle way, since dry moralizings would never attain the desired object. Therefore, he must "enliven Morality with Wit", while avoiding the opposite extreme, as suggested by the rejoinder: "temper Wit with Morality". Lamenting the "vice and folly" which had engulfed many of his contemporaries, Addison promises to safeguard his readers from these. Alluding to Socrates' mythical act of bringing Philosophy to earth from Heaven, Addison pledges to bring through his periodical "Philosophy out of Closets and Libraries, Schools and Colleges" into the public domain. Therefore Addison's intention is decidedly democratizing. In the late 17th and early 18th century, with the widespread availability of secular and rational education, judging who would be the arbiter of high culture had become a hotly debated topic. While social prestige and therefore ability had been traditionally accorded to the gentry-hereditary inheritors of property and prestige, the recipients of liberal and technical education had empowered the middle classes sufficiently to enable them to challenge the conventional superiority of the aristocracy. Addison's stated purpose of bringing philosophic discourse out of limited availability and into the domain of mass culture would further the democratic impulse further. Thus having determined to make the diversion of reading his paper a fruitful one for his readers, Addison also aims to dispel Vice and Folly from their minds (though he laments that these have come to characterize the Age he lives in).

Addison also hints at the beginning of the habit that we in modern times take for granted-reading the day's newspaper while sipping our morning tea. He looks to engage the minds of his readers early in the morning, even as they are sipping the beverage and biting into the first morsels of their breakfast. Manifesting his erudition, Addison next alludes to Sir Francis Bacon-who had likened a worthwhile book to the mythical serpent of Moses that engulfed the Egyptians. Addison says his endeavour is significantly humbler, since he neither wishes nor aims to make other prints extinct through the proliferation of his own. Even so, Joseph Addison berates the other publications of his day as merely presenting readers with fables of foreign lands, or serving to increase animosity about the other countries.

In the next paragraph, he ironically calls himself an idle observer and likens his lot to many in society who have considerable wealth but nothing worthwhile to do on a daily basis:

> "the Fraternity of Spectators who live in the World without having anything to do in it; and either by the Affluence of their Fortunes, or Laziness of their Dispositions, have no other Business with the rest of Mankind but to look upon them."

It is to be noted that Addison attempts to sharpen the critical faculties of that section of his readers which considers "the world as theatre" by infusing them with the right judgment. For people who are "altogether unfurnish'd with Ideas, till the Business and Conversation of the Day has supplied them" Addison claims his paper to be especially valuable. With its help they can stop relying on hearsay, rumours and illogical thought processes that obstruct the sharpening of critical faculties. This is Addison's euphemistic expression of confidence regarding the superiority of his publication.

Besides, Addison feels that his periodical would be of special service to the fair sex who (he feels) have nothing more than superficial chores to perform (mostly dressing, beautifying themselves, etc). Though Addison concedes that there are women who do perform more

momentous and worthwhile activities, one can sense Addison's misogyny coming to the fore here. For the rest, reading of this paper regularly would do immense good.
Last but not the least, Addison takes an ironic jibe at his 'friends and well-wishers' who doubt the longevity of Addison's successful running of this paper. For them, Addison makes the promise to stop publication as soon he fails to maintain adequate standards or realizes that his works are becoming dull.

Unit 11: Introduction to Samuel Johnson and *The Rambler* essays

Samuel Johnson: A Short Biographical Sketch

Samuel Johnson was the son of Michael Johnson, a bookseller, and his wife, Sarah. From childhood he suffered from a number of physical afflictions. By his own account, he was born "almost dead," and he early contracted scrofula (tuberculosis of the lymphatic glands). Because of a popular belief that the sovereign's touch was able to cure scrofula (which, for that reason, was also called the king's evil), he was taken to London at the age of 30 months and touched by the queen, whose gold "touch piece" he kept about him for the rest of his life. This was succeeded by various medical treatments that left him with disfiguring scars on his face and neck. He was nearly blind in his left eye and suffered from highly noticeable tics that may have been indications of Tourette syndrome. Johnson was also strong, vigorous, and, after a fashion, athletic. He liked to ride, walk, and swim, even in later life. He was tall and became huge.

In 1717 he entered grammar school in Lichfield. In 1726 Johnson visited his cousin, the urbane Reverend Cornelius Ford in Stourbridge, Worcestershire, who may have provided a model for him. In 1728 Johnson entered Pembroke College, Oxford. He stayed only 13 months, until December 1729, because he lacked the funds to continue. n the following year Johnson became undermaster at Market Bosworth grammar school, a position made untenable by the overbearing and boorish Sir Wolstan Dixie, who controlled appointments. With only £20 inheritance from his father, Johnson left his position with the feeling that he was escaping prison. After failing in his quest for another teaching position, he joined his friend Hector in Birmingham. In 1732 or 1733 he published some essays in *The Birmingham Journal*. Dictating to Hector, he translated into English Joachim Le Grand's translation of the Portuguese Jesuit Jerome Lobo's *A Voyage to Abyssinia*, an account of a Jesuit missionary expedition. Published in 1735, this work shows signs of the mature Johnson. In 1735 Johnson married Elizabeth Porter, a widow 20 years his senior. Convinced that his parents' marital unhappiness was caused by his mother's want of learning, he would not follow their example, choosing instead a woman whom he found both attractive and intelligent. His wife's marriage settlement enabled him to open a school in Edial, near Lichfield, the following year. While at Edial, Johnson began his historical tragedy *Irene*, which dramatizes the love of Sultan Mahomet (Mehmed II) for the lovely Irene, a Christian slave captured in Constantinople. The school soon proved a failure, and he left for London in 1737. In 1738 Johnson began his long association with *The Gentleman's Magazine*, often considered the first modern magazine. He soon contributed poetry and then prose, including panegyrics on Edward Cave, the magazine's proprietor, and another contributor, the learned Elizabeth Carter. In 1738 and 1739 he published a series of satiric works that attacked the government of Sir Robert Walpole and even the Hanoverian monarchy: *London* (his first major poem), *Marmor Norfolciense*, and *A Compleat Vindication of the Licensers of the Stage*. *London* is an "imitation" of the Roman satirist Juvenal's third satire. Thales, the poem's main speaker, bears some

resemblance to the poet Richard Savage, of whom Johnson knew and with whom he may have become friendly at this time. Before he leaves the corrupt metropolis for Wales, Thales rails against the pervasive deterioration of London (and English) life, evident in such ills as masquerades, atheism, the excise tax, and the ability of foreign nations to offend against "English honour" with impunity. The most famous line in the poem (and the only one in capitals) is: "SLOW RISES WORTH, BY POVERTY DEPRESSED," which may be taken as Johnson's motto at this time. In 1739 Johnson published a translation and annotation of the Swiss philosopher Jean-Pierre de Crousaz's *Commentary* on Pope's philosophical poem *An Essay on Man*. About this time Johnson tried again to obtain a position as a schoolteacher. His translations and magazine writings barely supported him; a letter to Cave is signed "impransus," signifying that he had gone without dinner. Despite his claim that "no man but a blockhead ever wrote except for money," he never made a hard bargain with a bookseller and often received relatively little payment, even for large projects. From 1741 to 1744 Johnson's most substantial contribution to *The Gentleman's Magazine* was a series of speeches purporting to represent the actual debates in the House of Commons.

In the early 1740s Johnson continued his strenuous work for *The Gentleman's Magazine*; collaborated with William Oldys, antiquary and editor, on a catalog of the great Harleian Library; helped Dr. Robert James, his Lichfield schoolfellow, with *A Medicinal Dictionary*; and issued proposals for an edition of Shakespeare. His *Miscellaneous Observations on the Tragedy of Macbeth* (1745), intended as a preliminary sample of his work, was his first significant Shakespeare criticism. In 1746 he wrote *The Plan of a Dictionary of the English Language* and signed a contract for *A Dictionary of the English Language*. His major publication of this period was *An Account of the Life of Mr. Richard Savage, Son of the Earl Rivers* (1744).
In 1749 Johnson published *The Vanity of Human Wishes*, his most impressive poem as well as the first work published with his name. It is a panoramic survey of the futility of human pursuit of greatness and happiness. Like *London*, the poem is an imitation of one of Juvenal's satires, but it emphasizes the moral over the social and political themes of Juvenal. Some of the definitions Johnson later entered under "vanity" in his *Dictionary* suggest the range of meaning of his title, including "emptiness," "uncertainty," "fruitless desire, fruitless endeavour," "empty pleasure; vain pursuit; idle show; unsubstantial enjoyment; petty object of pride," and "arrogance." He portrays historical figures, mainly from England and continental Europe, alternating them with human types, to show that all are subject to the same disappointment of their desires. *The Vanity of Human Wishes* is imbued with the Old Testament message of Ecclesiastes that "all is vanity" and replaces Juvenal's Stoic virtues with the Christian virtue of "patience." The poem surpasses any of Johnson's other poems in its richness of imagery and powerful conciseness. Johnson's connections to the theatre in these years included writing several prologues, one for Garrick's farce *Lethe* in 1740 and one for the opening of the Drury Lane Theatre. Garrick, now its manager, returned the favours. Early in 1749 Johnson's play *Irene* was at last performed. Thanks to Garrick's production, which included expensive costumes, an excellent cast (including Garrick himself), and highly popular afterpieces for the last three performances, the tragedy ran a respectable nine nights.

With *The Rambler* (1750–52), a twice-weekly periodical, Johnson entered upon the most successful decade of his career. He wrote over 200 numbers, and stories abound of his finishing an essay while the printer's boy waited at the door; in his last essay he confessed to "the anxious

employment of a periodical writer." The essays cover a wide range of subjects. A large number of them appropriately stress daily realities; others are devoted to literature, including criticism and the theme of authorship. Whatever their topic, Johnson intended his essays to "inculcate wisdom or piety" in conformity with Christianity. In tone these essays are far more serious than those of his most important predecessor, Joseph Addison, published in *The Spectator* (1711–12; 1714). Johnson himself ranked them highly among his achievements, commenting "My other works are wine and water; but my *Rambler* is pure wine." Johnson's wife Elizabeth was a great admirer of *The Rambler* essays and incidentally died just three days after the last issue of *The Rambler* was published.

A Dictionary of the English Language was published in two volumes in 1755, six years later than planned but remarkably quickly for so extensive an undertaking. The degree of master of arts, conferred on him by the University of Oxford for his Rambler essays and the Dictionary, was proudly noted on the title page. Johnson henceforth would be known in familiar 18th-century style as "Dictionary Johnson" or "The Rambler." There had been earlier English dictionaries, but none on the scale of Johnson's. In addition to giving etymologies, not the strong point of Johnson and his contemporaries, and definitions, in which he excelled, Johnson illustrated usage with quotations drawn almost entirely from writing from the Elizabethan period to his own time, though few living authors were quoted.

From 1756 onward Johnson wrote harsh criticism and satire of England's policy in the Seven Years' War (1756–63) fought against France (and others) in North America, Europe, and India. This work appeared initially in a new journal he was editing, *The Literary Magazine*, where he also published his biography of the Prussian king, Frederick II (the Great). He also contributed important book reviews when reviewing was still in its infancy. His bitingly sardonic dissection of a dilettantish and complacent study of the nature of evil and of human suffering, *A Free Enquiry into the Nature and Origin of Evil*, by the theological writer Soame Jenyns, may well be the best review in English during the 18th century. Johnson's busiest decade was concluded with yet another series of essays, called *The Idler*. Lighter in tone and style than those of *The Rambler*, its 104 essays appeared from 1758 to 1760 in a weekly newspaper, *The Universal Chronicle*. While not admired as greatly as *The Rambler*, Johnson's last essay series contained many impressive numbers.

Johnson's essays included numerous short fictions, but his only long fiction is *Rasselas* (originally published as *The Prince of Abissinia: A Tale*), which he wrote in 1759, during the evenings of a single week, in order to be able to pay for the funeral of his mother. This "Oriental tale," a popular form at the time, explores and exposes the futility of the pursuit of happiness, a theme that links it to *The Vanity of Human Wishes*. Prince Rasselas, weary of life in the Happy Valley, where ironically all are dissatisfied, escapes with his sister and the widely traveled poet Imlac to experience the world and make a thoughtful "choice of life." Yet their journey is filled with disappointment and disillusionment. They examine the lives of men in a wide range of occupations and modes of life in both urban and rural settings—rulers and shepherds, philosophers, scholars, an astronomer, and a hermit. They discover that all occupations fail to bring satisfaction. Rulers are deposed. The shepherds exist in grubby ignorance, not pastoral ease. The Stoic's philosophy proves hollow when he experiences personal loss. The hermit, miserable in his solitude, leaves his cell for Cairo. In his "conclusion in which nothing is concluded," Johnson satirizes the wish-fulfilling daydreams in which all indulge. His major characters resolve to substitute the "choice of eternity" for the "choice of life," and to return to Abyssinia (but not the Happy Valley) on their circular journey.

Johnson never again had to write in order to raise funds. In 1762 he was awarded a pension of £300 a year, "not," as Lord Bute, the prime minister, told him, "given you for anything you are to do, but for what you have done." This in all likelihood meant not only his literary accomplishments but also his opposition to the Seven Years' War, which the new king, George III, and his prime minister had also opposed.

In 1763 Johnson met the 22-year-old James Boswell, who would go on to make him the subject of the best-known and most highly regarded biography in English. The first meeting with this libertine son of a Scottish laird and judge was not auspicious, but Johnson quickly came to appreciate the ingratiating and impulsive young man. Boswell kept detailed journals, published only in the 20th century, which provided the basis for his biography of Johnson and also form his own autobiography.
Johnson participated actively in clubs. In 1764 he and his close friend Sir Joshua Reynolds founded The Club (later known as The Literary Club), which became famous for the distinction of its members. In 1765 Johnson established a friendship that soon enabled him to call another place "home." Henry Thrale, a wealthy brewer and member of Parliament for Southwark, and his lively and intelligent wife, Hester, opened their country house at Streatham to him and invited him on trips to Wales and, in 1775, to France, his only tour outside Great Britain. Their friendship and hospitality gave the 56-year-old Johnson a new interest in life. Following her husband's death in 1781 and her marriage to her children's music master, Gabriel Piozzi, Hester Thrale's and Johnson's close friendship came to an end. His letters to Mrs. Thrale, remarkable for their range and intimacy, helped make him one of the great English letter writers.

The pension Johnson had received in 1762 had freed him from the necessity of writing for a living, but it had not released him from his obligation to complete the Shakespeare edition, for which he had taken money from subscribers. Contemporary poet Charles Churchill satirized Johnson for the delay in bringing out the volume. The edition finally appeared in eight volumes in 1765. Johnson edited and annotated the text and wrote a preface, which is his greatest work of literary criticism. As editor and annotator he sought to establish the text, freed from later corruptions, and to explain diction that by then had become obsolete and obscure. Johnson's approach was to immerse himself in the books Shakespeare had read—his extensive reading for his *Dictionary* eased this task—and to examine the early editions as well as those of his 18th-century predecessors. His annotations are often shrewd, though his admiration reveals at times different concerns from those of some of his contemporaries and of later scholars.

In his "Preface" Johnson addressed several critical issues. For one, he vigorously defends Shakespeare against charges of failing to adhere to the Neoclassical doctrine of the dramatic unities of time, place, and action. Johnson alertly observes that time and place are subservient to the mind: since the audience does not confound stage action with reality, it has no trouble with a shift in scene from Rome to Alexandria. Some critics had made similar points before, but Johnson's defense was decisive. He also questions the need for purity of dramatic genre. In defending Shakespearian tragicomedy against detractors, he asserts that "there is always an appeal open from criticism to nature." Echoing Hamlet, Johnson claims that Shakespeare merits praise, above all, as "the poet of nature; the poet that holds up to his readers a faithful mirror of manners and of life." He goes on to say that "in the writings of other poets a character is too often an individual: in those of Shakespeare it is commonly a species" and that "Shakespeare has no heroes; his scenes are occupied only by men." These comments inveigh

against the rigid notions of decorum upheld by critics, such as Voltaire, who would not allow kings to be drunkards or senators to be buffoons. Johnson's concern for "general nature" means that he is not much interested in accidental traits of a character, such as the "Romanness" of Julius Caesar or Brutus, but in traits that are common to all humanity.

In 1765 Johnson received an honorary Doctor of Laws degree from Trinity College, Dublin, and 10 years later he was awarded the Doctor of Civil Laws from the University of Oxford. He never referred to himself as Dr. Johnson, though a number of his contemporaries did, and Boswell's consistent use of the title in *The Life of Samuel Johnson, LL.D.* made it popular. The completion of the Shakespeare edition left Johnson free to write by choice, and one such choice was his secret collaboration with Robert Chambers, professor of English law at the University of Oxford from 1766 to 1773. While it is difficult to determine just how much of Chambers' lectures Johnson may have written, his help was clearly substantial, and the skilled editor was valued by the dilatory professor.

In the early 1770s Johnson wrote a series of political pamphlets supporting positions favourable to the government but in keeping with his own views. These have often appeared reactionary to posterity but are worth considering on their own terms. *The False Alarm* (1770) supported the resolution of the House of Commons not to readmit one of its members, the scandalous John Wilkes, who had been found guilty of libel. The pamphlet ridiculed those who thought the case precipitated a constitutional crisis. *Thoughts on the Late Transactions Respecting Falkland's Islands* (1771) argued against a war with Spain over who should become "the undisputed lords of tempest-beaten barrenness." This pamphlet, his most-admired and least-attacked, disputes the "feudal gabble" of the earl of Chatham and the complaints of the pseudonymous political controversialist who wrote the "Junius" letters.

The Patriot (1774) was designed to influence an upcoming election. Johnson had become disillusioned in the 1740s with those members of the political opposition who attacked the government on "patriotic" grounds only to behave similarly once in power. This essay examines expressions of false patriotism and includes in that category justifications of "the ridiculous claims of American usurpation," the subject of his longest tract, *Taxation No Tyranny* (1775). The title summarizes his position opposing the American Continental Congress, which in 1774 had passed resolutions against taxation by England, perceived as oppression, especially since the colonies had no representation in Parliament. Johnson argues that the colonists had not been denied representation but rather had willingly left the country where they had votes, that England had expended vast sums on the colonies, and that they were rightly required to support the home country. The tract became notorious in the colonies, contributing considerably to the caricature of Johnson the arch-Tory. Yet this view is too simplistic. His rhetorical question to the colonists "How is it that we hear the loudest yelps for liberty from the drivers of Negroes?" can be traced in large part to a principled and consistent stance against colonial oppression.

In 1773 Johnson set forth on a journey to the Hebrides. Given his age, ailments, and purported opinion of the Scots, Johnson may have seemed a highly unlikely traveler to this distant region, but in the opening pages of his *A Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland*(1775) he confessed to a long-standing desire to make the trip and the inducement of having Boswell as his companion. He was propelled by a curiosity to see strange places and study modes of life unfamiliar to him. His book, a superb contribution to 18th-century travel literature, combines historical information with what would now be considered sociological and anthropological observations about the lives of common people.Johnson's last great work, *Prefaces,*

Biographical and Critical, to the Works of the English Poets was conceived modestly as short prefatory notices to an edition of English poetry. When Johnson was approached by some London booksellers in 1777 to write what he thought of as "little Lives, and little Prefaces, to a little edition of the English Poets," he readily agreed. He loved anecdote and "the biographical part" of literature best of all. The project, however, expanded in scope; Johnson's prefaces alone filled the first 10 volumes (1779–81), and the poetry grew to 56 volumes.
Throughout much of his adult life Johnson suffered from physical ailments as well as depression ("melancholy"). After the loss of two friends, Henry Thrale in 1781 and Robert Levett in 1782, and the conclusion of *The Lives of the Poets*, his health deteriorated. Above all, his chronic bronchitis and "dropsy" (edema), a swelling of his legs and feet, caused great discomfort. In 1783 he suffered a stroke. He died on December 13 and was buried in Westminster Abbey.

Though we know a great deal about Samuel Johnson the empiricist, the cultural anthropologist, the political skeptic, and the gloomy poet, little is known about his role as a moralist. Donald Greene's book *Samuel Johnson* (1970) discusses Johnson the political writer for more than forty pages, but discussion on the 337 essays by Johnson published in *The Rambler* (1750-1752), *The Adventurer* (1753-1754) and *The Idler* (1758-1760) occupy a mere 5 pages in Greene's book. However, in the 2nd half of the 20th century several writers, such as Walter Jackson Bates (in his 1955 book titled The Achievement of Samuel Johnson) have started paying greater critical attention to *The Rambler* in trying to assess Johnson's luminous intelligence more completely.

***The Rambler*: An Introduction**

The Rambler was published on Tuesdays and Saturdays from 1750 to 1752. It was Johnson's most consistent and sustained work in the English language. Though similar in name to preceding publications such as *The Spectator* and *The Tatler*, Johnson made his periodical unique by using a style of prose which differed from that of the time period. The most popular publications of the day were written in the common or colloquial language of the people whereas *The Rambler* was written in elevated prose. As was then common for the type of publication, the subject matter was confined only to the imagination of the author (and the sale of the publication); typically, however, *The Rambler* discussed subjects such as morality, literature, society, politics, and religion. Johnson included quotes and ideas in his publication from Renaissance humanists such as Desiderius Erasmus and René Descartes. His writings in *The Rambler* are considered to be neoclassical.

Older studies of *The Rambler* treat the work as a convenient repository of Johnsonian dicta from which one can deduce "the cornerstones" of his morality. But more recent scholarship points out a cardinal flaw of the older approach, namely that it took no account of the author's apparent and (to some) alarming habit of vacillating, even on issues of great moment, and even within individual essays. Paul Fussell has argued that we can understand *The Rambler* only if we think of Johnson, "caught short at deadline time," "working things out ad hoc from page to page." "Where he cannot resolve inconsistencies, he ignores them," writes Fussell, "where he cannot ignore them, he embraces them. Leopold Damrosch, Jr. detects two "rhetorical modes" in the *Rambler* essays, the first of which is designed "to jolt our complacency by a series of reversals," and the second "to deepen our understanding by a steady progression of reflections which are held together by association more than by logic. Patrick O Flaherty in his essay 'Towards an

Understanding of Johnson's *Rambler*' comments that there are fallacies inherent in the approaches adopted both by Fussell and Damrosch. Flaherty in his essay intends to re-focus attention upon the weighty and complicated purpose behind Johnson's writing.

And Johnson's purpose is clearly visible in *Rambler* 208, where he states that his "principal design" was "to inculcate wisdom or piety. To Johnson it appeared that the knowledge he was leading men towards was the most important kind for them to acquire. He thought that men are placed on earth to learn to learn to do good and avoid evil. Repeatedly in *The Rambler* he advised readers to turn away from "remote and unnecessary subjects" to "moral enquiries" and "the various modes of virtue. In Essay No 320 of *The Rambler* Johnson tries to grapple as honestly as he knows with the problems inherent in leading a moral life in the world of men. This involves probing into the complexities of human motivation and "the labyrinth of complicated passions" (IV, 41) in order to detect and uncover the sources of human error. Johnson repeatedly says that he knows the difficulties of making such a scrutiny of the human heart. In essay after essay he tries to explore the configurations and ramifications of a difficult subject and, quite often, giving the impression of vacillating. He will also be conscious of what he wrote in preceding essays, and he may want to correct or modify views which seem to him in retrospect to have been stated with too much appearance of confidence. Though wealth and power may be possessed by others, only authors possess the power of conferring "the honours of a lasting name" upon their fellow men. Johnson emphasizes that the power brings with it a heavy responsibility, requiring of authors "the most vigilant caution and scrupulous justice."

To uncover some of the other potential sources of ambiguity and inconsistency in The Rambler, we need to look away from particular essays to the moral vision which pervades the work as a whole. Johnson's perception of man's moral life in these essays is generally of something threatened from within and without and maintained only by perpetual vigilance. The vast majority of men, he writes in No. 70, are in "a kind of equipoise between good and ill" and require only "a very small addition of weight" to be moved in one direction or the other. This sense of the precariousness of virtue is strikingly conveyed in The Rambler by a set of three recurring images, each of them commonplace in Christian writing but of interest here in the insistent reinforcement they provide to John- son's theme. The most conspicuous of these images is of the heart (or mind) as a fortress or city under siege. The fortress image occurs often, expressing poetically Johnson's vision of the embattled heart, preyed upon by its own longings and vanities. A similar recurring image is that of the wanderer, trying to walk "with circumspection and steadiness in the right path at an equal distance between the extremes of error, threatened by "snares", "ambush", "asperities" and deceptively comfortable groves that seem irresistibly pleasant. The third recurring image is that of human life as a ship lost on a stormy ocean, subject to the vicissitudes of wind and tide. The more deeply Johnson burrows into human motivations to expose for men the innumerable strategies and vanities which enable them to live with error, the keener this awareness becomes of the frailty of virtue and the closer he is drawn to an extreme fastidiousness. The reader can be forgiven if he thinks at certain points in *The Rambler* that leading a moral life is too risky and toilsome for mere humans.

Thus he advises young people to enter the world with a policy of "prudent distrust," for the "dangers" to which the "converse of mankind" exposes them are "numerous," and "there is no ambition however petty, no wish however absurd, that by indulgence will not be enabled to

overpower the influence of virtue. Such stern morality, verging on over-scrupulousness, is characteristic of the *Rambler*, but it is only one of his two prevailing moods. Modifying and humanizing this severe attitude is another side of Johnson which is also expressed throughout the work. This is Johnson the compassionate and forgiving observer of men. It is this quality of mercy in him which emerges in No. 63 when, after having earlier repeatedly warned readers against the dangers of being dissatisfied and restless, he writes that it is natural for mankind to be restless and that this condition deserves "pity" and may even "admit some excuse". The strict moralist in him more than once warns against wasting time on trifles and ridicules collectors of useless oddities; and yet he also defends such collectors, since "he who does his best, is always to be distinguished from one who does nothing. Alongside warnings about the dangers inherent in deviating from the beaten track in even trivial ways, he can exclaim "what is there which may not be perverted?" and caution readers against "too much" refining their "delicacy". These two halves of Johnson's concerns jostle with one another throughout *The Rambler*.

Death is a subject to which he is obsessively drawn throughout *The Rambler*. According to Johnson every man should ideally begin his day "with a serious reflection that he is born to die." This will destroy "that vehemence of eagerness" after earthly possessions, make us moderate our desires, contract our designs, and at the same time urge us to do well what we know we are capable of doing (No 17).

What we see in *The Rambler* is a moralist who would have men be perfect in conflict with an onlooker who knew the extent of men's imperfection and felt pity for their suffering. Johnson recognized that many of the problems facing his readers were beyond his powers to solve: the heaviness of time, the secret mortifications of defeated hope, the limits placed for whatever reason on the extent of human knowledge. His pity, his habit of withdrawing from unequivocal moral stances within essays and from essay to essay, expresses his unwillingness to make heavier by chastisement the already burdensome life of men. But the habit also shows once again Johnson's recognition of life's irreducible complexity. Johnson looked abroad at the world and saw what any observer must see: that experience cannot be exhausted or explained by formulae; that hope is both therapeutic and deceptive; that prudence is some- times a wise policy, sometimes a foolish one; that suffering is both ennobling and degrading. As Imlac perceived in Rasselas, inconsistencies when imputed to man "may both be true". *The Rambler* mirrors, rather than resolves, this complexity. Johnson's reluctance to try to reduce life to a system also shows humility. To take a "distinct and comprehensive" view of "human life," he admitted candidly, "with all its intricacies of combination and varieties of connection, is beyond the power of mortal intelligence".

Johnson believed that the only cure for pain was palliative, not radical; he felt that life was every- where a state in which there was much to be endured and little to be enjoyed; he thought the desire for happiness in this world is vain, the only true happiness available to man being non-earthly; he believed that man's lot was to suffer. Parts of various Rambler essays can be found to support all of these grim dicta, but a reading of the whole work leaves one with a sense of the utter inadequacy of such phrases to contain the richness and variety of Johnson's commentary. On the whole, despite gloomy interludes, Johnson impresses one as less a despondent, down-at-the-mouth prophet of doom than a humanist thinker, interested in improving the lot of men and advancing civilization.

Unit 12 (a): *The Rambler* No. 4

The 4th number of *The Rambler* papers was published on Saturday, 31 March 1750. In characteristic Johnsonian fashion it begins with an epigraph, this time from Horace, where the Roman lyricist from the age of Augustus Caesar, in his book *Ars Poetica* advocates the fusion of "profit" and "delight".

Johnson begins the essay by looking at the genre of prose fiction, which was gaining popularity in eighteenth century England. Johnson points out that one of the reasons behind the popularity of this genre is the semblance of truth that it exudes, containing interesting accounts of accidents probable in the real world. Moreover the human characters that one encounters in these works of fiction are more or less in keeping with the real personages that surround us in human society.

However realistic these prose narratives may be, they do contain certain elements more properly associated with the genre of romance. The narrative strategy of novelists is such that they arouse and maintain a level of curiosity among the readers without dragging in fanciful elements commonly featured in the genre of romance. Strategies such as epic machinery or 'deus-ex-machina' are rarely, if ever, introduced to extricate heroes from danger. Neither giants, nor knights in shining armour, not even fanciful castles in never-never lands are staples of novels. At this point Johnson alludes to a remark by Scaliger (Italian scholar and physician who employed the techniques and discoveries of Renaissance humanism to defend Aristotelianism against the new learning) on Potanus (likely to be a poet referenced in Scaliger's *Seven Books about Poetry* or *Poetices Libri Septem* of 1591). Scaliger alleges that the poetry of Potanus is full of stock pastoral images featuring lilies, roses, dryads and satyrs. These recur in his poetry time and again, giving the semblance of beauty and artfulness to his works. But Scaliger debates that these are merely props that superficially exult his works without enhancing the core of literariness in them.

Johnson feels genuinely amazed to contemplate how such works featuring stock patterns and strategies could retain popular acclaim for such a long duration. However, the continued acceptability of such strategies among readers ensures writers' adherence to these tried and tested techniques. Quoting Horace once again, Johnson clarifies that readers' persistent acceptance places "a greater burden on the less of forgiveness". In fact readers have become so accustomed to these strategies that they can trace the slightest deviations from these norms, if and when writers introduce innovations. Referring to an incident in the life of ancient Greek painter Apelles, Johnson reminds how a shoemaker once censured the former for ill-executing a slipper in one of his paintings. Through this reference Johnson intends to emphasize upon the point that those who have come to recognize a particular form as the standard become highly sensitive to any deviations from the norm.

Returning to the topic of contemporary novelists, Johnson states that compliance to the tastes of readers is not the chief concern of writers. Novelists of Johnson's day pandered chiefly to the tastes of young impressionable readers who considered the novelistic discourse as predominantly moralistic. According to Johnson novelists take full advantage of this fact to impress upon the pliant minds of their readers "every false suggestion and partial account". One cannot help notice how Johnson carefully builds his argument, to subvert the authority novelists wield in the public sphere of Johnson's day.

Next Johnson reminds us by referring to an unnamed ancient authority on writers and their responsibilities, how every writer should be careful in presenting their material in the public

domain, especially when the readers concerned are young. This is because young readers being impressionable are susceptible to "unjust prejudices, perverse opinions, and incongruous combinations of images".

Romances, which predominated in an earlier era, featured incidents so distant from the intercourse of daily life that readers were safe from imbibing values from these texts and applying them in their personal and social lives. Readers were free to amuse themselves with the ups and downs in the fates of "heroes and …traitors, deliverers and persecutors" without running the risk of being influenced by them adversely. The characters of romance acted upon the basis of a value system intrinsic to the make-believe world of romance, lying outside the aegis of lived human reality. But even romances were read voraciously by the youth, whose impressionable minds were susceptible to look upon the heroes of romance as idols and the travails they faced and overcame heroically as admirable.

Given the immense power of example, which readers are likely to emulate, Johnson opines that they are more potent that dry instructions of morality or words of advice. Therefore, Johnson would have writers of fictional narratives choose incidents in such a manner that only the best and morally superior incidents be allowed to feature in their works. This would ensure that even if readers are swayed by their attractiveness and try to emulate such fantastic deeds, they would be emulating virtue rather than vice. Johnson sounds like an apostle of neoclassic decorum in these lines.

Next, Johnson points out how authors stand at an advantageous position since they are at liberty to pick and choose which incidents they would feature in their narratives and which ones they would omit. With regard to this he compares writers to a diamond; diamonds may be artfully polished and placed strategically in order to maximize their luster. Similarly authors may so choose material and arrange them that attention of the readers may be attracted and maintained suitably.

Johnson, following the neoclassic school, reminds that imitation of nature is the ultimate aim of art. But Johnson places a caveat on this dictum by claiming that only those parts of nature should be preferably imitated which bring about an affinity towards virtue in the minds of readers. Though representing life in general, art would be gainfully employed only if those sections of life are imitated which are neither "discoloured by passion", nor "deformed by wickedness". Johnson fails to discover any use in such descriptions of life which paint the world in profligate colours. Thus Johnson considers it unwise to portray the entirety of mankind as a mirror in art and literature.

Rather, while describing men and manners, such accounts should ideally be omitted, which would rather "make men cunning than good". However, even if such details must be provided in fictional accounts, proper care need be taken by the authors to portray them in a negative light, so that readers may learn to distinguish good from evil, the imitable from the disreputable. In other words, the purpose of literature would be truly served if the authors take proper care, thus infusing in readers the ability to identify and segregate that part of human behavior which must be shunned. Johnson the moralist predominates here once again.

Johnson says that there are several writers who so mingle the reprehensible and the imitable that good and evil lose their distinctive qualities. In such cases neither does vice remain abhorrent, nor does virtue retain its merit. Johnson here reminds us that in practical life we are likely to meet people who are "splendidly wicked", whose crimes are suitably hidden by the gloss of charisma. Johnson finds such people as agents of corruption in every age. However,

Johnson finds that such instances are exceptional and must be omitted from descriptions, as far as practicable.

Johnson in the concluding paragraph admits that certain virtues are inalienably connected to their corresponding faults and one cannot be mentioned without mentioning the other. In this regard Johnson quotes from an observation of Jonathan Swift, to conclude that men are "grateful in the same degree as they are resentful."

Unit 12 (b): *The Rambler* No. 60

The 60th essay of *The Rambler* papers was published on October 13, 1750. It begins with two epigraphs-one by Horace and the other by Francis. The one by Horace, if translated into plain English, reads: "what is fair, what is foul, what is helpful, what is not, more plainly and better than Chrysippus[1] or Crantor[2]?" The second one by Philip Francis exults the work of the Greek poet Homer, whose poetry, he claims, combines "the beautiful and the base", and assimilates vice and virtue more fruitfully than all the "sober sages of the schools".

Johnson begins his essay by emphasizing upon the role of the imagination in evoking empathy for the others. The power of the imagination is so great that it transports the reader momentarily from his present, real existence to the imagined locus of the person whose ecstasy or vicissitude he is reading about. This power of the imagination which thus transports lies nascent in the mind of the reader and may only be unlocked by a writer of supreme capability. When we read historical accounts featuring the rise of fall of empires, we are hardly ever led to empathize with the fate of their kings and emperors. Whatever little interest is evoked comes not because we empathize with the human actors on the stage of life, but because we are dazzled by their glamour and grandeur or appalled by their crookedness. On the contrary when one reads a tale of love, even the mind of one generally accustomed to worldly pursuits starts fluttering in hope. Therefore, Johnson comes to the decision that it is only the lives of individual beings that are successful in arousing genuine interest amongst readers. Thence, Johnson reaches the conclusion that the form of the biography is the only one "worthy of cultivation". The biography may be considered a particularized historical narrative chiefly focusing on the trajectory of a single person's fate, as opposed to generalized history; it is precisely because of this reason that the former attracts us irresistibly, while the effect of the latter remains inane. Historical narratives (other than biography) involve the fates of too many individuals and include too many incidents. Therefore the reader fails to draw any useful moral lesson applicable to his life as an individual. Moreover, quoting the Roman historian Pliny, Johnson shows us how the quotidian incidents in the lives of commoners differ from the momentous events described in the narratives of history.

Johnson opines that the life of every human being, apart from the obvious similarities among them, contains something or the other that is unique-since every human being is different from the other. Therefore, there is always something to learn from the life of each individual. However, this individuality also contains a universality since despite dissimilarities, every human being is buoyed by hope, cribbed by fear and doubt, swayed by love and often trapped by desire and seduction.

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[1] Chrysippus of Soli was a Greek Stoic philosopher (and a student of the Stoic School of Cleanthes), who excelled in logic, the theory of knowledge, ethics, and physics. He created an original system of propositional logic in order to better understand the workings of the universe and role of humanity within it.

[2] Crantor was a Greek philosopher, of the Old Academy, probably born around the middle of the 4th century BC, at Soli in Cilicia.

Next Dr Johnson questions the validity of a widely-held belief among the mass of people, namely that the lives lived by the majority of people engaged in various professions, deemed unheroic, are futile, irrespective of the success they achieve in their respective lives. He questions the basis of such assumptions, stating that this "notion arises from false measures of excellence and dignity, and must be eradicated by considering that… what is of most use is of most value". While he is not against pomposity and grandeur, he denies the possibility of them becoming the sole criteria for adjudicating virtue or credit. According to Johnson, they are mere "appendages" which can heighten the sense of beauty and credit, rather than being the creator of the same. That attribute is reserved solely for such agencies as virtue and prudence. Quoting Thuanus (French historian, book collector and president of the Parlement de Paris) Johnson explicates how his frankness about his personal life revealed his earnestness and has endeared him to readers of posterity.

Johnson now moves towards a different line or argument, stating that personal anecdotes (whatever be the manner in which we read them) always carry with themselves a significance greater than public occurrences. Alluding to Salust (Roman historian cum politician of the first century BC) and his book *The Conspiracy of Catiline*, Johnson corroborates his argument by showing how the aforementioned work describes something as trivial and personal as the speed of one's walking as an important indicator of the functions of his brain. Next he alludes to the German Lutheran Reformer Philip Melanchthon and his extreme punctuality in every aspect of his life, a detail which has superseded every other regarding his life, activities and contribution since it was this excessive stress on punctuality that ruined his health and led to his premature demise.

However, the art of the biography, according to Johnson, often suffers due to the fact that the author allotted with the task of compiling the biography is technically or temperamentally unsuited to the task. Johnson differentiates between the mere chronicle representation of historical facts and timeline with respect to the lives of individuals and the biography proper. Those who present the former merely collect the dry facts without narrativizing the incidents properly. According to Johnson only proper narrativization results in a biography which rivets the attention of the reader and thus associates him with the glories and vicissitudes of the character whose life is described. Johnson focuses upon the importance of personal anecdotes in enlivening a biographical narrative. Though sometimes these biographers do add certain anecdotes from the lives of the characters described, these details are unimportant and skimmed carelessly, without careful reading or understanding, from the wealth of details available about the given person's life. For instance he refers to the Tickell's biography of Addison where the biographer has mentioned the irregular heart-beat of Addison. Johnson comments that even after several careful readings he has failed to understand the significance of this particular detail to the scheme of the biography.

In the final two paragraphs Johnson attempts to point out the reasons why most biographies fail to achieve their intended effect. The first of them is the time gap between the relevance of the personality (whose biography is to be composed) and the time when it is actually composed. If the composition of the same is begun after a substantial time has elapsed, the narrative would be free from bias and dispute, since the biographer, writing in retrospect, would be able to take better measure of the person in question and his contribution. But due to that very reason interest of the readers in the concerned person tends to decrease. Johnson explicitly states that "the incidents which give excellence to biography are of a volatile and evanescent kind", which tend to lose significance once the heat of the moment has cooled off. Here he is pointing at the

shortness of public memory. Besides, the person composing the biography at a later date is naturally prone to draw too many conclusions from the life and activities, especially with the passage of time in between.

But simultaneously, biographers who write before allowing passage of substantial amount of time run the risk of colouring the biography with their personal prejudices. Consequently, fidelity-a key feature of the art of biography, is sacrificed. In several cases, the biographer is so biased towards the personage whose biography he intends to compose, that he conceals the unpalatable details regarding the character whose biography he is composing. Certain biographers curiously feel it their duty to dissemble the shortcomings of their friends, even when the exposure of those would be innocuous. This fallacy leads to the writing of biographies where the protagonist is hardly delineated from the others, thereby diluting and defeating the intended result. In this context, Johnson quotes from Sir Matthew Hale (a pre eminent justice under both Cromwell and Charles II. His works on law and legal procedures became well known after his death) to show how this ideal judge, whenever he felt sympathetic towards a criminal, reminded himself that he needed to sympathize with the law (and by extension his country) in equal measure. Through the reference to Hale, Johnson drives home the point that biographers need to care not only for the historical personage (whom they are writing about), but also for the genre they are writing in-which has its own ethics and conventions.

Suggested Reading

1. *The Commerce of Everyday Life: Selections from The Tatler and The Spectator*-edited by Erin Mackie
(Washington University)
2. *Telling People What to Think: Early Eighteenth Century Periodicals from The Review to The Rambler*-
Edited by J.A. Downie and Thomas N Corns (Routledge Publishing House)
3. *Urban Enlightenment and the Eighteenth Century Periodical Essay*: *Transatlantic Retrospects*-Richard
Squibbs (Palgrave Macmillan)
4. *The Rise of Literary Journalism in the Eighteenth Century: Anxious Employment*-Iona Italia
(Routledge)
5. An analysis of the styles of Addison and Steele in the *Spectator* papers-Zelma Inez Turner, Atlanta
University.
6. *In Mind of Johnson: A Study of Johnson's The Rambler*-Philip Davis (The Athlone Press)
7. 'Johnson and His 'Readers' in the Epistolary *Rambler* Essays'-Manushag N. Powell
8. 'Excellence in Biography: *Rambler* No. 60 and Johnson's Early Biographies'-John J. Burke Jr.

Assignment

1. How does Samuel Johnson characterize the ideal biographer in *Rambler* No 60?
2. Why does Johnson consider the biography as the only literary form worthy of cultivation?
3. What is Johnson's idea regarding the budding genre of the novel, in the 18th century? How does he
distinguish it from the form of the romance?
4. Comment on Johnson's moral intention behind the *Rambler* essays.

5. Discuss *Spectator* No 10 as an instance of attempted democratization of the sphere of literary and

Philosophical discourse.

6. Discuss the art of characterization as evident in *Spectator* No 2.

Block IV: 18th Century Non-Fictional English Prose

Unit 13(a): The Discourse on Taste and the Development of Aesthetics

Unit 13(b): David Hume-A Brief Introduction

Unit 14:'Of The Standard of Taste'-David Hume

Unit 15(a): History of the Sublime

Unit 15(b): Edmund Burke-An Introduction

Unit 16(a): A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful

Unit 16(b): Edmund Burke's *The Sublime and the Beautiful*- Part V

Unit 13(a): The Discourse on Taste and the Development of Aesthetics

Today the term *aesthetics* refers to an identifiable sub-discipline of philosophy concerned with the nature and expression of beauty and the fine arts. The discipline covers a broad spectrum of issues, problems, and approaches, but students and practitioners generally agree that its origins can be traced unequivocally to eighteenth-century British philosophers working predominantly, though not exclusively, in England and Scotland. Many of these writers were based in and around the old universities of Edinburgh, Glasgow, and Aberdeen, where (with the exception of David Hume who was denied a position twice on account of his religious views) they held chairs in philosophy and related disciplines; these thinkers were the intellectual force at the heart of what has come to be known as the Scottish Enlightenment. Other eighteenth-century writers, such as Anthony Ashley Cooper, third earl of Shaftesbury, Joseph Addison, and Edmund Burke, were involved in politics or cut central figures in the polite society of English letters, or, like William Hogarth and Sir Joshua Reynolds, were practicing artists. The earliest works in the tradition are Shaftesbury's *Characteristicks of Men, Manners Opinions, Times* (1711), and Addison's essays on the "Pleasures of the Imagination" in *The Spectator* (1712), with Francis

Hutcheson's *Inquiry into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue* (1725) often cited as the first systematic and self-conscious attempt to address questions that came to define a new area of philosophical inquiry, which, by the beginning of the twentieth century crystallized into the discipline complete, in its modern form, with all the attendant paraphernalia of academic respectability.

Although the intellectual roots of modern aesthetics are buried deep in British soil, the term *aesthetics* is of distinctly German stock. Its linguistic heritage lies in the Greek nominal 'aisthetikos'- sensitive or sentient,

derived in turn from the verb 'aisthenesthai', meaning to perceive, feel, or sense. Famously, Immanuel Kant used the term for that part of his *Critique of Pure Reason* concerned with the principles of "a priori sensibility" given in the "pure" intuitions of space and time. In doing so he was following the lead of Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten (1714–62), who had already coined the phrase 'episteme aisthetike' both to designate. Knowledge based on sense perception and name the faculty that makes it possible. In his lectures from 1742 onward – the basis for the two-volume *Aesthetica* (1750 and 1758) – Baumgarten subsequently extended the term to designate a "science of sensual cognition" more generally. By the middle of the 18th century the term was popular across philosophical debates in Germany. In 1781, Kant criticized some features of Baumgarten's work, but conceded the fact that "Germans are the only people who currently make use of the word 'aesthetic' in order to signify what others call the critique of taste".

In England and Scotland, "aesthetics" did not become common currency until well into the nineteenth century, and was long disparaged as an obscure German word of little critical import. On the contrary British writers used the term "taste" for the affective faculty and the species of knowledge derived from it, and assigned the term *criticism* to the inquiry that attempted to elucidate its principles. *Aesthetics* is absent from Samuel Johnson's *A Dictionary of the English Language* (1755), and in 1798 William Taylor could still regard it coolly as part of the "dialect peculiar to Professor Kant.

Things developed apace over the next two decades, however, and by 1821 at least this element of the peculiar dialect had made sufficient inroads that Samuel Taylor Coleridge lamented the lack of a "more familiar word than æsthetic, for works of taste and criticism. By 1846 John Ruskin could report in *Modern Painters* II that "aesthetic" was "commonly employed" with reference to impressions of beauty, and in the 1883 edition of the work he inserted the word *now* before *commonly* and added that "It [aesthetic] was, of course, never so used by good or scholarly English writers, nor ever could be. Whether one focuses on the term or concept, however, it is clear that the first part of the eighteenth century saw the birth of a new and distinct discipline, which one might appropriately call "philosophical aesthetics".

Unit 13(b): David Hume-A Brief Introduction

Hume was born on 26 April 1711 in Edinburgh, Scotland. His father was Joseph Home (an advocate or barrister of Berwickshire, Scotland), and the aristocrat Katherine Lady Falconer. He changed his name to Hume in 1734 because the English had difficulty pronouncing "Home" in the Scottish manner.

He was well read, even as a child, and had a good grounding in Greek and Latin. He attended the University of Edinburgh at the unusually early age of twelve but soon gave up a prospective career in law in favor of philosophy and general learning. At the tender age of eighteen, he made a great "philosophical discovery" that led him to devote the next ten years of

his life to a concentrated period of study, reading and writing, almost to the verge of a nervous breakdown.

In order to earn a living, he took a position in a merchant's office in Bristol before moving to Anjou, France in 1734. It was there that he used up his savings to support himself while he wrote his masterwork, "A Treatise of Human Nature", which he completed in 1737.

After the publication of his "Essays Moral and Political" in 1744, Hume was refused a post at the University of Edinburgh after local ministers petitioned the town council not to appoint Hume due to his Atheism. For about a year he tutored the unstable Marquise of Annandale and became involved with the Canongate Theatre in Edinburgh, where he associated with some of the Scottish Enlightenment luminaries of the time.

From 1746, Hume served for three years as Secretary to a distant relative, Lieutenant-General St. Clair, including as an aide-de-camp on diplomatic missions in Austria and Northern Italy, and even at one point as a staff officer on an ill-fated military expedition as part of the War of the Austrian Succession. It was during this period that he wrote his "Philosophical Essays Concerning Human Understanding", later published as "An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding", which proved little more successful than the "Treatise". He was charged with heresy (although he was defended by his young clerical friends, who argued that, as an atheist, he was outside the Church's jurisdiction), and was again deliberately overlooked for the Chair of Philosophy at the University of Glasgow.

In 1752, the Faculty of Advocates employed him as their librarian, for which he received little or no emolument, but which gave him access to a large library, and which enabled him to continue historical research for his "History of Great Britain". This enormous work, begun in 1745 and not completed until 1760, ran to over a million words and traced events from the Saxon kingdoms to the Glorious Revolution. It was a best-seller in its day and became the standard work on English history for many years. Thus, it was as a historian that Hume finally achieved literary fame.

From 1763 to 1765, Hume was Secretary to Lord Hertford in Paris, where he was admired by Voltaire and was friends (briefly) with Jean-Jacques Rousseau. For a year from 1767, he held the appointment of Under Secretary of State for the Northern Department in London, before retiring back to Edinburgh in 1768.

He died in Edinburgh on 25 August 1776, aged 65, probably as a result of a debilitating cancer he suffered from in his latter years, and was buried, as he requested, on Calton Hill, overlooking his home in the New Town of Edinburgh. He remained to the end positive and humane, well-loved by all who knew him, and he retained great equanimity in the face of his suffering and death.

Most of Hume’s early philosophical work stems from a mysterious intellectual revelation he appears to have experienced at the age of just eighteen. He spent most of the next ten years frantically trying to capture these thoughts on paper, resulting in "A Treatise of Human Nature"which he completed in 1737 at the age of just 26 (and published two years later). This book, which he subtitled "An Attempt to Introduce the Experimental Method of Reasoning into Moral Subjects", is now considered to be Hume's most important work and one of the most important books in the whole of Western philosophy, despite its poor initial reception. He refined the "Treatise" in the later "Philosophical Essays Concerning Human Understanding" (actually published as "An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding" in 1748), along with a companion volume "An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals"(1751), although these publications proved hardly more successful than the original "Treatise" on which they were based.

Hume was a thorough-going Empiricist, the last chronologically of the three great British Empiricists of the 18th Century (along with John Locke and Bishop George Berkeley), and the most extreme. He believed that, as he put it, "the science of manis the only solid foundation for the other sciences", that human experience is as close are we are ever going to get to the truth, and that experience and observationmust be the foundations of any logical argument. Anticipating the Logical Positivistmovement by almost two centuries, Hume was essentially attempting to demonstrate how ordinary propositions about objects, causal relations, the self, etc, are semantically equivalent to propositions about one's experiences.

He argued that all of human knowledge can be divided into two categories: relations of ideas (e.g. mathematical and logical propositions) and matters of fact(e.g. propositions involving some contingent observation of the world, such as "the sun rises in the East"), and that ideas are derived from our "impressions" or sensations. In the face of this, he argued, in sharp contradistinction to the French Rationalists, that even the most basic beliefs about the natural world, or even in the existence of the self, cannot be conclusively established by reason, but we accept them anyway because of their basis in instinct and custom, a hard-line Empiricist attitude verging on complete Skepticism.

But Hume's Empiricism and Skepticism was mainly concerned with Epistemology and with the limits of our ability to know things. Although he would almost certainly have believed that there was indeed an independently existing world of material objects, causally interacting with each other, which we perceive and represent to ourselves through our senses, his point was that none of this could be actually proved. He freely admitted that we can form beliefs about that which extends beyond any possible experience (through the operation of faculties such as custom and the imagination), but he was entirely skeptical about any claims to knowledge on this basis.

Central to grasping Hume's general philosophical system is the so-called “problem of induction”, and exactly how we are able to make inductive inferences (reasoning from the observed behavior of objects to their behavior when unobserved). He noted that humans tend to believe that things behave in a regular manner, and that patterns in the behavior of objects will persist into the future and throughout the unobserved present (an idea sometimes called the Principle of the Uniformity of Nature). Hume argued forcefully that such a belief cannot be justified, other than by the very sort of reasoning that is under question (induction), which would be circular reasoning. Hume's solution to this problem was to argue that it is natural instinct, rather than reason, that explains our ability to make inductive inferences, and many have seen this as a major contribution to Epistemology and the theory of knowledge.

Hume was a great believer in the scientific method championed by Francis Bacon, Galileo Galilei (1564 - 1642) and Sir Isaac Newton (1643 - 1727). However, the application of the problem of induction to science suggests that all of science is actually based on a logical fallacy. The so-called induction fallacy states that, just because something has happened in the past, it cannot be assumed that it will happen again, no matter how often it seems to happen. However, this is exactly what the scientific method is built on, and Hume was forced to conclude, rather unsatisfactorily, that even though the fallacy applies, the scientific method appears to work.

Closely linked to the problem of induction is the notion of causality or causation. It is not always clear how we know that something is actually caused by another thing and, although day always follows night and night day, there is still no causal link between them. Hume concluded that it is the mental act of association that is the basis of our concept of causation (although different

commentators differ in their interpretation of Hume's words on the matter, varying from a logical positivistinterpretation to a skeptical realist or quasi-realist position).

Hume's views on personal identity arose from a similar argument. For Hume, the features or properties of an object are all that really exist, and there is no actual object or substance of which they are the features. Thus, he argued, an apple, when stripped of all its properties (color, size, shape, smell, taste, etc), is impossible to conceive of and effectively ceases to exist. Hume believed that the same argument applied to people, and he held that the self was nothing but a bundle or collection of interconnected perceptions linked by the properties of constancy and coherence, a view sometimes known as "bundle theory", and one in direct opposition to Descartes's "I think therefore I am" assertion.

Hume's anti-Rationalism, however, was not confined to his theory of belief and knowledge, but also extended into other spheres, including Ethics. He asserted that "reason is, and ought only to be, the slave of the passions, and can never pretend to any other office than to serve and obey them". Thus, he severely circumscribedreason's role in the production of action, and stressed that desires are necessary for motivation, and this view on human motivation and action formed the cornerstone of his ethical theory. He conceived moral or ethical sentiments to be intrinsically motivating, and to be the providers of reasons for action. Thus, he argued, given that one cannot be motivated by reason alone (given that motivation requires the additional input of the passions), then reason cannot be behind morality. His theory of Ethics, sometimes described as sentimentalism, has helped to inspire various forms of non-cognitivist and moral nihilist ethical theories including emotivism, ethical expressivism, quasi-realism, error theory, etc.

In his "A Treatise of Human Nature", Hume definitively articulated the so-called "is-ought problem", which has since become so important in Meta-Ethics, noting that claims are often made about what ought to be on the basis of statements about what is. However, Hume pointed out, there are significant differences between descriptive statements (about what is) and prescriptive or normative statements (about what ought to be), and it is not at all obvious how we can get from making descriptive statements to prescriptive. In line with his ingrained Skepticism, he advised extreme caution against making such inferences, and this complete severing of "is" from "ought" is sometimes referred to as "Hume's Guillotine".

As an Empiricist, Hume was always concerned with going back to experience and observation, and this led him to touch on some difficult ideas in what would later become known as the Philosophy of Language. For instance, he was convinced that for a word to mean anything at all, it had to relate to a specific idea, and for an idea to have real content it had to be derived from real experience. If no such underlying experience can be found, therefore, the word effectively has no meaning. In fact, he drew a distinction between thinking (which concerns clear ideas which have a real source in experience) and just everyday talking (which often uses confused notions with no real foundation in experience).

This reasoning also led him to develop what has become known as "Hume's Fork". For any new idea or concept under consideration, he said, we should always ask whether it concerns either a matter of fact (in which case one should then ask whether it is based on observation and experience), or the relation between ideas(e.g. mathematics or Logic). If it is neither, then the idea has no value and no real meaning and should be discarded.

Like Thomas Hobbes before him, Hume sought to reconcile human freedom with the mechanist (or determinist) belief that human beings are part of a deterministic universe whose happenings are governed by the laws of physics. Hume's reconciliation of freedom and determinism (a

position known as compatibilism) involves a more precise definition of Liberty ("a power of acting or not acting, according to the determinations of the will") and Necessity ("the uniformity, observable in the operations of nature; where similar objects are constantly conjoined together"), and the argued conclusion that not only are the two compatible, but that Liberty actually requires Necessity. Furthermore, he argued that, in order to be held morally responsible, it is required that our behavior be caused or necessitated.

Hume wrote a great deal on religion, although, due to the rather repressive religious climate of the day, he deliberately constrained his words (as it was, the Church of Scotland seriously considered bringing charges of infidelity against him). He never openly declared himself to be an atheist, and did not acknowledge his authorship of many of his works in this area until close to his death (and some were not even published until afterward).

However, it is certainly true that, in works such as "An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding" (1748) and "Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion" (written between about 1750 and his death in 1776, and published posthumously in 1779), he attacked many of the basic assumptions of religion and Christian belief, and he found the idea of a God effectively nonsensical, because there was no way of arriving at the idea through sensory data. Some consider it his best work, and many of his arguments have become the foundation of much of the succeeding secular thinking about religion. Having said that, though, it is likely that Hume was, true to his most basic inclinations, skeptical both about religious belief (at least as demanded by the religious organizations of his time) and of the complete Atheism of such contemporaries as Baron d'Holbach (1723 - 1789), and his position may best be characterized by the term "irreligious".

Hume argued that it is impossible to deduce the existence of God from the existence of the world because causes cannot be determined from effects. Although he left open the theoretical possibility of miracles (which may be defined as singular events that differ from the established laws of Nature), he cautioned that they should only be believed if it were less likely that the testimony was false than that a miracle did in fact occur, and offered various arguments against this ever having actually happened in history.

He gave the classic criticism of the teleological argument for the existence of God (also known as the argument from design, that order and apparent purpose in the world bespeaks a divine origin - see the Arguments for the Existence of God section of the Philosophy of Religion page for more details), arguing that, for the design argument to be feasible, it must be true that order and purpose are observed onlywhen they result from design (whereas, on the contrary, we see order in presumably mindless processes like the generation of snowflakes and crystals). Furthermore, he argued that the design argument is based on an incomplete analogy (that of the universe to a designed machine), and that to deduce that our universe is designed, we would need to have an experience of a range of different universes. Even if the design argument were to be successful, he questioned why we should assume that the designer is God, and, if there is indeed a designer god, then who designed the designer? Also, he asked, if we could be happy with an inexplicably self-ordered divine mind, why should we not rest content with an inexplicably self-ordered natural world?

When faced with Leibniz's contention that the only answer to the question "why is there something rather than nothing?" was God, and that God was a necessary being with no need of explanation, Hume responded that there was no such thing as a necessary being, and that anything that could be conceived of as existent could just as easily be conceived of as non-existent. However, he was not willing to propose a convincing alternative answer to the riddle of

existence, taking refuge in the argument that any answer to such a question would be necessarily meaningless, as it could never be grounded in our experience.

Hume's Political Philosophy is difficult to pinpoint, as his work contains elements of both Conservatism and Liberalism, and he resisted aligning himself with either of Britain's two political parties, the Whigs and the Tories. His central concern was to show the importance of the rule of law, and stressed, in his "Essays Moral and Political" of 1742, the importance of moderation in politics (particularly within the turbulent historical context of 18th Century Scotland). In general, he thought that republics were more likely than monarchies to administer laws fairly, but the important point for Hume was that society be governed by a general and impartial system of laws, based principally on the "artifice" of contract (Contractarianism). He supported freedom of the press; he was sympathetic to elected representationand democracy (when suitably constrained); he believed that private property was not a natural right (as John Locke held), but that it was justified because resources are limited; he was optimistic about social progress arising from the economic development that comes with the expansion of trade; and he counseled strongly against revolution and resistance to governments except in cases of the most egregious tyranny.

Although best known today as a philosopher, Hume also developed many of the ideas that are still prevalent in the field of economics, and Adam Smith, among others, acknowledged Hume's influence on his own economics and Political Philosophy. Hume believed in the need for an unequal distribution of property, on the grounds that perfect equality would destroy the ideas of thrift and industry, and thus ultimately lead to impoverishment. He was among the first to develop the concept of automatic price-specie flow, and proposed a theory of beneficial inflation, which was later to be developed by John Maynard Keynes (1883 - 1946).

Hume was also famous as a prose stylist, and pioneered the essay as a literary genre, publicly engaging with contemporary intellectual luminaries such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Adam Smith, James Boswell (1740 - 1795), Joseph Butler(1692 - 1752) and Thomas Reid (1710 - 1796).

But it was as a historian that Hume finally achieved literary fame. His immense 6-volume "History of England" (subtitled "From the Invasion of Julius Caesar to the Revolution in 1688"), written between 1745 and 1760, is a work of immense sweep, running to over a million words. It became a best-seller in its day and became the standard work on English history for many years.

Unit 14: 'Of the Standard of Taste'-David Hume

Hume's seminal essay 'Of the Standard of Taste' consists of four distinct sections:

In the first section Hume outlines the problem, showing how taste varies from person to person on account of its subjective nature. Hume proceeds from this fundamental problematic to closely examine the other aspects of the problem.

In the second section Hume, like a true empiricist, contemplates the possible rules governing the standard of taste.

In the third and probably most significant section, Hume delineates the qualities of a good critic. He states that in order to be labeled a good critic, one must be endowed with qualities like- a) Strong sense, b) intricate imagination, c) thorough practice, d) unbiased comparison and e) absence of prejudice.

Notwithstanding the aforementioned criteria, Hume considers two caveats that will affect every critic, namely: i) natural variations in people and ii) cultural conditioning.

Hume opens the first section by stating that people there exists a great variety of taste in art, even among people whose background and training are similar. Jonathan Bennett points out that Hume does not use the term 'taste' in a shallow sense, but in order to refer to 'every kind of aesthetic reaction to works of art'. However later in his essay Hume does clarify that the focus of his discussion is artistic creations:

> "The great variety of Taste, as well as of opinion, which prevails in the world, is too obvious not to have fallen under every one's observation. Men of the most confined knowledge are able to remark a difference of taste in the narrow circle of their acquaintance, even where the persons have been educated under the same government, and have early imbibed the same prejudices. But those, who can enlarge their view to contemplate distant nations and remote ages, are still more surprised at the great inconsistence and contrariety."

Hume assures us about the existence of beauty, although his business is not to define it. In this essay he focuses spotlight on discussions revolving the Standard of Taste. Hume reminds us that the variety that exists in judgement of taste is 'greater in reality than in appearance.' Although apparently everyone joins in praise of abstract qualities such as elegance, propriety, simplicity and spirit in condemning fustian, affectation, coldness and a false brilliance, people tend to disagree while discussing particular cases. As a result, unanimity vanishes.

This plainly shows a fundamental characteristic of the human mind-we agree in our judgement of artistic qualities in the abstract, but while addressing specific examples, we resort to subjective taste. Hume simultaneously points out the very different role played by subjectivity in scientific debates, where particular findings from different experiments are agreed upon while the general theoretical principles are hotly debated.

Making a comparison between ethics and the present problem of taste, Hume claims that morality is based upon sentiment (emotions) not reason. We agree on general moral qualities we consider good:

> "Writers of all nations and all ages concur in applauding justice, humanity, magnanimity, prudence, veracity; and in blaming the opposite qualities. Even poets and other authors, whose compositions are chiefly calculated to please the imagination, are yet found, from HOMER down to FENELON, to inculcate the same moral precepts, and to bestow their applause and blame on the same virtues and vices."

Everyone can agree that 'virtue' is good and 'vice' is bad – not to do so would mean perverting language. However, we surrender to subjective taste as soon as we discuss particular moral cases. Hume compares the ancient Greek poet Homer and the French writer Fénelon, author of the 1699 *novel Les Aventures de Télémaque*. Homer's Achilles and Ulysses are heroes, yet both have less admirable qualities too, whereas Fénelon's hero Telemachus is perfectly virtuous. The two writers have different opinions of what behaviour is appropriate in a heroic character.

Hume then makes a similar point with reference to the Qu'ran. Its followers insist upon its 'excellent moral precepts' and it uses the same positive language of justice, charity etc in Arabic that English does, yet it bestows praise on behaviour that would be unacceptable in 'civilised society'. (I would add that the Bible is just as bad, though Hume may, as a religious sceptic, have had the Bible quietly in mind.) Again, people agree about generalities and quarrel about particulars.

Moral and aesthetic agreement, then, is often based on a linguistic illusion: we agree on certain evaluative terms but not on what they mean.

He says there is therefore little point in making generalisations about ethics. By extension, there is perhaps little point in making them about aesthetics either.

To resolve such difficulties, Hume concludes:

> "It is natural for us to seek a Standard of Taste; a rule, by which the various sentiments of men may be reconciled; at least, a decision, afforded, confirming one sentiment, and condemning another."

The goal of Hume's essay is to establish a 'rule' for how we may settle disputes over taste by judging who is right and who is wrong. The sceptical, relativist position laid out in the opening paragraphs (including 7) is pessimistic about this possibility, but Hume does not agree with that position – as we go on, we find he agrees with some aspects of it, e.g. that beauty is subjective, but nonetheless thinks it is possible to establish a standard.

This paragraph is important. To the question 'is there a Standard of Taste?' Hume presents one possible answer: namely, 'no'. There is a species of philosophy [i.e. relativism], which cuts off all hopes of success in such an attempt, and represents the impossibility of ever attaining any standard of taste. He further outlines the relativist case, drawing the distinction between judgement and sentiment (emotion). All sentiment is right; because sentiment has a reference to nothing beyond itself, and is always real, wherever a man is conscious of it. But all determinations of the understanding are not right; because they have a reference to something beyond themselves, to wit, real matter of fact; and are not always conformable to that standard. Reason ('understanding') expects that something can be proved correct or incorrect by appeal to objective fact. By contrast, a sentiment cannot be judged correct or incorrect.

Among a thousand different opinions which different men may entertain of the same subject, there is one, and but one, that is just and true; and the only difficulty is to fix and ascertain it. On the contrary, a thousand different sentiments, excited by the same object, are all right: Because no sentiment represents what is really in the object. If you feel something, the feeling is real, and no one can accuse you of being 'wrong' for feeling it. Following these observations, Hume argues that on this view, if taste is based upon feeling rather than objective reason, beauty must be subjective:

> "Beauty is no quality in things themselves: It exists merely in the mind which contemplates them; and each mind perceives a different beauty."

Morality and aesthetics are based upon feeling and are therefore subjective. You cannot pronounce any opinion about beauty correct or incorrect because all such opinions are sentiments. A Standard of Taste is impossible. Each of us may be confident in our opinion yet may make no claim to 'regulate those of others'. The same object may be thought to taste both sweet and bitter, and it is pointless to claim that one experience is more right than the other – we may extend this bodily example to our sentiments as well. Hume evokes (without actually naming it) the Latin proverb de gustibus non est disputandum: 'there is no disputing over taste', or in French chacun à son goût. This is a rare case, he says, of 'common sense' agreeing with philosophy.

But Hume immediately counters this with a contrary 'common sense' position. We behave as if there are objective standards. Whoever would assert an equality of genius and elegance between OGILBY[3] and MILTON, or BUNYAN and ADDISON, would be thought to defend no less an

[3] John Ogilby was a Scottish translator, impresario and cartographer. Best known for publishing the first British road atlas, he was also a successful translator. He was satirized by John Dryden in his satirical MacFlecknoe, and by Alexander Pope in The Dunciad.

extravagance, than if he had maintained a mole-hill to be as high as TENERIFFE[4], or a pond as extensive as the ocean. We take it for granted that Milton is a better writer than John Ogilby, a Scottish poet now only remembered for being namedropped in Hume's famous essay. If there is no Standard of Taste, then an advertising jingle is as aesthetically valuable as Mozart's Requiem. There are always people who think otherwise, but we are comfortable dismissing such opinions as 'absurd and ridiculous'. We respect a plurality of views on taste when its objects seem broadly comparable, but when one work seems obviously better than another, the principle of de gustibus non est disputandum quickly breaks down. Things don't in themselves have good and bad, beauty and ugliness. These values come from people. But people can be right or wrong about at least some of them. This 'common sense' position that we may judge people's opinions is at least as valid as the other 'common sense' position that we can't.

Having established this background for the argument, Hume proceeds to defend the former common sense position against the latter by seeking grounds for a Standard of Taste.

9: Hume has already called the Standard of Taste a 'rule'. Here he refers to the 'rules of composition', by which he seems to mean the rules followed by artists when creating their works. Thus we have two sets of rules: those of taste or criticism, and those of composition, but Hume does not make a distinction between them. Presumably, the artist applies the rules of composition to their work, then the critic judges, with reference to those same rules, how well it has been done. The rules will be based upon 'a certain conformity or relation between the object and the organs or faculties of the mind', or what Hume later calls 'the relation, which nature has placed between the form and the sentiment'. Hume's approach to the rules of composition is characteristically empiricist:

> "It is evident that none of the rules of composition are fixed by reasonings a priori, or can be esteemed abstract conclusions of the understanding, from comparing those habitudes and relations of ideas, which are eternal and immutable. Their foundation is the same with that of all the practical sciences, experience."

The rules cannot be worked out a priori, that is, from reasoning alone, independent of sensory experience. Reason must be accompanied by facts, which in art is supplied by experience of what works: 'what has been universally found to please in all countries and in all ages'. Hume rightly observes that poetry does not depend for its effects on strict empirical fact:

> "Many of the beauties of poetry and even of eloquence are founded on falsehood and fiction, on hyperboles, metaphors, and an abuse or perversion of terms from their natural meaning. To check the sallies of the imagination, and to reduce every expression to geometrical truth and exactness, would be the most contrary to the laws of criticism; because it would produce a work, which, by universal experience, has been found the most insipid and disagreeable."

But though poetry does not have to accord with scientific fact, it 'must be confined by rules of art'. These rules are general observations, concerning what has been universally found to please in all countries and in all ages... discovered to the author either by genius or observation. Living in the Neoclassical age, Hume has no problem with looking back to older cultural authorities, and admires Homer as a model for all ages. Here he holds up the Italian Renaissance poet Ludovico Ariosto, author of the vast epic poem *Orlando Furioso* (first version 1516), as an example of a second-rate writer whom we still enjoy reading. He wants to make the point that if weaker writers please us, it is because they have other merits that conform to the rules and lead us to forgive the flaws. If we take pleasure from features that criticism considers flaws, then

[4] An island in Spain

criticism needs to change. 'If they are found to please, they cannot be faults.' Thus Hume asserts that the rules of composition are based upon what pleases the audience, i.e. upon subjective feelings.

Hume concludes that all the general rules of art are founded only on experience and on the observation of the common sentiments of human nature. But he notes that this reference point of common human experience and feelings is unstable, because, as we established earlier, feelings are variable. They don't always behave according to their own general principles and can be thrown out of kilter. To get the best and most representative judgement of taste, therefore, we must choose with care a proper time and place, and bring the fancy to a suitable situation and disposition. A perfect serenity of mind, a recollection of thought, a due attention to the object; if any of these circumstances be wanting, our experiment will be fallacious, and we shall be unable to judge of the catholic and universal beauty. High standards of critical judgement depend upon concentrating upon the object, in the right state of mind. The rules, we have seen, are based upon 'the relation which nature has placed between the form and the sentiment.' We find its influence from the durable admiration, which attends those works, that have survived all the caprices of mode and fashion. It is from proven masterworks that we may find the rule of the Standard of Taste.

We are still no closer to what the rules actually are. Given that we need to iron out the flux of human feelings, Hume thinks the best way to identify them is to examine works that have been tried and tested over a long period of time. He points out:

> "The same Homer, who pleased at Athens and Rome two thousand years ago, is still admired at Paris and at London. All the changes of climate, government, religion, and language, have not been able to obscure his glory."

The passage of time reveals which are the exemplary works of art:

> "Authority or prejudice may give a temporary vogue to a bad poet or orator, but his reputation will never be durable or general. When his compositions are examined by posterity or by foreigners, the enchantment is dissipated, and his faults appear in their true colours. On the contrary, a real genius, the longer his works endure, and the more wide they are spread, the more sincere is the admiration which he meets with."

The immediate pressures of envy, personal acquaintance and so on can cloud our judgement, but once these are removed and the work is judged only on its own merits, we can observe 'the beauties, which are naturally fitted to excite agreeable sentiments,' and these have long-standing authority.

This appeal to 'beauties, which are naturally fitted to excite agreeable sentiments' implies the rules are in fact not subjective but objective. Otherwise, where do they get their long-standing authority? Hume explains:

> "It appears then, that, amidst all the variety and caprice of taste, there are certain general principles of approbation or blame, whose influence a careful eye may trace in all operations of the mind. Some particular forms or qualities, from the original structure of the internal fabric, are calculated to please, and others to displease."

Note the 'principles of approbation or blame' are not in the object but in the operation of the mind in its response to the object. Hume seems to be saying that yes, all taste is subjective, but there are tendencies in the human organism or constitution that make us more likely to value some beauties/rules over others. There are 'some particular forms or qualities' in the object that give us pleasure or displeasure. Hume clearly considers these properties reliable: they will

please us. If they do not, the blame lies in some defect in the human organism. In each creature, there is a sound and a defective state; and the former alone can be supposed to afford us a true standard of a taste and sentiment. Just as a person with the flu can't be expected to judge the flavours in a meal because his or her sense of taste will be impaired, a person whose faculties are defective can't respond to art with the most appropriate pleasure and thus can't make the best judgements of it. In a community of healthy faculties Hume thinks that we may find our Standard of Taste:

> "If, in the sound state of the organ, there be an entire or considerable uniformity of sentiment among men, we may thence derive an idea of the perfect beauty; in like manner as the appearance of objects in daylight, to the eye of a man in health, is denominated their true and real colour, even while colour is allowed to be merely a phantasm of the senses."

Hume's analogy with colour is illuminating. The healthy organism perceives a 'true and real' colour even though colour is accepted as being a sensation created by the organism itself. By analogy, the healthy organism experiences a 'true and real' beauty even though we all agree beauty and taste are subjective. The beauty is 'true and real' because it is predicated upon a 'structure of the mind' that is broadly common to all human beings. However the general principles are affected by variations in 1) the structure of the mind and 2) the contexts in which objects are experienced, hence the variation in the pleasure felt.

Hume is saying that some objects or properties are 'naturally calculated' to please us via the structure of our minds. To return to colour: our experience or sensation of colour is created for us by the brain, but it is an interpretation based upon actual data, i.e. different colours represent different wavelengths of light that may be scientifically measured; similarly, beauty is a subjective feeling but that feeling has a causal relationship with specific objective properties.

An example of the variability across individuals is 'delicacy of imagination'. It is valued by all but exercised by fewer. To define what he means by 'delicacy', Hume takes an illustration from *Don Quixote*. The Don's squire Sancho Panza relates a story in which two of his relatives detected a taste of leather and iron in a glass of wine. They were ridiculed for this until a key and thong were discovered in the wine cask, revealing that his relatives' judgement was in fact acute. Sancho takes this as evidence that his own judgement of wine will also be acute, i.e. he assumes that the faculty runs in the family. This story is not the best example for what Hume is discussing, as Sancho's claim to good judgement in wine is based simply upon genetic inheritance, whereas Hume will later argue that good judgement comes through five criteria including things like practice. But he wants to make a particular point. He goes on:

> "Though it be certain, that beauty and deformity, more than sweet and bitter, are not qualities in objects, but belong entirely to the sentiment, internal or external; it must be allowed, that there are certain qualities in objects, which are fitted by nature to produce those particular feelings."

Certain qualities in objects are 'fitted by nature' to produce sentiments of beauty because of that 'structure of the mind' we have already discussed. Beauty is subjective but is prompted by objective properties towards which the human organism is biased. Again, there is a contradiction here that needs further explanation. How can beauty belong 'entirely' to sentiment when those sentiments are produced by fitting qualities in objects? Of course the experience varies across individuals.

Where the organs are so fine, as to allow nothing to escape them; and at the same time so exact as to perceive every ingredient in the composition: This we call delicacy of taste...In making

their delicate judgements of taste, the critic draws upon the general rules of beauty... being drawn from established models, and from the observation of what pleases or displeases.

Here comes Hume's real point with the Sancho Panza story: he likens finding the rules of composition to finding the key at the bottom of the wine cask. Until the key was found, it was impossible to prove the quality of Sancho's relatives' judgement over that of their less delicate critics, but the key existed nonetheless. Once we have identified an 'avowed principle of art' – once we have produced that key from the cask – we can justify our judgement and prove to our opponent that they lack delicacy of imagination:

> "When we prove, that the same principle may be applied to the present case, where he did not perceive or feel its influence: He must conclude, upon the whole, that the fault lies in himself."

Thus we can use the Standard of Taste to settle disputes about taste. This is quite a naive claim. Hume seems to take it for granted that the delicate person can convince the other person by force of reason.

Note that Hume refers in to 'sentiment, internal or external'. External sentiments are our sensations; internal sentiments are our feelings.

In the next few paragraphs Hume discusses what it takes to become a 'true judge' or what I will call an 'ideal critic'. He has already given us delicacy of imagination.

Hume makes a case for improving our critical faculties through practice. Delicate taste is desireable and everyone approves of it. The perfection of that faculty is to perceive with exactness its most minute objects, and allow nothing to escape its notice and observation... the perfection of the man, and the perfection of the sense or feeling, are found to be united. Natural ability varies, but nothing tends further to encrease and improve this talent, than practice in a particular art, and the frequent survey or contemplation of a particular species of beauty. For an unpracticed person, the sentiments accompanying objects are 'obscure and confused' and our reason struggles to identify their merits and flaws. The best we can hope for is a general verdict. But allow him to acquire experience in those objects, his feeling becomes more exact and nice: He not only perceives the beauties and defects of each part, but marks the distinguishing species of each quality, and assigns it suitable praise or blame.

Given that practice is so important, we should withhold judgement until we have experienced the object more than once, in different lights, each time giving it our undivided attention. To recall, this sharpening of the faculties applies both to criticism and composition:

> "The same address and dexterity, which practice gives to the execution of any work, is also acquired by the same means, in the judging of it."

Hume continues by stressing the importance of comparison. It is impossible to continue in the practice of contemplating any order of beauty, without being frequently obliged to form comparisons between the several species and degrees of excellence, and estimating their proportion to each other. A man, who has had no opportunity of comparing the different kinds of beauty, is indeed totally unqualified to pronounce an opinion with regard to any object presented to him. By comparison alone we fix the epithets of praise or blame, and learn how to assign the due degree of each. Inferior works often have their attractions, but it takes someone 'familiarized to superior beauties' to see past them and make a mature, well-informed judgement with reference to the greatest works of human culture. One accustomed to see, and examine, and weigh the several performances, admired in different ages and nations, can alone rate the merits of a work exhibited to his view, and assign its proper rank among the productions of genius.

Attaining this breadth of reference requires the critic to free his mind of prejudice. Hume shows he is aware of the importance of cultural context: he notes that works of art often need to be experienced in a particular way, and the critic must try to put himself in the shoes of its intended audience. He uses the example of an orator who tailors his speech to a specific, even hostile, audience, but might not be properly understood by someone who reads the text within a different culture or era. Critics must try to forget their 'individual being and peculiar circumstances'. A critic who allows their judgement to be distorted by prejudice suffers the consequences:

> "By this means, his sentiments are perverted; nor have the same beauties and blemishes the same influence upon him, as if he had imposed a proper violence on his imagination, and had forgotten himself for a moment. So far his taste evidently departs from the true standard; and of consequence loses all credit and authority."

Note Hume contradicts himself. He says the critic must preserve his mind free from all prejudice, and allow nothing to enter into his consideration, but the very object which is submitted to his examination. But this goes against the application of practice and comparison, which require him to bring other artworks into his consideration as well as the one he's looking at.

Prejudice is 'destructive of sound judgment' and 'it belongs to good sense to check its influence.' Hume helpfully describes some of the properties of 'the nobler productions of genius'. We can detect the influence of Aristotle's *Poetics* on his list:

> "A mutual relation and correspondence of parts.
> A certain end or purpose, for which it is calculated.
> A chain of propositions and reasonings."

The characters must be represented as reasoning, and thinking, and concluding, and acting, suitably to their character and circumstances. The purpose of poetry is to please by means of the passions and the imagination. This is as specific as Hume gets about any actual rules. But he is not trying here to describe the rules – he is describing some of the things that can be judged by good sense. The able critic must be aware of such considerations and be sufficiently 'capacious of thought' to judge how well they have been used. It seldom, or never happens, that a man of sense, who has experience in any art, cannot judge of its beauty. Good sense is important for fighting prejudice but also for judging an artwork's structure, unity, purpose, and so on.

Hume believes that a critic capable of all these gifts – what he calls a 'true judge', or what we would today prefer to call a 'true critic' – is a rare character. Though the principles of taste be universal, and nearly, if not entirely the same in all men; yet few are qualified to give judgment on any work of art, or establish their own sentiment as the standard of beauty. The natural faculties might be defective, or the critic lacks the range of necessary qualities. In a key sentence, Hume summarises the five criteria that he thinks characterize the ideal critic:

> "Strong sense, united to delicate sentiment, improved by practice, perfected by comparison, and cleared of all prejudice, can alone entitle critics to this valuable character; and the joint verdict of such, wherever they are to be found, is the true standard of taste and beauty."

Let's underline those five criteria:

1. Strong sense
2. Delicate sentiment
3. Practice
4. Comparison
5. Lack of prejudice

These are positive attributes in the critic, and conversely, the lack of them is a hindrance to good judgement. That 'joint verdict of true judges' is, for Hume, the answer to the puzzle of how we decide which subjective opinions are valuable. It is 'the true standard of taste and beauty', confirmed by the 'common sentiments of human nature'. The ideal critic is someone who can best perceive the 'beauties, which are naturally fitted to excite agreeable sentiments' because the various defects that impede our perception of those beauties are, in the ideal critic, absent or minimal.

This seems clear enough, but it presents Hume with a new problem. Who is to say whether a particular person is a ideal critic or not? This seems to return us to the problem of relativism with which we started.

Hume's response is to deny that identifying ideal critics is subjective. Taste is subjective, but whether one is a ideal critic or not is objective, a matter of fact. He believes he has proved that the taste of all individuals is not upon an equal footing, and that some men in general, however difficult to be particularly pitched upon, will be acknowledged by universal sentiment to have a preference above others. Whether someone is an ideal critic or not will be a matter of dispute, but everyone agrees that such a person is valuable. Where the disputes occur, people must simply put forward their best arguments:

> "they must acknowledge a true and decisive standard to exist somewhere, to wit, real existence and matter of fact; and they must have indulgence to such as differ from them in their appeals to this standard."

Hume seems to be suggesting that to decide who is an ideal critic, we make an appeal to empirical evidence. It is again a bit naive of him to assume this is a straightforward process.

To defend his position, Hume returns to the 'test of time' argument. But in reality the difficulty of finding, even in particulars, the standard of taste, is not so great as it is represented. He claims that establishing truth in science is harder than in literature. Theories of philosophy and science come and go, but the appeal of great works like those of Terence and Virgil persists.

Hume retreads it because he thinks it can help us to identify 'men of delicate taste'. The 'ascendant' or prominence such persons acquire thanks to the quality of their judgements makes their opinion dominant and gives them lasting influence. He claims that it is easy to tell a true person of taste:

> "Though men of delicate taste be rare, they are easily to be distinguished in society, by the soundness of their understanding and the superiority of their faculties above the rest of mankind."

People with superior faculties will produce superior judgements, which we may confirm by comparing them to tried and tested principles of art, and they rise to prominence on merit. These are the critics whose opinions we should consult to resolve disputes over taste. Disagreement about them must yield in the long run to 'the force of nature and just sentiment.' Hume wraps up by saying a civilised nation rarely fails to identify its favourite epic or tragic author, i.e. he is talking about artists as well as ideal critics. Note how in this paragraph Hume assigns to his ideal critics a social role:

> "The ascendant, which they acquire, gives a prevalence to that lively approbation, with which they receive any productions of genius, and renders it generally predominant. Many men, when left to themselves, have but a faint and dubious perception of beauty, who yet are capable of relishing any fine stroke, which is pointed out to them. Every convert to the admiration of the real poet or orator is the cause of some new conversion.

> And though prejudices may prevail for a time, they never unite in celebrating any rival to the true genius, but yield at last to the force of nature and just sentiment."
>
> The critic's excellence of judgement makes his or her opinion generally dominant; they can point out qualities in artworks to less perceptive people, who will inevitably defer to the better opinion. Through their verdicts the critics help to fix the taste of wider society.

In the final section, Hume identifies two causes of prejudice even for ideal critics. Despite our attempts at establishing the Standard of Taste, there are two unavoidable influences that will affect our judgements:

1. 'The different humours of particular men.'
2. 'The particular manners and opinions of our age and country.'

Where there is such a diversity in the internal frame or external situation as is entirely blameless on both sides, and leaves no room to give one the preference above the other; in that case a certain degree of diversity in judgment is unavoidable. In these cases 'we seek in vain for a standard, by which we can reconcile the contrary sentiments', i.e. Hume admits that sometimes the Standard of Taste will fail.

First he addresses point no 1. There will always be some diversity of opinion even among true artists and critics, thanks to the variability of human nature and culture. A young person tends to be more amorous, an older person more philosophical and moderate. We also tend to favour different artists at different ages. Broadly we naturally incline more towards artists who resemble ourselves in personality, national customs, etc. This is a defect in a critic, but it is almost impossible not to feel a predilection for that which suits our particular turn and disposition. Such preferences are innocent and unavoidable, and can never reasonably be the object of dispute, because there is no standard, by which they can be decided. In such cases, contending works and judgements are just different and cannot be pronounced right or wrong. Note the phrase: 'the general principles of taste are uniform in human nature'. Under ideal conditions, everyone responds to art in broadly the same way – with a bit of variation, as he is currently describing.

Hume now turns to point no 2. We tend to prefer 'pictures and characters' that resemble our own customs and culture. Unlike a 'common audience', a critic or artist makes allowances for such variations.

However, he then alludes to the so-called 'quarrel between the ancients and moderns' that was a running debate in the 18th century: had the modern era achieved superior learning to the ancients? We need not reject artists of previous ages because of their different customs:

> Must we throw aside the pictures of our ancestors, because of their ruffs and fardingales?

Hume has already made this point about throwing off prejudice towards other cultures. But he makes an unexpected move. Instead of taking his own advice and putting himself into the shoes of the ancient Greeks and Romans, he condemns ancient poets who depict 'vicious manners' without disapproval (he offers no specific examples). The want of humanity and of decency, so conspicuous in the characters drawn by several of the ancient poets, even sometimes by Homer and the Greek tragedians, diminishes considerably the merit of their noble performances, and gives modern authors an advantage over them. Hume wants a stronger, more explicit morality than he finds in the ancient writers. When he says modern authors have an 'advantage' over ancient ones, he seems to be saying, on my reading, that modern morality is better than ancient morality, or at least that the morality of modern authors is better than the morality of ancient authors. The modern critic, it seems, need not forgive gross violations of our higher moral standards even in works from very different cultures. We moderns are better than that.

Hume does not say we cannot excuse the ancient poet (he thus holds true to the criterion of prejudice), but he does say that moral flaws damage our aesthetic enjoyment. However I may excuse the poet, on account of the manners in his age, I never can relish the composition. Our moral displeasure makes it harder for us to enjoy the work:

> "Whatever indulgence we may give to the writer on account of his prejudices, we cannot prevail on ourselves to enter into his sentiments, or bear an affection to characters, which we plainly discover to be blamable."

Hume therefore makes an exception of morality when it comes to 'making allowances' about customs. He is asserting that moral values are relevant to the aesthetic value of a work of art (a position known as moderate moralism). A moral blemish is an aesthetic blemish.

Hume finishes his essay with a discussion of religion. He makes a distinction between moral principles on the one hand and 'speculative opinions' (ideologies, including religion) on the other. Unlike moral principles, speculative opinions are in 'continual flux and revolution', and mistakes in these matters are not serious blemishes on works of art. Whatever speculative errors may be found in the polite writings of any age or country, they detract but little from the value of those compositions. Adjusting ourselves to different morals however requires 'a very violent effort', and someone who is confident in the 'rectitude' of their moral standards will not make allowances. Hume does not explain why moral principles, which are based upon sentiment and vary across cultures, are not also in 'flux and revolution'

Writers may be excused for speculative errors on religious matters, as 'the same good sense, that directs men in the ordinary occurrences of life, is not harkened to in religious matters,' which lie outside human reason. Critics who wish to form good judgements of ancient literature must not be prejudiced by the writers' religion, which Hume calls 'the absurdities of the pagan system of theology'. You cannot expect good sense on such things, whether in life or in works of art.

Religious principles are only a problem when they are so strong as to become bigotry or superstition:

> "Where that happens, they confound the sentiments of morality, and alter the natural boundaries of vice and virtue. They are therefore eternal blemishes, according to the principle above mentioned; nor are the prejudices and false opinions of the age sufficient to justify them."

Just as we are right to condemn the worst violations of our moral standards, we are right to condemn the worst violations of our religious standards. In the final two paragraphs he addresses bigotry and superstition in turn.

On this basis he has a dig at Roman Catholicism, which by its nature inspires 'violent hatred of every other worship', and gives the examples of two plays – Corneille's *Polyeucte* (1642) and Racine's *Athalia* (1691) – that he thinks have been blemished by this sort of 'bigotry'. Hume describes a scene from *Athalia* where the Jewish priest Joad accuses a priest of Baal of 'poisoning the air' with his 'horrid presence', earning the applause of the Paris audience. This illustrates an 'intemperate zeal for particular modes of worship'. Hume also thinks:

> "Religious principles are also a blemish in any polite composition, when they rise up to superstition, and intrude themselves into every sentiment, however remote from any connection with religion."

Local customs are no excuse for the poet, and Hume cites two examples from Petrarch and Boccaccio. He therefore contends that certain violations of morality and religion are serious enough to overrule the critic's duty to approach other cultures without prejudice, and they ought to be condemned. And thus the essay comes abruptly to an end.

Suggested Reading

1. *The Century of Taste (The Philosophical Odyssey of Taste in the Eighteenth Century)*-George Dickie.
2. *The British Aesthetic Tradition (From Shaftesbury to Wittgenstein)*-Timothy M. Costelloe.
3. *David Hume: Moral and Political Theorist*-Russell Hardin.
4. *The Pursuits of Philosophy (An Introduction to the Life and Thought of David Hume)*-Annette C. Baier.
5. *Hume's Aesthetic Theory*-Dabney Townsend
6. 'Rethinking Hume's Standard of Taste'-Theodore A. Gracyk
7. 'Hume's Standard of Taste'-Noel Carroll

Assignments

1. According to Hume what are the chief characteristics of a critic?
2. Is it possible to come to an objective definition of literary/artistic taste? Following Hume's essay 'Of the Standard of Taste', write an analytical essay.
3. How does Hume define the standard of literary creation and the standard of literary criticism? Does Hume find any similarities between the two?
4. Would it be correct to call David Hume a neoclassical critic?
5. In reaching the definition of a Standard of Taste, Hume mentions encountering two unavoidable influences that affect our judgements. Name them and explain how they hinder reaching a Standard definition of Taste. According to Hume, how can this difficulty be surmounted?

***On the Beautiful and the Sublime*-Edmund Burke**

Unit 15 (a): History of the 'Sublime'

Longinus

Peri Hupsos or *On Sublimity*, by the Greek critic Dionysius Longinus, is widely acknowledged to be the first properly theoretical discussion of the sublime. It is primarily rhetorical, aiming to teach those oratorical devices that enable a speaker to move or persuade an audience. Longinus was a follower of Cicero. What distinguishes *On Sublimity* from its predecessors, however, is the stress its author places on a mode of speech that is indeterminate or without form, a quality that renders the pedagogical aspect of the work extremely problematic. Although standard rhetorical devices such as *inventio*, *dispositio*, *elocutio*, *memoria* and *actio* were amenable to teaching and infusion, the sublime seemed to elude definition. Reading *On Sublimity*, therefore, it is easy to conclude that the author secretly regards his subject as formally unteachable. Therefore the sublime is beyond definition. What strikes an audience with wonder (*ekplexis*) is more powerful than what merely persuades or pleases us. Unlike conventional public speech, therefore, the sublime is a discourse of domination; it seeks to ravish and intoxicate the audience so that a grand conception may be instilled in the mind.

Therefore the sublime according to Longinus is a product of nature rather than of art. All that remains essential to the sublime is a state of feeling, which may be loosely described as wonder, awe, rapture, astonishment, ecstasy, or elevation. Longinus differs significantly from

Horace since the latter in his work *Ars Poetica* had claimed that *ars* is a 'practiced mastery of craft, a systematic knowledge of theory and technique.

The Concept of Sublime in the 18th Century

Longinus' treatise came to the attention of a select number of English readers in the late seventeenth century via the influential French translation and commentary of Despréaux Boileau. Although the Latin text had been made available in 1554, the English translation in 1652, it was not until the mid 1740s that the concept of the sublime reached a wider public. Late seventeenth and early eighteenth century British theorization on the sublime was observable in the work of the following five theorists: Thomas Burnet, John Dennis, Joseph Addison, Anthony Ashley Cooper and John Baillie.

(i) Burnet-*Sacred Theory*: The desire to efface the material nature of human experience, in particular its dependence on the stuff of language, is thus key to our understanding of the sublime. For a better understanding one may look at Burnet's *The Sacred Theory of the Earth* (originally composed in Latin and later translated into English), which begins by revising conventional seventeenth-century attitudes to nature. A 17th century poet like Andrew Marvell had opined that mountains are 'unjust', 'hook-shouldered' excrescences, which threaten to 'deform' the balance of the earth. A smooth, well-ordered garden, offering ease and delight to the spectator, was preferable to the brooding intensity of the mountain crag.

But Burnet's response to a vision of the mountain is markedly different. He claims that mountains have something 'august and stately', filling the mind with 'great thoughts and passions', reminding us of the creative potential of the Supreme Maker. Burnet and his contemporaries, after all, conceived nature as a work of beauty, founded on principles of order, proportion, and restraint. The vast irregularity of mountain scenery offended this belief, yet it was the mountains that conveyed an image of the divine. Though the conceptual distinction between the sublime and the beautiful awaits the publication of Burke's *Enquiry*, the idea of the sublime as a mode of divine excess is already in place.

(ii) John Dennis: Like Burnet, Dennis was moved to express his delight in the 'extravagancies' of nature 'in a language of extravagance and hyperbole'. Dennis struggled to reconcile his aesthetic preference for the order and regularity of beauty with his newfound enthusiasm for the sublime. He attributed the beauty of the universe to its "Proportion, Situation, and (inter)Dependence". As a child of the Enlightenment, Dennis regarded nature as a rational system. Yet his enthusiasm for the vast and irregular militated against this regard. Thus, whilst the 'prospect of Hills or Valleys, or flowery Meads, and murmuring Streams' produced 'a delight consistent with Reason', it was the 'Extravagancies' of nature that provided an intimation of the divine.

(iii) Joseph Addison: In an issue of the *Spectator* magazine published on 21 June 1712, Addison claims that:

> "Our Imagination loves to be filled with an Object, or to grasp at anything that is too big for its Capacity. We are flung into a pleasing Astonishment at such unbounded Views, and feel a delightful Stillness and Amazement in the Soul at the Apprehension of them"

Besides describing the beautiful sights, Addison goes on to describe their origins. Like Burnet, Addison maintains that the underlying cause of greatness rests on the side of the naturally magnificent object. In a distinction derived from the empiricist philosopher John Locke (1632–

1704), Addison insists that the 'Primary Pleasures of the Imagination' are stimulated by the 'Sight' of such objects, and that the 'Secondary Pleasures of the Imagination flow from the Ideas of visible Objects'. Marjorie Nicholson comments that for Addison 'rhetorical ideas' were 'secondary' and they had a "great dependence" upon primary ideas coming to man direct from Nature'.

From the outset, however, it is made clear that since 'we know neither the Nature of an Idea, nor the Substance of a Human Soul', then it is impossible to 'trace out the several necessary and efficient Causes from whence the Pleasure or Displeasure arises'. The impetus by which an idea is produced cannot be established with any certainty; what Addison can be certain of, however, is why we should be so impelled. The ultimate cause is God. Man is created in God's image, therefore he is conditioned to delight in 'what is Great or Unlimited'.

(iv) Anthony Ashley Cooper: The Platonic displacement of the senses, the search for ideal objects over and above the fallen objects of this world, is crucial to the development of the sublime in the writings of Anthony Ashley Cooper, Earl of Shaftesbury. Shaftesbury's writing is notable for its 'enthusiasm'-which 'signifies divine presence, and was made use of by [Plato] to express whatever was sublime in human passions'. As Shaftesbury's prose sought to demonstrate the balancing of cosmic order and rhetorical *ekstasis*, so also it aimed to instill a sense of the ultimate goodness of the universe. Drawing again on Plato, Shaftesbury goes on to claim that the mind is in accord with itself and with the universe when it recognizes that 'what is beautiful is harmonious and proportionable; what is harmonious and proportionable is true; and what is at once both beautiful and true is, of consequence, agreeable and good'.

(v) John Baillie: The order that Shaftesbury perceives was undermined in the latter half of the eighteenth century by the spread of scientific materialism and philosophical skepticism. But the roots for an out-and-out decentring of the harmony between mind, beauty, virtue, and God were already implicit in the rhetorical concept of the sublime. For those writing after Longinus, in the discourse of the sublime, language works insidiously to transgress the boundaries between things, allowing properties to be transferred from one object to another, so that anything, even a dunghill, may be raised to a point of magnificence. John Baillie takes up this point in his *An Essay on the Sublime* (1747). After beginning conventionally enough with the claim that a sublime 'Disposition of Mind' is 'created by grand Objects, Baillie admits that some 'Objects … [that] are not great and immense, if long connected with such, will often produce an Exaltedness of Mind. In Shaftesbury's grand 'design', the relations between things are guaranteed by the presence of divine authority. God. Where Baillie departs from Shaftesbury is in his admission of the constructed nature of the sublime.

Unit 15(b): Edmund Burke-An Introduction

He was born in 1730, in Arran Quay, Dublin, and educated at the Quaker school in Ballitore and Trinity College Dublin. Obedient to his father's wish, he embarked on the formal study of law in the Middle Temple at the Inns of Court in London: a curriculum of professional training he would never complete. He published two early books, *A Vindication of Natural Society* in 1756 and *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* in 1757, which caught the eye of David Hume, Samuel Johnson, and other illustrious contemporaries and established him as an author. Burke had already shown an interest in politics, informed by copious knowledge; and in 1758 he contracted with the bookseller Dodsley to produce the

Annual Register and wrote the political history of the year for its first volume in 1759. The same year saw his appointment as private secretary to a member of Parliament, William Gerard Hamilton. In 1761, Hamilton was named chief secretary for Ireland, and Burke accompanied him to Dublin. A disagreement over the freedom that Burke was to be allowed for his own projects led in early 1765 to a falling- out with Hamilton; but a few months later, Burke found a new patron, the Marquess of Rockingham, the leader of a group of Whigs then pressing the House of Commons to assert its in de pen dence from the king. Rockingham made Burke his private secretary (a position he would hold for seventeen years), and through affiliation with the Rockingham party, Burke was returned as a member of Parliament for the pocket borough of Wendover. In January 1766, he gave his maiden speech, presenting a petition from Manchester merchants against restrictions on American trade. He went on to distinguish himself as a strategist for the Rockingham administration of 1765– 1766 and assisted in its major achievement, the repealof the stamp tax on the American colonies.

In 1769, Burke joined the parliamentary resistance to an effort by King George III and his parliamentary allies to prevent John Wilkes from taking his seat in the House of Commons. While the legal argument simmered, the Rockingham party began to concert a policy to check the increasing power of the king. Burke's view of the constitution at this crisis emerged in 1770, in his first political book, *Thoughts on the Cause of the Present Discontents.* This was a practical manifesto for the Rockingham Whigs and also a theoretical defense of the idea of a political party. An organized opposition, Burke argued, was a necessary bulwark of liberty; and to warrant the formation of such a party, one reason would always suffice: "When bad men combine, the good must associate; else they will fall, one by one, an unpitied sacrifi ce in a contemptible struggle." Whatever might alter in his subsequent stance, Burke would continue to speak for the good of "association" as a limit on the privilege and aggrandizement of court favorites.

Burke believed that the practice of politics could never be isolated from the ordinary work of moral judgment. Accordingly, he was skeptical of a priori theories of the social contract that codified the definitions of citizenship and state power. In the 1770s and 1780s, most of his energy was given to enlarging the liberty of the people by strengthening the protections against monarchical abuse of power. Yet he was never a believer in popular government: statesmanship always carried, for him, a sense of the dignity and ceremony that should accompany high enterprises, and the capacity to take long views without concern for popular support or mandates. Burke's exalted idea of political duty could not be fulfilled by a monarch. Its embodiment was the leader in a responsible assembly who, drawing on the skill and talents of others, labors to mold the sentiments of the people and to justify the policies and laws of a nation.

In 1774, Burke gained a chance to play such a part. A set of Whigs who admired his views on American aff airs invited him to stand for Parliament in Bristol. This was a contested election (rare then), in the second city of the kingdom, and Burke's victory gave him a platform from which he could directly engage the public issues of the time. In the parliamentary sessions of 1774 and 1775, he pleaded for a sympathetic reception of the American protests against taxation. His *Speech on Conciliation with America,* delivered in March 1775, urged a policy of concession to the point of disowning any further intention to tax. Th e three- hour speech, with its history of trade with the colonies, its bold sketch of American manners and morals, and its genealogy of the descent of British liberty, has been considered from that day to this among the greatest orations in the language: "An Englishman," Burke told his listeners, "is the unfittest person on earth to argue another Englishman into slavery." The right use of the Americans, he concluded, was to

take them as equal partners in trade and as allies in time of war. “Magnanimity in politics is not seldom the truest wisdom; and a great empire and little minds go ill together.”

During his Bristol years, from 1774 to 1780, Burke stood out as a defender of free trade with Ireland, of liberalization of the laws controlling imprisonment for debt, and of repeal of the legal disabilities of Catholics— all unpopular positions in a Protestant and mercantile city. When threatened with loss of his constituency in 1780, he gave an unswerving defense of his actions in his *Speech at the Guildhall Previous to the Election*. Looking back on six years of service, Burke said to the voters of Bristol: “I did not obey your instructions: No. I conformed to the instructions of truth and nature, and maintained your interest, against your opinions, with a constancy that became me.”

With Britain still fighting the American war, Burke at this moment began to follow the trail of abuse of power from the western to the eastern empire. A powerful interest linking British policy in those two regions was the East India Company. By the time he re- entered the House of Commons in 1781 as representative for Malton, Burke had found the cause that would occupy the remainder of his parliamentary career: to expose the injustices of the Company in India, where its actions had the corrupt and despotic character of “a state in the disguise of a merchant”; and when the investigation pointed finally to a responsible party, to impeach the highest resident officer of the Company, the governor- general of Bengal, Warren Hastings.

In March 1782, Burke was appointed paymaster of forces in the second Rockingham ministry— a subcabinet position that was the highest he would ever hold— but the administration ended in July with the death of Lord Rockingham. In the running of the party, Burke nevertheless continued to be a central figure, now as an adviser to Charles Fox. Twenty years Burke’s junior, a popular leader and exuberant speaker with a genius for politics, Fox had begun his career as a Tory before acquiring a more generous understanding of constitutional liberty. As leader of the remnant of the Rockingham Whigs, he forged an improbable but politic alliance with Lord North, the minister who had presided over the American war; and from Burke and Fox together, in 1783 there issued a carefully drafted proposal on the governance of India. To rally support for the mea sure, Burke delivered his *Speech on Fox’s East India Bill,* which recounted in unsparing terms the history of British India and urged a systematic reform of the empire. Fox’s bill would have placed officers of the Company under parliamentary control; rejection of the plan by the House of Commons precipitated the fall of the Fox– North coalition. Burke’s response was to speak more pressingly for the impeachment of Hastings. He took his party with him— Fox, Sheridan, and others— and having secured the partial support of the prime minister, William Pitt, the House of Commons launched the trial of Hastings before the tribunal of the House of Lords. Meeting on the days Parliament could spare from other business, the process stretched from 1788 to 1795 and ended with the acquittal, on all counts, of Warren Hastings by the House of Lords. Burke would look back on this attempt at full- scale reform as his proudest achievement—“my monument.”

A surer fame in his lifetime came from his pamphlets of the 1790s against the French Revolution. The first and most influential of these was *Reflections on the Revolution in France.* Published in November 1790, it would provoke, by the end of the decade, more than a hundred replies. Burke warned against a great change in the spirit of society from aristocratic to demo cratic manners, and from the authority of an ancient landed nobility to that of a mobile commercial class. He spoke as a believer in precedent and prescription and as a defender of natural feelings such as reverence for an established church and a hereditary nobility. Against the

promise of a society based on contract, he offered his vision of a society rooted in trust—"a partnership not only between those who are living, but between those who are living, those who are dead, and those who are to be born." Burke believed that the advent of democracy would destroy the very idea of a human partnership spread out over generations. He gave reasons to support his fear that democracy could never correct the errors that "the people" given unchecked power would commit on a new and terrifying scale. With its broad exposition of political principles and its dramatic narrative of crisis, the *Reflections* did more than any other book to create the French Revolution as a world- historical event for the mind of Europe.

Burke's attack on the revolutionists in France was also an attack on their allies in En gland. It split the Whig Party; and in 1791, after a bitter exchange with Fox in the House of Commons, Burke crossed the floor to the administration side. In 1794, he was awarded a pension by Pitt and George III, and retired to his estate in Beaconsfield. Two pamphlets of Burke's final years exhibit the continuity and the ambivalence of his political views. In 1792, *A Letter to Sir Hercules Langrishe* made an impassioned plea for the rights of Catholics in Ireland. The *Letters on a Regicide Peace,* in 1796, sought to justify and instigate a counterrevolutionary war against France. He died in 1797, ending as he began, in isolation.

Unit 16(a): A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful

Edmund Burke's *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* (1757) is not only one of the major theories of the sublime; it is one of the foundational texts of modern aesthetics. The first treatise to systematically compare the sublime and the beautiful, it serves as a bridge between the empiricism of early eighteenth-century British criticism (Addison, Shaftsbury, Hutcheson) and the development of philosophical aesthetics in Germany in the latter half of the eighteenth century (Mendelssohn, Lessing, Kant). Although the treatise is perhaps best known for its promotion of an aesthetics of terror, this reputation tends to obscure Burke's multifaceted treatment of sublimity, namely his integration of theories of man and society with reflections on art and nature.

This unit endeavours to explore the wider contexts and implications of Burke's Enquiry, specifically how Burke, by integrating empiricist with literary-critical methods of analysis, seductively recalibrates the sublime for modernity. The first section argues that the narrowness of the term "aesthetic" – a concept that was not available to Burke – can lead to fundamental misunderstandings of Burke's project and that Longinus's treatise and rhetorical theory more generally play a greater role in Burke's conception of sublimity than is typically granted. The second section on Burke's empirical methodology, aims to dispel the common assumption that the pleasure in the sublime results from the "removal" of pain. However, according to Burke's own articulation, the sublime involves an irreducible virtuality that is somewhat at odds with Burke's presentation of elementary sensation. The third section explores Burke's opposition between the passion of self-perseveration (based on fear) and the social passions, an opposition that does not neatly map onto the distinction between the sublime and the beautiful, as Burke initially implies; for the sublime also involves the social passions, namely sympathy and ambition, the former emphasizing the social bond (empathy for the other's pain) and the latter the individualistic impulse (the agonistic quality of sublimity observed in Longinus). The fourth section delves more deeply into Burke's association between bourgeois individualism and the sublime. Finally, the fifth section closely examines Burke's subsection devoted to "Power,"

which was added to the second edition of the Enquiry, showing how it reveals a continuity between a religious and an aesthetic understanding of transcendence in Burke's thought.

Unit 16(b): Edmund Burke's *The Sublime and the Beautiful*- Part V

Section I

The first section of Part V of Burke's *Sublime* begins with the assertion that physical objects of nature exert their respective influences on the human mind in keeping with their motions and configurations, ordered by Nature and supervised by the ever-vigilant Almighty. Though works of painting attract our minds in a similar fashion, they have the additional factor of imitation of life attached to them. The manner in which works of architecture entrance our minds depends on their being founded on the laws of nature and simultaneously the laws of reason. Here Burke reminds us that proportion is a key feature of beauty-whether something will or will not appear alluring depends ultimately on whether they possess proportion or not. But Burke finds that the mechanism by which words allure us differs from the above-mentioned forms of enchantment. Burke finds it essential to undertake a thorough study of the manner in which words appeal to our intellect.

Section II

We generally tend to think that poetry (as well as words in general) affects us by conjuring those ideas in front of our mind's eye which the words stand for. Burke classifies words into three types-

(i) aggregate words like man, horse, tree, castle, etc. They represent simple ideas united by nature to form a determinate composition.

(ii) abstract words like red, blue, round, square, etc. They stand for one simple idea.

(iii) compound abstract words formed by an arbitrary union, of the two previous types and of the various relations between them in greater or less degrees of complexity; as virtue, honour, persuasion, magistrate.

Burke is interested in a discussion of the third type of words-compound abstracts. He claims that they do appeal to us, but not by representing something they denote. Burke points that they do not constitute "real essences". As instance he points out that on hearing compound abstract words like virtue, liberty, or honour-one can't get any precise idea of the relations which these words stand for. Burke says that when we analyze these words we reduce them from one set of general words to another, and then into the simple abstracts and aggregates. Proceeding along this chain of explication, by the time we discover the original ideas the effect of the composition is totally lost. Therefore this sort of meaning-making is unsuited to general conversations. When we encounter such words in reality, we see them being applied to good or evil happening to someone. Thereafter, whenever we encounter such words we associate the sounds to their earlier context and deduce whether they represent good or evil. With time, we completely forget their

original context but only remember whether they point towards good or evil. This impression is consciously/unwittingly used by our minds as we attempt to read across texts in our lives.

Section III

Alluding to John Locke, Edmund Burke points out that even before the complete sense of a word is acquainted to a child, the positive or negative connotation of the word is taught. Later in life when the situations befitting these words arise, it often happens that those words referring to evil give pleasant sensations and vice versa. Burke calls it "a strange confusion of ideas and affections", resulting in contradiction between notions and actions. Burke opines that even people who sincerely love virtue and detest vice often act wickedly at times. On these occasions passions on the side of virtue were not aroused due to the contradiction between the particular occasion and the ideas with which the sounds have been generally associated. As instance Burke quotes words like "Wise, valiant, generous, good, and great" which generally affect us irrespective of occasion. Burke identifies such scenarios when words unbecoming of necessity are used, as instances of 'bombast'. He holds good sense and experience as caveats against the wayward power of language.

Section IV

Burke identifies the threefold effect of words on us-

(i) sound, (ii) manner, (iii) the affection of the soul produced by one or by both of the foregoing. Compounded abstract words produce the first and third named effects.

But Simple Abstract words like blue, green, hot, cold etc play all three of the purposes of words. But Burke feels that these words do not derive their power by forming pictures of the several things they would represent in the imagination. Though the simple abstracts may sometimes directly be associated with some particular idea or object, the compound abstracts never conjure any picture in the mind. On the contrary they refer to a train of associations. By quoting a passage describing the course of the river Danube, he explains how in real reading experiences words rapidly appear in clusters and thus forbid tracing the chain of association which they refer to. Therefore, he concludes that "it is impracticable to jump from sense to thought, from particulars to generals, from things to words, in such a manner as to answer the purposes of life; nor is it necessary that we should."

Section V

Burke says that he has often tried to convince people that their passions are aroused by words whose core ideas they don't know. Moreover, these people are never convinced when he tells them that in common conversation we do understand what others are saying even without delving into the train of associations conjured by the word. Burke proposes disinterested/unbiased analysis of words and mechanism of appeal on us.

Burke says that while composing this work he became aware of the possibility that one might hear/read words which appeal to him (without grasping the complete essence) and later be capable of using them to elicit the same or other appealing emotions in others. In this regard he mentions a blind poet Mr Blacklock who had no way of identifying or distinguishing among

colours. But in Mr Blacklock's description of colourful objects surpasses the propriety or justness with which people without visual deformities may describe those objects. Burke points out that Mr Blacklock is a living example of someone who cannot have a clear idea of colours, yet he has been so moved by their description that he can in turn describe them with vigour.

Section VI

In this Section Burke distinguishes between descriptive and dramatic types of poetry. Burke opines that dramatic poetry imitates the manners and passions of men following the dictum "animi motus effert interprete lingua" (meaning "of the emotional highlights of the tongue"). But descriptive poetry operates chiefly by substitution-it uses sounds (which refer to things or ideas) to give the effect of reality.

Section VII

Words can only represent but cannot conjure the real object which they name or describe and this may lead one to conjecture that the power of words would be trivial. But in reality, they exert profound impact on our minds. Burke accounts the source of this impact to three sources-

(i) Whenever we describe how someone is affected by something, our description is already coloured by the manner in which we are ourselves affected by that person's fate (sympathy/apathy/antipathy). Moreover, the way in which we are affected by the fate of others depends on our perspective, which in turn is built around what others have said/written on that subject. To speak/write, words are indispensable.

(ii) Abstract ideas often do not have material reality. But there are words representing abstract ideas. These words often wield substantial power over our passions and direct our actions.

(iii) Words give us the power to combine things we cannot otherwise combine as materials in reality. Moreover, description through words can impart "enlivening touches" which painting cannot hope to attain. Words connote more than they denote. Therefore they mean more than simply the materials denoted by the words. As an instance Burke quotes Milton in whose description the habitation of the fallen angels-"Rocks, caves, lakes, fens, bogs and dens" is made more gloomy by linking it with "shades of death, /A universe of death." The geographical features listed as the abode of fallen angels could not be equated with suggestion of evil without the mechanism of words.

But once again Burke points out that words do not always "clearly" depict the things they represent. In such cases it is paradoxical that words can emote more effectively than the things represented. But Burke himself untangles this knotty paradox when he defines the nature of human mind as-" We yield to sympathy what we refuse to description".

Actually verbal description conveys a poor and insufficient idea of the thing described. Such "naked description" does not affect us. It requires careful handling of modes of speech to enliven the description so that the listener may be moved. Burke opines that "very polished languages" like the French language are characterized by "superior clearness and perspicuity" but they are deficient in strength. On the other hand Oriental languages are very powerful. He says:

"Uncultivated people are but ordinary observers of things, and not critical in distinguishing them; but, for that reason, they admire more, and are more affected with what they see, and therefore express themselves in a warmer and more passionate manner."

Burke says that "affection" might often be well-conveyed without the idea being precisely presented. He concludes by stating that to understand how words affect us, it were best to enquire into the properties of such things in nature, as raise love and astonishment in us; and by showing us in what manner they operated to produce these effects."

Suggested Reading

1. *The Intellectual Life of Edmund Burke: From the Sublime and Beautiful to American Independence*-David Bromwich
2. *The Theory of the Sublime: From Longinus to Kant*-Robert Doran
3. *The Sublime (The New Critical Idiom)*-Philip Shaw
4. *Of the Sublime: Presence in Question (SUNY Series: Philosophy and Critical Theory)*-Rodolphe Gasche and Mark C. Taylor (eds)
5. *The Sublime: A Reader in Eighteenth Century Aesthetic Theory* –Andrew Ashfield and Peter de Bolla (eds)
6. 'Burke on the Sublime and the Beautiful'-Anthony Quinton
7. *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful*-Edmund Burke
8. 'Edmund Burke and the Emotions'-David Dwan.
9. 'A Short Guide to the History of the Sublime'-Kenneth Holmqvist and Jaroslaw Pluciennik

Assignment

1. By what mechanism do words exert their influence on the mind?
2. What is Burke's purpose behind introducing the anecdote of Mr Blacklock?
3. How does Burke characterize dramatic poetry? How can one differentiate it from descriptive poetry?
4. According to Burke, what causes "a strange confusion of ideas and affections"?
5. How far does Burke concur/differ from Longinus' account of the sublime? Discuss.
6. Present an analytical study of the concept of sublime, as handled by British philosophers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

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E N G L I S H

(POST GRADUATE DEGREE PROGRAMME)

SEMESTER II

Optional
Course II (a)

Course Material

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Utmost care and precision have been ensured in the development of the SLMs, making them useful to the learners, besides avoiding errors as far as practicable. Further suggestions from the stakeholders in this would be welcome.

During the production-process of the SLMs, the team continuously received positive stimulations and feedback from Professor (Dr.) Sankar Kumar Ghosh, Hon'ble Vice- Chancellor, University of Kalyani, who kindly accorded directions, encouragements and suggestions, offered constructive criticism to develop it within proper requirements. We gracefully, acknowledge his inspiration and guidance.

Sincere gratitude is due to the respective chairpersons as well as each and every member of PGBOS (DODL), University of Kalyani. Heartfelt thanks is also due to the Course Writers-faculty members at the DODL, subject-experts serving at University Post Graduate departments and also to the authors and academicians whose academic contributions have enriched the SLMs. We humbly acknowledge their valuable academic contributions. I would especially like to convey gratitude to all other University dignitaries and personnel involved either at the conceptual or operational level of the DODL of University of Kalyani.

Their persistent and co-ordinated efforts have resulted in the compilation of comprehensive, learner-friendly, flexible texts that meet the curriculum requirements of the Post Graduate Programme through Distance Mode.

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University of Kalyani

Optional Course 2(a): Post-Independence Indian Literature in English

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Block I: The Poetry of Kamala Das and Nissim Ezekiel

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OBJECTIVES

In one of the most referred of books, *A History of Indian English Literature,* M.K. Naik comments,

> "Women poets form a sizable school in modern Indian English literature and the most outstanding work, expressive of what Mary Erulkar has trenchantly called 'the bitter service of womanhood', is by Kamala Das (1934 –), a bilingual writer like [Arun] Kolatkar. A distinguished author in her mother tongue, Malayalam, Kamala Das has published three books of verse in English: *Summer in Calcutta* (1965), *The Descendants* (1967) and *The Old Playhouse and Other Poems* (1973)." (208).

Kamala Das is regarded as one of the most important of the women poets of Indian English in the post-independence period. And it is for nothing that a poet with three slender volumes of poetry has attracted so much of attention – both critical and popular. Along with major poets like Nissim Ezekiel, Dom Moraes, A. K. Ramanujan, Arun Kolatkar, R. Parthasarathy, Jayanta Mahapatra, K. N. Daruwalla, Kamala Das's name appears simultaneously in most important anthologies of Indian English poetry. Not only in India, her poems have also appeared in magazines and journals all over the world. Her importance can be adjudged from the fact that her works appear in the syllabi and are taught in India as well as abroad. Hence any study of Indian English literature of the post-independence period remains incomplete without the study of Kamala Das's poetry.

Unit 1 (a): Life and Works of Kamala Das

Her Life

Kamala Das was born on 31 March 1934 as Madhavi Kutty, the daughter of parents who were poets of some renown and she was educated mostly at home. She lived with her grandmother, Nayar father and Nalapat mother beside the sea in Southern Malabar in Kerala. Her home was influenced by Mahatma Gandhi so much that Gandhiji's photos hung in every room. The family members even wore khadi clothes and spun the khadi yarn. In her autobiography titled *My Story* (1976), Kamal Das mentions the seven members of her family who lived in her ancestral home called the Nalapat house – her grandmother, her aunt Ammini, her grand uncle, the poet, her great grandmother, her two sisters, and interestingly, Mahatmaji. At the tender age of fifteen, Kamala Das was married off to Mr Das, an official in the Reserve Bank of India posted in Bombay at that

time. Kamala Das's difference in age with her husband made him more of a father figure to her and he also encouraged her meeting people of her own age. These meetings at times led to extra marital affairs, which critics point out, are expressly dealt with in her poems. Her writings reveal that she was so desperate that she was prepared to offer herself to any man who would give her what she did not find in her marriage – 'a beggar begging for love' is how she describes herself in her poems. In spite of the miserable life in her husband's house, she continued to live with her husband and three sons. With the passing of time she has however confessed to her dependence on her husband who was a father to her sons as well as herself. In fact she says she grew up with her sons. It was also her husband who encouraged her writing professionally because the extra income helped the finances of the family. The most contradictory event of her life was probably her converting to Islam in 1999, taking on the name Kamala Suraiya. She eventually settled in Trivandrum with her husband but at present lives with her youngest son in Pune.

Her Works

Kamala Das writes both in English and Malayalam. In her native tongue she is popular for her short stories and some novels. Her books of poems in English are: Summer in Calcutta (1965), The Descendants (1967), and The Old Playhouse and Other Poems (1973). She has published with Pritish Nandy a collection of their love poems titled Tonight, This Savage Rite (1979). Her autobiography titled My Story, which created quite a stir, was first serialized in "The Current Weekly" of Bombay from January to December 1974, and was then published as an independent work in 1976. Her only novel in English is titled Alphabet of Lust (1976).

Though her prose works are controversial, her essays like "I Studied All Men", "What Women Expect Out of Marriage and What They Get", "Why Not More Than One Husband?" and "I Have Lived Beautifully" have helped to consolidate her image as a feminist writer. Her essays as well as her poems expose a writer who is "forthright, unconventional yet honest, ebullient yet tragic, impetuous yet insecure" (Dwivedi 3). In fact some of her feminist ideas are seen to have been expressed in some of her poems also.

Unit 1(b): Critical Analysis of Select Poems of Kamala Das- (i) 'The Dance of Eunuchs and 'My Grandmother's House'

The poems in the syllabus can be found in two of her collected volumes of poems. While "The Dance of the Eunuchs", "My Grandmother's House", "A Hot Noon in Malabar" and "In Love" are from the volume titled Summer in Calcutta published in 1965. The other two poems namely "The Invitation" and "The Looking Glass" appeared in the collection titled The Descendants that was published in 1967. We will here discuss the poems of the earlier collection first and then move to the later volume.

THE DANCE OF THE EUNUCHS

It was hot, so hot, before the eunuchs came
To dance, wide skirts going round and round, cymbals Richly
clashing, and anklets jingling,
Jingling. Beneath fiery gulmohur, with
Long braids flying, dark eyes flashing, they danced and
They danced, oh, they danced till they bled... There were green Tattoos on their
cheeks, jasmines in their hair, some
Were dark and some were almost fair. Their voices Were harsh,
their songs melancholy; they sang of lovers dying and of children
left unborn ...
Some beat their drums; others beat their sorry breasts and wailed,
and writhed in vacant ecstacy.

They were thin in limbs and dry, like half-burnt logs from Funeral
pyres, a drought and a rottenness
Were in each of them. Even the crows were so
Silent on trees, and the children, wide eyed, still;
All were watching these poor creatures' convulsions.
The sky crackled then, thunder came, and lightning
And rain, a meagre rain that smelt of dust in
Attics and the urine of lizards and mice...

The opening poem of the volume Summer in Calcutta is "The Dance of the Eunuchs", usually regarded as expressing the poet's suppressed desires. The poem graphically describes a group of eunuchs and their activities on a hot day. The poem opens with a description of the dancing of the eunuchs. The poet beautifully expresses the "wide skirts going round and round", the cymbals "richly clashing", the anklets "jingling", all creating the music that the eunuchs create through their music and dance. The use of repetition like "round and round", "jingling, jingling, jingling", "they danced and they danced", all help to reinforce the music of the eunuchs' dance. The poet's description of the physical appearance of the eunuchs is also very vivid – their long braids, their dark eyes, the green tattoos on their cheeks, jasmine in their hair and some fair skinned and some dark, with harsh voices. Immediately after the musical note, a tone of sadness sets in. The songs that the eunuchs sing are melancholy songs, songs of death – of "lovers dying" and of "children left unborn". They wail and beat their breasts while they sing these sad songs. The poem starts with their dance but soon moves on to their 'wailing' and 'writhing' in "vacant ecstasy". The note of music and dance changes to one of sadness of their sad songs, of their emaciated bodies – "thin in limbs and dry; like half-burnt logs from funeral pyres, a drought and a rottenness" that the poet finds in them. Their musical "jingling" colourful dance changes to "these poor creatures' convulsions". And with that came the rains, almost as if the dance of the eunuchs had brought in the rains. Rains, the people had been eagerly waiting for, had arrived because of the eunuchs. It is as if through their dance and sad songs they bring the rains, and thus relief from the heat, signaling a good omen. They suffer pain, poverty and marginalization but bring good luck for the people of society. Eunuchs are regarded as lucky in the Hindu tradition.

The choice of words which convey the ideas so perfectly make Kamala Das the remarkable poet that she is. The choice of the eunuchs would appear at first to be an unusual choice. But when we think further, we find that the eunuchs' choice is to convey the pain of their lives and also their sexual ambiguity. A. N. Dwivedi comments that the "poem objectifies through an external, familiar situation; the poet's strangled desire within" (5). We might add that these strangled desires are similar to those that the eunuchs also suppress and in spite of them sing and dance to entertain people and earn their bread. The solemn note at the end of the poem – an almost climactic sneer of the smell of dust in "Attics and the urine of lizards and mice" is a characteristic trait of Das's poetry that we will find in quite a few of her poems.

MY GRANDMOTHER'S HOUSE

There is a house now far away where once I received
love. The woman died,
the house withdrew into silence, snakes moved among books I
was then too young
to read, and my blood turned cold like the moon. How often I
think of going there,
to peer through blind eyes of windows or just listen to the
frozen air
or in wild despair, pick an armful of darkness to bring it
here to lie

behind my bedroom door like a brooding dog... you
cannot believe, darling,
can you, that I lived in such a house and
was proud and loved, I who have lost
my way and beg now at stranger's doors
to receive love, at least in small change ?

The next poem from *Summer in Calcutta* that I am going to discuss here is "My Grandmother's House". Kamala Das has always expressed a special attachment to her grandmother and the ancestral house where she spent a considerable part of her childhood. This poem nostalgically looks back at her happy and carefree childhood days. The tone of nostalgia that is evident in this poem is also visible in "A Hot Noon in Malabar", that will also be discussed here. The poet here recollects her cheerful childhood days, surrounded by the warmth of love and security, spent in her grandmother's house in Malabar. The tone of nostalgia becomes more intense because the poet refrains from describing those happy memorable days. Rather she describes the pain in the absence of those love-filled days.

The poem starts with a description of the deserted house that once used to resound with the voices and laughter of its inmates. The same house is now engulfed in darkness and infested with snakes. The 'silence', 'darkness', 'frozen air', 'blind eyes of windows', all of which make the blood turn "cold like the moon" reinforces the 'brooding' mood of 'despair'. The love and warmth the poet received in that house in the past also seems to exist in its current darkness. The abundance of love the poet received there is in contrast to her later life where she tends to "beg now at strangers' doors to / Receive love". To compensate for the absence of security and love in her present life the poet wants to "pick an armful of darkness" from that old house and bring it with her. The love she received in her childhood is compared to a "brooding dog" that refuses to let the mistress out of his sight. Such is the constant feeling of warmth and security that she feels even in the remembrance of that lost love and expects to find even in the darkness that she would want to gather from that house.

The tone of nostalgia depicted by the poet here is compared by A. N. Dwivedi to Charles Lamb's attitude in his essay "Old Familiar Faces" and also reminds the author of Tennyson's "Tears, Idle Tears" and of the line "thinking of the days that are no more". The dominant mood of melancholy, pathos and nostalgia, A. N. Dwivedi finds, is common to all these works. Again in her autobiography My Story Kamala Das describes the desertion of their ancestral house much as she describes it here in the poem: "After the sudden death of my grand-uncle and then that of my dear grandmother the old Nalapat House was locked up and its servants disbanded. The windows were shut, gently as the eyes of the dead are shut…. The rats ran across its darkened halls and the white ants raised on its outer walls strange totems of burial." (Chapter 33) She even calls it "the old beloved house". Such intense feeling for the house is similar to the feeling of nostalgia and the oppressive mood of death and decay as expressed in the poem.

Unit 2(a): Critical Analysis of (iii) 'A Hot Noon in Malabar' and (iv) 'In Love'

A HOT NOON IN MALABAR

This is a noon for beggars with whining Voices, a noon for
men who come from hills With parrots in a cage and
fortune-cards,

All stained with time, for brown *Kurava*[1] girls With old eyes,
who read palms in light singsong Voices, for bangle-sellers
who spread
On the cool black floor those red and green and blue Bangles, all
covered with the dust of roads,
For all of them, whose feet, devouring rough Miles, grow
cracks on the heels, so that when they Clambered up our porch, the
noise was grating, Strange... Ths is a noon for strangers who
part The window-drapes and peer in, their hot eyes Brimming with
the sun, not seeing a thing in Shadowy rooms and turn away and
look
So yearningly at the brick-ledged well. This Is a noon for
strangers with mistrust in
Their eyes, dark, silent ones who rarely speak At all, so that
when they speak, their voices Run wild, like jungle-voices.
Yes, this is
A noon for wild men, wild thoughts, wild love. To be here, far
away, is torture. Wild feet Stirring up the dust, this hot
noon, at my Home in Malabar, and I so far away...

The next poem from this collection is "A Hot Noon in Malabar". As already mentioned earlier, like the poem discussed above, this poem too dwells in memories of a happier past. The poet is conscious of being "so far away" from her "Home in Malabar" and this brings back a flood of memories of hot summer afternoons in Malabar. She describes in graphic detail the typical village scene on any such hot afternoon. However, while the mood of nostalgia prevails in the poem much like the earlier poem, the mood here is one of celebration and of fond remembrances. Unlike the other poem, where the mood of death and despair predominates, this poem is dominated by colour and music. There are the 'whining voices' of beggars, of the 'light singsong voices' of the Kurava girls, the grating sound of cracked feet on the porch and the wild "jungle-voices". The brightness, colourful jingle and cacophony of such a 'wild' hot summer afternoon nevertheless seems to lend more warmth in contrast to the torturous atmosphere on a similar hot afternoon in the city where the poet is at present – "and I so far away….". And to yet again quote from her autobiography: "From every city I have lived, I have remembered the noon in Malabar with an ache growing inside me, a homesickness". An important aspect of this poem is the contrast that the poet highlights between the people of the city and those who live close to nature – the wild but simple rustic people. This poem like "My Grandmother's House" is said to be steeped in autobiographical elements.

IN LOVE

Of what does the burning mouth of sun, burning
in today's
sky remind me? oh yes, his mouth... and his limbs
like pale and carnivorous plants reaching
out for me, and the said lie of my unending
lust, Where is room, excuse or even need
for love, for isn't each embrace a complete
thing,
a finished jigsaw, when mouth on mouth, I lie,
ignoring my poor moody mind, while pleasure
with deliberate gaiety trumpets harshly into
the silence of the room. At noon I watch the
sleek crows flying like poison on wings and at

night from behind the Burdwan Road the corpse-
bearers cry Bol
Hari Bol, a strange lacing for moonless nights,
while I walk the verandah, sleepless,
a million questions awake in me and all about
him and this
skin-communicated thing that I dare not
yet in his presence call our love.

The next poem is "**In Love**" published in the same collection titled *Summer in Calcutta*. In complete contrast to the poems I have discussed above this is quite an ambiguous poem centering on the poet's deliberations about physical love. The "burning mouth of sun" reminds the poet of the 'mouth' of the lover, the passion. Though she tries to question the validity and importance of such physical relationships in one's life, the images used for the purpose have negative implications. The limbs of the embracing partner are like "pale and carnivorous plants", and the story of 'unending lust' is actually a "sad lie". The most explicit and caustic comment the poet makes is in the following lines: "Where/ Is room, excuse or even/ Need for love, for, isn't each/ Embrace a complete thing, a/ Finished jigsaw". Here the poet emphasizes the way in which passion can overshadow emotional love and how this passion for lust that "trumpets harshly" is like a jigsaw puzzle, a complex web. But in its aftermath all does not seem rosy. On the contrary everything appears poisonous and death-like. Thus the immediate image that follows is of "sleek crows flying/ Like poison on wings" and the corpse-bearers crying "*Bol Hari Bol*". The poet in fact refuses to call this "skin-communicated thing" the physical relationship between two people, as 'love'. And she spends sleepless nights walking on the verandah and questioning herself on the validity and importance of love and lust. For all criticism that names Kamala Das as a poet of lust and physical pleasure, this poem could sure argue on behalf of the poet. In this poem the poet in fact ponders in an interior dialogue with herself the importance, if at all, of physical relationship in a person's life.

Unit 2(b): Critical Analysis of (v) 'The Invitation' and (vi) 'The Looking Glass'

THE INVITATION

I have a man's fist in my head today Clenching,
unclenching....
I have got all the Sunday evening pains. The sea is
garrulous today. Come in, Come in. What do you lose
by dying, and Besides, your losses are my gains.
Oh sea, let me shrink or grow, slosh up, Slide down, go
your way.
I will go mine. He came to me between Long
conferences, a fish coming up
For air, and was warm in my arms And inarticulate.
.....You are diseased
With remembering,
The man is gone for good. It would indeed Be silly to
wait for his returning.
Come in, come in. Oh sea, just leave Me alone. As
long
As I remember, I want no other.
On the bed with him, the boundaries of Paradise had
shrunk to a mere

Six by two and afterwards, when we walked Out together, they
Widened to hold the unknowing city....
End in me, cries the sea. Think of yourself Lying on a funeral pyre
With a burning head. Just think. Bathe cool, Stretch your limbs on cool
Secret sands, pillow your head on anemones. All through that summer's afternoons we lay On beds, our limbs inert, cells expanding Into throbbing suns. The heat had
Blotted our thoughts... Please end this whiplash Of memories, cries
The sea. For long I've waited for the right one To come, the bright one, the right one to live In the blue. No. I am still young
And I need that man for construction and Destruction. Leave me....
The sea shall bear some prying and certain Violations, but I tell you, the sea
Shall take no more, the sea shall take

I will now undertake to analyse the two other poems from the collection *The Descendants* (1967), namely "The Invitation" and "The Looking Glass". Kamala Das herself has confessed to her preoccupation with death. Her autobiography also records her failed attempts at suicide. She has continually complained of loneliness and an urge hence to end her life. In the same vein therefore in "**The Invitation**" the poet describes the sea's invitation for her to drown herself in its waters. Hence the dominant mood in the poem is one of death by drowning. The undercurrent of frustration that is usually present in all her works is openly spoken of here. The throbbing pain in the head, all her "Sunday evening pains", her being "diseased with remembering" and the "whiplash of memories" all point to her frustrations. There is a clear element of pain due to the end of a relationship when "The man is gone for good". And as a result she can sense the sea inviting her to end her life in its waters by drowning. "For long I've waited for the right one/ To come, the bright one, the right one to live/ In the blue" says the sea. The sea invites her to commit suicide "in order to escape the trials and tribulations of existence" (Dwivedi 105). The invitation is tempting but she resists it by trying to be positive. In spite of the sea trying in vain to justify why a death by drowning is better "Bathe cool,/ Stretch your limbs on cool/ Secret sands, pillow your head on anemones", than burning on the funeral pyre, the sea's invitation is refused. "The sea shall take no more, the sea shall take no more". A. N. Dwivedi comments, "Very often in her poetry Kamala Das identifies the 'sea' as a source of solace and comfort and redemption, whereas the 'heat' or the 'sun' connotes the opposite forces of oppression and exploitation" (106). However, exasperated with her pains she finally decides to accept the sea's invitation – "Darling, forgive, how long can one resist?"

THE LOOKING GLASS

Getting a man to love you is easy Only be honest about your wants as
Woman. Stand nude before the glass with him So that he sees himself the stronger one
And believes it so, and you so much more Softer, younger, lovelier... Admit your Admiration. Notice the perfection
Of him libs, his eyes reddening under

The shower, the shy walk across the bathroom floor, Dropping towels, and the jerky way he
Urinates. All the fond details that make Him male and your only man. Gift him all,
Gift him what makes you woman, the scent of Long hair, the musk of sweat between the breasts, The warm shock of menstrual blood, and all your Endless female hungers. Oh yes, getting
A man to love is easy, but living Without him afterwards may have to be
Faced. A living without life when you move Around, meeting strangers, with your eyes that Gave up their search, with ears that hear only His last voice calling out your name and your

Body which once under his touch had gleamed Like burnished brass, now drab and destitute.

"**The Looking Glass**" is probably the only poem in the syllabus where the trace of a feminist poet is evident. The poem speaks of the acceptance of the demands of one's body by the woman herself. "Only be honest about your wants as/ Woman". This poem is a celebration of the male and female human forms. It is also about the realization of one's wants and its acceptance. The poet seems to be accepting and relishing the gendered notions of the 'stronger' male form and the "softer, younger, lovelier" female form. She unhesitatingly speaks of the physical pleasures of love – of the "warm shock of menstrual blood" and of "endless female hungers". She describes the "fond details" of one's lover and the unspoken attractions of the female physical form. She unhesitatingly speaks of the pleasures of giving in love, "Gift him all,/ Gift him what makes you woman". But while on the one hand she describes the intimacy and the pleasures of physical love, on the other she delineates the pains of a broken relationship and thus the utter loneliness. "Oh yes, getting/ A man to love is easy, but living/ Without him afterwards may have to be/ Faced." The courage of this woman poet is evident in the poem in the discussions and explicit descriptions of all that is usually regarded as taboo in Indian society. According to A. N. Dwivedi, "The poem is simple and straightforward in its diction. It is highly charged with passion and power. A sharp feminine sensibility is at work here." (109) It should be noted that the importance given to eroticism in the poem is only to acknowledge the sensuousness of the human form. And it definitely takes ample pluck to be able to speak about it so expressly in print. It therefore would not be unfair to applaud this woman poet's effort in doing what most would not dare to.

Unit 3(a): Themes in the Poetry of Kamala Das

The various themes in Kamala Das's poems will be dealt with in detail in this section. It is usually pointed out that Kamala Das's range of poetry is very limited. She is sometimes compared to Jane Austen because the range of her themes is said to be narrow and limited (Dwivedi 20). However there are certain important themes that need to be discussed while dealing with her poems.

(i) The role of memory : A number of Kamala Das's poems dwell in the past and the poet is found to reminisce about fond memories of her childhood years. In the poems discussed above we have already seen the role of memory when the poet remembers her happier childhood days in "My Grandmother's House".

While the role of memory in Kamala Das's poems is mostly nostalgic, sometimes it is also used to express the author's own desires and frustrations like in "A Hot Noon in Malabar" or in "The Dance of the Eunuchs". In both these poems the poet remembers the days she spent in Malabar and uses it to contrast her present life with that of her past. Again it is also with the help of memory that she is able to make social comments when she praises the carefree and 'wild' lives lived in close contact with

nature rather than the far away life in the city ("A Hot Noon in Malabar"). Even when she comments on the marginalized and sad lives of the eunuchs, who in spite of their pain strive to entertain the public ("The Dance of the Eunuchs"), she uses memory. Thus memory is used in almost every poem whether to remember her relationships with several men or to start off a train of thoughts that take her back to Malabar, to her grandmother's house and to the abundance of love that existed there. In fact if we look carefully at the discussion of all the poems in our syllabus, we will notice how every poem starts off by remembering something from the past.

(i) **The elements of decay and death in her poems** : Especially in her poems "My Grandmother's House", "The Invitation" and "In Love" we find a very powerful and justified use of the images of death and decay. In the first poem the image of the snakes moving around in the silent house, "the blind eyes of windows", "blood turned cold like the moon" and the 'darkness' and "frozen air" helps to emphasize the atmosphere of death and decay. The whole poem of "The Invitation" centers on the theme of death and the author's suicidal tendencies. Again "In Love" uses the images of death at the end of the poem to accentuate the harsh effects of the aftermath of a physical relationship. Here the death imagery is used to heighten the contrasting effect of love and lust. In fact in both cases of the use of memory as well as the use of the images of death and decay, the effect is one of anguish and a deep feeling of loss.

(ii) **The championing for women's cause** : As already mentioned earlier, it is mostly in her prose pieces that such a strain of feminist writing is evident, but in the poem "The Looking-Glass" we can find some traces of such feminist fervour. In her refrain to be honest about one's wants and be ready to accept one's wants, Kamala Das has shown a lot of courage to be able to write about it in print. In her discussion in the poem of the pleasures of physical love, she has been extremely candid. By being brave enough to talk about it so publicly, she has been able to break down the gendered notions of what a woman can and cannot speak about. Somewhere through this act of hers she is making a statement about the women's cause. She refuses in the process the notion that only men can have sexual needs and desires. In fact in being able to honestly confess to her need for love, whether it is the love of her grandmother and the elders in the Nalapat house or the love from the man in her life, she does take a feminist stand by being able to express her needs. Also by confessing to her weaknesses she shows her strength of character. Here then is a woman writer who has broken all laws of gendered society by writing about herself and her life and needs and wants, honestly and with a lot of vigour.

(iii) **Her tragic vision**: According to A. N. Dwivedi, "Kamala Das's poetry abounds in details of misery and grief, loneliness and helplessness, death and disease, coldness and frigidity, frustration and dejection, and all these render her vision tragic."(83) The author points to Kamala Das's suicidal tendencies and want of love, rather "begging for love", as signs of her tragic vision. To quote him again, "Kamala Das's verse reveals the fact that she is a deeply distressed woman, languishing for true love, repenting her hollow marriage, complaining of her man and situation."(93) While this is true to a certain extent I would refute the idea that this makes Kamala Das's vision pessimistic. In fact I believe one who is able to write about her wants and weaknesses so openly, cannot be pessimistic. Everyone goes through bad phases in life but not everyone can cope with their share of difficulties. But one who learns to cope with them, or at least makes such an effort, can not be termed as pessimistic. And Kamala Das's poetry does show her making an effort to deal with her vicissitudes. Thus while I do agree that her vision can be termed as tragic, I would not agree that it is wholly pessimistic too. And the discussion of the poems in our syllabus would prove my point.

In conclusion, to quote A. N. Dwivedi again, "whatever she wrote was born of her own experiences which immediately make her an integral poet, a poet of felt thought" (20). As has already been pointed out in this section earlier, most of Kamala Das's poems deal with fond memories of her past. "Her poems are also an expression of love and passion…. [of] personal anguish and dilemma in love" (Dwivedi 26). Again along with her feelings of loss for her

childhood days is a jubilant feeling of freedom newly found in the city. The various themes as discussed here show the gifted poet that Kamala Das is.

Unit 3(b): Kamala Das as Confessional Poet

"One of the most important groups to have emerged on the poetic scene after the Second World War, the Confessional poets are the primary continuators of a tradition that attempts to make significance and beauty out of terror of our modern condition which is marked by a retreat into privatism and a progressive alienation of the artist from society…. Whether or not the poet is presenting the actual facts of his experience is irrelevant, but he must give the "illusion of a true confession. (This is Mina Surjit Singh in the essay titled "The Confessional Voice of Kamala Das", in Kaur pp. 89-90).

Like this author many critics would include Kamala Das in the group of poets known as Confessional poets like Sylvia Plath, Anne Sexton and Robert Lowell. All these poets were so named because they wrote subjective poems and that too with considerable frankness and sincerity. Confessional poetry is said to have emerged from the author's need to 'confess' – either about a guilt, about a death, suffering or some angst. It necessarily may not be a 'confession' as such, but an expression of the poet's most personal thoughts and emotions. A. N. Dwivedi comments: "Such poetry with its absence of inhibition regarding the expression of the most personal of matters, is usually contrasted with the 'objectivity' in the poetry of Eliot and Pound. Thus the use of free verse or blank verse in such poetry as opposed to the more restrictive rhymed verse." (40) I would like to mention here two important points made by Dwivedi about such poetry. He says the requirements of 'good' confessional poetry would be – one where the poet is seen to finally overcome his/her "vicissitudes of life" (41) and also one that is a candid disclosure rather than a mere 'concept' or fanciful idea of the poet's situation. A few characteristics of confessional poetry that A. N. Dwivedi outlines are given below. Though certain critics would point to the element of 'madness' and insanity in Kamala Das's poems which I personally disagree with, there is a similarity with the other generally accepted themes of 'confessional' poetry that I will briefly mention here.

(i) "Das's fundamental rejection of the traditional Hindu woman's virtues, modesty, reticence and deference, her feminine sensibility does assume special significance in that she dares an uninhibited articulation of the hurts it has received in an insensitive, largely man-made society" ("The Confessional Voice of Kamala Das" by Mina Surjit Singh, in Kaur, 41). Kamala Das gives an honest account in her poems of all her sufferings in her quest for emotional satisfaction and a genuine relationship in a patriarchal world.

(ii) The emotions of 'discontent' and 'dissatisfaction' that is common to confessional poetry is also found in the poems of Kamala Das. Her continual complaints about her circumstances and her persistent search for a stable and fulfilling relationship that are the foci of her poems help to bring these emotions of 'discontent' and 'dissatisfaction' to the fore.

(iii) Confessional poetry is said to "operate from a level that is personal and particular rather than general and universal" (Dwivedi 43). And the poems of Kamala Das as discussed above amply illustrate the deeply personal trait in her writing.

The next characteristic of 'confessional' poetry that we find in Kamala Das's poems is the traces of her autobiography. These autobiographical elements in her poetry can also be seen to match stories in her autobiography titled *My Story*. Hence yet again these are not fictive stories of her imagination but lived moments of her life. Such elements abound in the poems in the syllabus like "My Grandmother's House", "A Hot Noon in Malabar" and even "The Invitation".

(iv) Confessional poetry is known to extensively express feelings of "persecution and inadequacy" (Dwivedi 43). Kamala Das's "The Dance of the Eunuchs" can be said to be one such poem which expressly talks about her own feelings of 'persecution and inadequacy'.

(v) There is a constant stress in her poetry of the personal "I", "my" and "mine" restricting her poetry to an extremely private scope. This is another important aspect of the 'confessional' poet's work.

(vi) As Mina Surjit Singh also points out that Kamala Das would not be bound by the restrictive laws of either society or verse. Hence her poetry is an expression of a free flow of emotions and admission of various personal experiences in print.

The private life of the poet Kamala Das therefore, "especially under stress of psychological crisis,… becomes a major theme" (Kaur 90). And these are the various ways by which Kamala Das's poetry can be classified as 'confessional' poetry.

Unit 3 (c): Kamala Das's Style

With regard to Kamala Das's style P. Lal comments that "while Mrs Das has her attitudes and reactions all poetically perfect, her handling of verse-patterns is often surprisingly defective" (Kaur 68). He also points out that "a poet of such exquisite awareness should lack so much in craftsmanship is sad" (ibid). In essence P.Lal points to the prosaic quality of her verse, "prose would have suited them better" (ibid), he says. However I will here discuss some aspects of Kamala Das's poetry under the sub-heads of 'diction', 'versification' and 'imagery and symbolism'.

(i) **Diction:** Kamala Das had no formal education. Hence her poems are usually spontaneous outpourings of her innermost thoughts and emotions. Critics have pointed to her "instinct for precise and harmonious words" (Dwivedi 51). She is seen to have an amazing command over the English language in spite of her lack of formal education. "Her diction is lyrical and natural. Simplicity and lucidity are its hallmarks. It is hardly ever wrapped up in philosophical broodings or mystical abstractions." (Dwivedi 53) In the Foreword to Kanthapura (1938) Raja Rao had mentioned that "We, in India, think quickly, we talk quickly, and when we move we move quickly." It is the same speed and tempo of language that is noticeable in the poetry of Kamala Das. The repetition of words and phrases employed for purposes of emphasis helps to make her "verse musical and rhythmical" (Dwivedi 54). According to A.N. Dwivedi there is a cadence that is noticeable in the usage of repetition in poems like "A Hot Noon in Malabar". Dwivedi also points to the "rarely suggestive but more often 'expressive'" (54) diction of Kamala Das's poetry.

(ii) **Versification:** Kamala Das prefers the use of free or blank verse that allows her the freedom of expression. Dwivedi also points out that the use of free verse "allows her [Das] to include more within a smaller space" (61). Dwivedi comments that it is more important for Kamala Das "to show 'a spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings' than being particular in versification" (ibid). Linda Hess, a critic criticized Das's technicality in 1966 as "the carelessness in composition, a looseness typified by the alarming number of ellipses, … patches of triteness and lapses of balances". But the critic also concedes that "all these deficiencies cannot finally cloud the fact that a genuine poetic talent is at work here" (Quoted in Dwivedi, 61). P. Lal in fact points out that "In Das's case, the majority of the poems need not, in fact, have been written in verse-line patterns; prose would have suited them better". And also that "Many of the [Das's] poems thus flawed could improve if they were presented as Tagore presented the Gitanjali poems: in long movements of almost chantable prose." (Kaur 68)

(iii) **Imagery and Symbolism:** "Imagery tends to serve twin-purposes together – that of 'ornamentation' and that of arousing 'aesthetic pleasure' in the reader. An image enables a poet to convey his [/her] abstract thoughts or mystical longings in a 'concrete' form." (Dwivedi 66) Dwivedi also rightly points out that the "process of 'image-making' involves the skilful use of metaphors, similes, contrasts, and may be equated to 'picture-making' or 'concretization of emotions'" (66). And Kamala Das uses images and symbols in abundance in the poems in the syllabus, as have been discussed in the section where the poems have been discussed in detail. However in the poems in the syllabus there is no single recurrent image that thus transforms in to a symbol.

Some of the various images found in Kamala Das's poems in the syllabus are going to be discussed here. A predominant image is that of the 'sun'. While this particular image is usually used in poetry to convey brightness and a positive effect, in the poems here it denotes the 'heat' of passion. However the absence of the 'sun' denotes something very different – the elements of decay and death. The images of death are variedly implied by darkness and the absence of sunlight. Two different uses of the image of 'sun' is well explicated by A.N. Dwivedi when he points to the "oppressive power of the sun" in "The Dance of the Eunuchs" and its 'wildness' in "A Hot Noon in Malabar". An important image in Kamala Das's poetry is that of the human body. In a poem like "The Looking Glass" the poet celebrates both the male and female forms. Breaking all gendered and feminist assumptions of power, she celebrates the mutual appreciation of male and female physicality. She also urges all women here to "Gift him all,/ Gift him what makes you woman". In the poem "In Love" the human body is suggested to denote the heights of passion in physical union and also leading thus to question this "skin-communicated thing". There is also a recurrent use of the image of the 'sea'. In the poem "The Invitation", the sea acts as a calming and soothing agent. But it is also the sea that is waiting to consume the existence of the poet. Several minor images are used in the poems to emphasize the dominant theme of that particular poem. Like for example, animal imagery is very often used in her poems to denote various moods of the poet.

Unit 4(a): Nissim Ezekiel-Life and Works

K. R. Srinivasa refers to Nissim Ezekiel as: "An artist who is willing to take pains, to cultivate reticence, to pursue the profession of poetry with a sense of commitment. Ezekiels' poems are as a rule lucid - a merit these days - and are splendidly evocative and satisfyingly sensuous" (657). Often described as "poets' poet", Nissim Ezekiel inspired young poets writing in English in India for over four decades. He was a powerful and original literary critic and cultural commentator. It was with Ezekiel that modern poetry takes roots in India. He enriches the style and content of Indian English peotry enabling it to reflect the 20th century Indian reality. As a poet writing about urban alienation, he expresses the angst of many an educated, middle-class Indian.

Ezekiel was born in Munbai (Bombay) and his father was a Botany professor and his mother Principal of her own school. He belonged to Mumbai's Jewish community known as 'Bene Israel' Ezekiel was educated at Antonio D'Souza High School in Bombay. In 1947, he did his Masters in English Literature from Wilson College, University of Mumbai. In 1947-48, he taught English literature at Juter College, Mumbai and published literary articles. In November 1948, he sailed to London and studied philosophy at Birkbeck College. After a three and a half years stay, Ezekiel worked his way home as a dock scrubber aboard a cargo ship carrying arms to Indochina. He married Daisy Jacob in 1952 and in the same year Fortune press, London, published his first collection poetry : A Time to Change. He joined the Illustrated weekly of India under the editorship of C. R. Mandy and was instrumental in publishing the poems of many younger poets like A. K. Ramanujan, Dom Moraes, Adil Jussawala. Gieve Patel and so on. He remained with the Illustrated Weekly as assistant editor for two years. Soon after his return from London, he published his second book of verse Sixty Poems. For the next 10 years, he also worked as a broadcaster on arts and literature for All India Radio.

In 1954 he was made the editor of a newly founded literary magazine 'Quest'. He also served as an associate editor of 'Imprint', 1961-67, writing articles and reviewing books in a style that can only be described as Ezekielian. In 1961 itself he became the professor of English in Mithibhai College, Bombay, and later in Bombay University. He was also a visiting Professor at Leeds University. In 1967 he was invited to deliver lectures in the University of Chicago. He was able to introduce a number of young poets writing in English as an editor of poetry India, a quarterly (1964- 67). In 1964 he became art critic of the of the Times of India and also edited the Pen journal for several years. His reputation as a poet and teacher led to another invitation to

visit America this time by the government under its Internationational Visitors Program in 1974. He won the Sahitya Akademi Award, in 1983 and the Padmashree in 1988.

Ezekiel's poetical works include Sixty Poems, A Time to Change (1952), The Third (1952), The Unfinished Man (1960), The Exact Name (1965) Snakeskin and other Poems (translations of the Marathi poet Indira Sant, 1974), Hymns in Darkness (1976) and Latter-Day Psalms (1982). His Collected Poems 1952-88 appeared in 1989. A keen student of American Literature he edited two excellent, very readable books, An Emerson Reader (1965) and A Martin Luther King Reader (1969) and an anthology of fiction and poetry called Another India (1990).

He wrote two essays "Poetry and Philosophy" (1966) and "Poetry as Knowledge" (1972) in Quest, in which he expounded his ideas on poetry.

Unit 4(b): Themes in the Poetry of Nissim Ezekiel

Even as a student, in 1945, Ezekiel had expressed his poetic aim in a letter to a friend : "By now it is quite obvious to me that my poetry must express a certain totality of human experience". Elsewhere he mentions that poetry must move from a purely personal plane to a plane at once intensely individual and universal. Ezekiel's poems are on the one hand a search for self and identity. In these kinds of poems he looks inward.

"..... I wear
a human face but, prowl about the streets
of towns with murderous claws and anxious ears, recognizing all
the jungle sounds of fear
and hunger, wise in tracking down my prey
and wise in taking refuge when the stronger. roam."

(Commitment, *A Time to Change*, 1952).

Again in many of his important collections he expresses a gritty urban realism. He talks about city, politics, loneliness, love, sexuality and human situations

"Midnight Taxi-strike George Fernandes
Long walk to Churchgate between pavement sleepers Last train to
Borivli stopping at all stations
Two blind beggars husband and wife, in the first class compartment Half the day
hazy with the previous night."

(Hangover, *Latterday Psalms*, 1982).

In many of his poems the city of Bombay figure as a central image. Unlike other amateurs Ezekiel has been able to give to his poems a finality of form. In his "Poet, Lover and Birduwatcher". Ezekiel rightly says :

'The best poet wait for words. The hunt is not an
exercise of will But patient love relaxing on a hill."

Ezekiels poetry is sincere. They are infact generalizations of his own intimately felt experiences. They are simple, introspective and analytical.

Bruce King feels that there is a distinct personality expressed in the voice themes and style. In Kings words, Ezekiel sees "Life .... as a quest for wholeness, for intellectual and spiritual satisfication, for maturity. While the aim is salvation of the spirit from distractions and obsessions, it is grounded in the physical and social. The quest essentially concerns how to live happily, calmly, ethically as an integrated human being" (92).

Ezekiel showed how it is possible to write about oneself without being self consciously Indian and that Indian poetry could voice the feeling of the urban, educated and used not be obsessed with mythology, peasants and nationalist slogans.

Unit 5(a): Analysis of Select Poems of Nissim Ezekiel-(i) 'Night of the Scorpion', (ii) 'Philosophy', (iii) 'Enterprise'

Night of the Scorpion:

Taken from the collection. *The Exact Name,* published in 1965, the poem narrates a simple and tragic incident, where the poet's mother was stung by a scorpion. Even though the situation is a deeply personal one, Ezekiel is able to maintain an objective tone and a detached manner which helps him to make clear observations of the incident. Since it was raining heavily outside, almost "ten hours", the scorpion had been forced to move inside the premises of the house and 'crawl beneath a sack of rice.' The mother of the poet got stung probably because she had happened to touch the insect while doing some work there. The scorpion however escapes into the rain after having bitten the poet's mother. Ezekiel deliberately chooses, this incident with a rural setting because it enables him to highlight the contrast between the scientific temperament of the urban educated class and the ignorance and superstition of the rural folk. The response of the rural neighbourhood to the accident calls forth the poet's wonder and surprise. Soon the peasants came like swarms of flies and started praying to God for the woman's safety and inactivate the scorpion which is traditionally believed to be the symbol of evil. The errieness of the atmosphere is enhanced with the giant scorpion shadows created by the candles and lanterns carried by the villagers on the sun baked walls.' In spite of the fact that they ransacked the premises, the creature was not to be found, which was quite alarming because the villagers believed that the poison flowed in the mother's blood with each movement of the scorpion.

The illiteracy and ignorance of the villagers is emphasized by the fact that they prayed for things which to an educated eye would seem very irrelevant to the sting of a scorpion. For example, they believed that the present suffering would alleviate the sins of the previous birth or decrease the 'misfortunes of the next world'. The traditional belief of the world as an illusion or 'maya', (although explored by many a great poets and authors) is presented here in a very simple manner

> 'May the sum of evil balanced in this unreal
> world against the sum of good
> become diminished by your pain'.

There is an almost a fairy tale like wish that the good may win in its combat with the evil and the scales may be tilted in favour of the former.

R. Parthasarathy feels, that the poem demonstrates an effective use of parallelism where the domestic tragedy is balanced with the feeling of the community and the interrelationship between the two is established.

In some way or the other the personal no longer remains the personal, but becomes a matter concerning all :

> "and they sat around
> On the floor with my mother in the centre"

As the peasants invoke the divine spirits they wish that the tremendous suffering would annihilate the material desires and ambitions of the poet's mother which tend to make one unholy. Although the concern of the community may be a positive gesture, the poet becomes ironical about the attitude of the villagers who seemed to know everything best : "the peace of understanding on each face." Towards the end of the poem the crowd becomes more of a trouble to the woman than a panacea for a human being groaning with pain.

The conflict of the peasants with the poet's sceptic rationalist father becomes evident when, after getting frustrated and livid with the curses and blessings, he tries out "powder, mixture, herb and hybrid". It is surprising that science and supertition work together. On the one hand the poet's father pours a little paraffin upon the bitten toe and puls a match to it. On the other hand the holy man continued to perform his rites in order to curb the poison with incantation. The chaos reaches a crescendo until after twenty hours "it lost its sting". Perhaps the greatest irony of the whole poem is the reaction of the poet's mother after she gets well : "Thank God the scorpion picked on me/ and spared my children". The mammoth effort of rationality and superstition is reduced to insulstantiality things by the simple sincerity a typical Indian mother.

The Indianess of the poem is evident in the choice of the situation and setting. Ezekiel's purpose is very clear, the poem is the poet's response to a typical couflicting situation in India. M.
K. Naik says about the poem : "Nissim Ezekiel's *Night of the scorpion* ably illustrates the Indian synthesis in the work of the modernist. Hence the contrast between the two attitudes to scorpion bite : the sceptic rationalist attitude armed with a little paraffin as a remedy and the superstitious attitude fortified by prayers and incantations - a constrast typical of the modern Indian situation - give the poem of strong immediacy of experience,. "(38)

The poem becomes all the more appealing because Ezekiel employs a loose, seemingly free verse narrative structure. It is much more relaxed and open worked than Ezekiel's formal poetry with a natural colloquialism in diction and prose. However regular Iambic lines seem to keep their own pattern and lends to break the free flow of verse :

"They clicked their tongues,
With every movement the scorpion made
his poison moved in Mother's blood, they said.....

Inspite of such minor discrepancies in form, the poem remains a very interesting one as *Christopher Wiseman* says : "Night of the sorpion' remains an interesting and very valid poem, containing a fascinating tension between personal crisis and mocking social observation but the discrepancies of form confuse the tone, which swings between the natural and colloquial reporting of experience and a more removed literary formality. And yet, for all the problems, a real voice is heard in this poem, with its own rhythms and cadences...." (142).

Philosophy

In an autobiographical poem, entitled "Background, casually", Nissim Ezekiel had written:".

Philosophy,
Poverty and Poetry, three
Companions shared my basement room."

The poet would often be dissatisfied with the mundane realities and tend to compare the barren world of scientific and philosophical speculations with the rich and suggestive world of poetry. One of the very abstract poems of Ezekiel, Philosophy belong to the collection *The Exact Name published in* 1865.

At first the world of philosophy seems to be a wonderful escape from the sordid reality and the poet is often transported almost magically to this world of philosophy. This is of course a psychological journey into a different plane of reality which the poet describes as a 'flow' or a smooth involuntary transition. Since philosophy is concerned with logic and reasoning, its world is a 'cold' one and devoid of emotion. Interestingly, once he enters this sphere the is no dearth of new ideas and principles which emerge atmost spontaneously and thus the word 'lucidity', Since the human mind is constantly working like a 'mill' to produce new ideas. The idea of 'mill' carries an echo of the Yeatsian image in "An Acre of grass" where also the human mind is compared to a mill, or a divinely propelled machine.

In a comparative study Ezekiel ventures to show the contribution of sciences to the body of human knowledge. The study of geology which throws light on nature and history of earth reveals that the earth and life forms evolved from nothing but "quintessential slime": that is simple mud and dirt. Every moment the evolutionary process is at work and in the course of this process, numerous new stars come into existence and

go out of it. All these changes of the earth do have a strong impact on the human mind which probably experiences many agitations because of them. But the poet is regardless of those changes and convulsions, which are no more significant than a momentary shutting of the eyelids, which *part open once again*. Time is considered to be a powerful entity whose eyes emotionally respond to the innumerable cosmic changes that occur in the universe.

"Of each historic passion as a blink That happened to
the sad eye of Time".

As Philosophy and science struggle to unearth the 'residues of meaning' from the various earthly and supernatural activities, the poet remains sceptic and ironical about the pains involved in the process. The human mind struggles to arrive at a final solution regarding the mysteries of human life and expose the 'darkest myths'. Often the cold unemotional researches of science or the logic of philosophy is of no aid to him. Sometimes certain workable solutions are arrived at, but those cannot be called the "final formula of light' or the exact meaning. The poet rejects such 'clarity of sight' because he is doubtful about such clear-cut solutions. He is of the opinion that things which reject complete explanation should be ignored or left alone. Thus, Ezekiel feels that science and philosophy too have their limitations and are incapable of solving all the mysteries on earth and beyond earth. At this point, the readers would often feel that the poem is a contrast to "Night of the scorpion" where Ezekiel shows a similar scepticism about the curative powers of traditional methods as opposed to science.

Since Ezekiel, like Shelley or Arnold believes that poetry is capable of performing miracles, he substitutes Sience and Philosophy with Poetry. As *Satyanarain Singh* comments, Ezekiel believed "Great poetry is rooted in life experience and without this basis no amount of conscious rhetoric or contrived artistry can rival the language which is the true voice of feeling." (169). With this 'great poetry' rooted in the practical responses to life, Ezekiel hopes to interpret some of the unknown territories of knowledge.

"The mundane language of the senses sings Its own
interpretations".

The word 'sings' brings in again an Yeatsian idea of revelation of things so long unknown to man. Such interpretations may employ the common understanding of men in a common language. Here again Ezekiel follows the dictum of wordworth whose poetry is about ordinary men in ordinary language. Compared to this simple language of poetry the complicated language of Science and Philosophy appear dead and lifeless; therefore a 'nakedness/that dies of cold'. In the absence of human touch and warmth, such analytical language fails to solve the greater mysteries of life. Poetry or the common language of man triumphs over the deadness of unemotional subjects.

However such a prescription that practical wisdom could solve everything and that, What cannot be explained should be left unexplained, has its own hazards. Such an attitude could amount to building up vagueness and abstraction in the field of knowledge, thus putting to risk its very authenticity. *Satyanarain Singh* comments, "While the question about the power of language to convey spiritual experience is arguable, it is difficult to determine or judge the authenticity of the experience itself - in the absence of any objective criteria. Such warning to the precisionists... might in effect turn out to be a plea for vagueness and abstraction leading to a slackening of artistic discipline". (174). Nevertheless 'Philosophy' lends itself to an interesting reading, using a lot of intellect and argument for supporting its claim that, poetry is sometimes greater than Philosophy or Science *Bruce King* pays a tribute :

"Philosophy..... is concerned about what is to be made from 'Lucidity'. After we understand that we are nothing and that life began in 'quintessential slime' what remains ? It is necessary to refuse a philosophy based on such scientific awareness, such 'nakedness'. But Ezekiel does not offer a new romanticism. Rather he (or what the poem 'Jamini Roy' terms 'all asserting art') proclaims in 'Philosophy' :

'The mundane language of the senses sings' Its own
interpretations. Common things Become, by virtue of their
commonness,
An argument against the nakeduess
That dies of cold to find the truth it brings."

The mundane, the common, the life of the senses now has a poetic and religious value. It 'sings' (a Yeatsian word), has 'virtue' and is now different from 'nakedness', the bleak cold physical world as revealed by science .... Reality in itself is now seen as worthy and capable of making us happy and of being the basis of art." (45).

The poem is written with an easy flow of open ended couplets with the thought over flowing from the second rhyme to the following line. The rhythm remains undisturbed, gracefully moving from the beginning to the end of the stanza.

Enterprise

One of the recurrent metaphors in Ezekiel's poetry is that of a journey or a 'pilgrimage'. This journey is often in search of something - may be the poet's real self, peace, identity or God, as in 'A Morning walk' :

"The more he stared the less he saw
Among the individual trees.
The middle of his journey nears.
Is he among the men of straw
Who think they go which way they please.

Michael German feels that Ezekiel believes "the poet is a man who travels to an alien land to bring back primal knowledge," and "Ezekiel looks for a similar pattern of departure and return in his life. Each poem bears the mark of struggle in the 'primeval jungle' and in an equilibrium of opposing forces" (107)

More often such literal and metaphorical journeys lead only to disillusion-ment and frustration, instead of culminating in achievement of the desired goal. But such quests and journeys are nevertheless never given up for the poet still hopes to find meaning in one. Ezekiel often said that scores of his poems are written for personal, therapeutic purposes. Thus Enterprise can also be read as a part of that venture to understand the deepest recesses of self. Included in the collection The unfinished Man (1960), the title itself suggests a kind of a venture or a task undertaken by many. The word 'we' includes the poet and this time the task was to find God and his 'grace' or blessings. The most common option is to undertake a pilgrimage much in the same way as the magi undertook a journey to meet baby Jesus in Bethleham - beautifully interpreted by T. S. Eliot in his poem "Journey of the Magi".

Quite naturally, the pilgrims were an enthusiastic group whose sheer energy alleviates most of the problems. But soon after the poet and his friends realize that the journey is somewhat unproductive and a bit loo laborious especially on a very hot day under the scorching sun.

Nevertheless the journey continues and the members of the group take down their observations of all and sundry :

"On things the peasants sold and bought
The ways of serpents and of goats"

They eventually arrive at the three cities where a prophet has delivered his discourses. Placed in the pagan context, this can be the cities where Buddha or Mahavira taught. There is a light banter at the idea of mindlessly taking down 'notes' just to keep up the energy level.

One of the first setbacks comes to the journey in form of a desertion by a friend, who is an important member of the group because he writes stylish prose and is an intellectual. This unfortunate incident occurs because there were divided opinions as to how to cross a desert path. Allegorically the desert patch symbolizes the struggle and difficulties of life. Further the question of 'stylish prose' in this stanza deepens the allegorical content of the poem where there is a deeper meaning beneath the surface. It could be intrepreted thus the journey being the individuals struggle to take up the vocation of a professional poet in the larger world. The group members are the other fellow poets or author who strive towards the same goal and share the same intellectual interests.

Therefore, the one who had a 'stylish prose' was a particularly talented member of this intellectual coterie. He leaves the group for he has ego problems with others. The 'desert patch' may again suggest one of the

many difficulties which beset the journey towards fame and success as a practitioner of Indian writing in English.

The poet expresses his candid appreciation for the talented member by saying "(he) was quite the best of all our batch, also realizing that they were no longer a well knit group. 'A shadow' symbolizes the rift created between the members and as the gap widens, the success of the literal and metaphorical journey becomes questionable. The other stumbling block in the way comes when the group is twice attacked by robbers and they lose their direction. When a section of the members decide to give up the quest, thus liberating itself, the poet tries to pray, probably because, he is one of the few who are prepared to face the adversities in the path of illumination. The leader of the group tries to enhance the moral courage of the group by saying that he could smell 'the sea'. The sea of course would bring in the allusion of Moses' journey with the Israelites towards the promised land, where, on the way they had to cross the Red sea, failing which the Israelites could never free themselves from the persecution of the pharaoh. The 'sea' therefore provides a ray of 'hope' and the desire to surmount a major hurdle. But, in spite of the leaders motivation no enthusiasm is generated in the pilgrims by now they are 'straggling' or 'dispersed' a crowd (most of their friends having left them), with little hope. They find no meaning in thunder and lightning which could be the heralds of God (as in Milton's *Paradise Lost* Book I). Rather they are more concerned about the mundane and common but very useful needs like the soap, which they are deprived of.

The pilgrims in the quest of God and success are demoralized in varying degrees:

"Some were broken, some merely bent".

The irony the end of the journey is two pronounced to be ignored, because none of them in remember the purpose of the journey. The pain had robbed away the glory and meaning of the enterprise. The epiphanic realization comes to every darkened face. "Our deeds were neither great nor rare". The alienated poet realizes that a group effect is not always successful and ambitious projects do not necessarily have a productive output. In some cases, slow, steady and low key ventures taken alone, could be the route to success. May be the pilgrims fail to identify the true God or are dissappointed to find one the end of the journey who do not match their expectations. One cannot ignore a similar experience of Eliots magi at the end of their journey

'this Birth was
Hard and bitter agony for us, like Death, our death. We returned to
our places, these kingdoms,
But no longer at ease here, in the old dispensation, With an alien
people clutching their gods.
I should be glad of another death' (11 38-43).

(Journey of the Magi)

While the poet breathes a bitter air of loneliness at the end of the journey it is probably only he who realizes the truth:

"Home is where we have to gather grace." Emphasizing once again the idea of 'Karma' or doing one's duties in the given limited sphere, as a pathway to salvation or the blissful state. Chetan Kernani opines about the use of the word 'grace in this context :

"As a verbal experience many poems show the gift not only for subtle organization but also the ability to bring a common place word evocatively alive in a new context.

As an instance, we can see the use of the word 'grace' in the following line:

"Home is where we have to gather grace" (80)

Indernath Kher says: "The entire purpose and meaning of the pilgrimage is missed. But this does not refer to the failure of the metaphor itself, only the pilgrims who are basically city-dwellers have failed to perceive the nature of the calling. However, the failure on the part of the pilgrims proves paradoxical, their shame and torment lead to the realization which the poet reveals in the last line of the poem. Ezekiel implies here that 'grace' or redemption can be obtained through life, in the very act of living in the world. But in so far as "Home" is a metaphor of the self, redemption has to be won also through the private landscape of one's psyche or mind. Both these realms, the outer and the inner are essential to human growth and fulfilment." (151-152)

"Enterprise" maintains a regular 5 lined stanzaic pattern and rhyme scheme, with alternate lines rhyming with each other. It is written in Iambic tetrameter.

Unit 5(b): Analysis of Select Poems of Nissim Ezekiel-'Marriage', 'The Vision', 'Good-Bye Party for Miss Pushpa T.S.'

Marriage:

Poems written by Ezekiel in 1959, published in *The Unfinished Man,* are significant in their own unique way, as indicated by the title, an explicit recognition of another time of change. "Marriage" belongs to this collection. About the collection Bruce King comments: "Instead of wholeness and equipoise the poems speak of a time of incompleteness and record a period of personal purgatory concluding with the possibility of redemption. The ten poems are a sequence concerning the discontents of a supposedly settled life; they are related more by theme than by story." (96-97).

Written in couplets, "Marriage" records the disillusionments in conjugal life, but carefully avoids the detail so that the poet may not be marked as a spoilsport, scaring off new couples. The poems seem to begin with a universal truth that when lovers marry for a first few days everything seems blissful and idyllic, atmost as if such happiness would be eternal. They are satisfied at realizing that theirs is the best match and vow 'never to be separated'.

The youthful is always beautiful and the groom feels that he is a lucky man. Such happiness, however, is rooted more in fulfilment of the sexual desires than a long lasting meaningful relationship. So a lot of the fun rests in the 'joy of flesh and blood', whereby the couple satisfy their physical desires. 'Nakedness' then becomes not a matter of shame but new revelation leading to familiarity.

Here the poet brings in the biblical allusion saying that the poet too believed, the love between his wife and himself would not undergo the fall experienced by Adam and Eve in Paradise. The phrase 'primal fall' indicates the disobedience of Adam and Eve, by tasting the fruit of the tree of knowledge (i.e. knowing sexual pleasures), for which they were banished by God from the Garden of Eden. The poet, in his newly married, ecstatic state refuses to believe and acknowledge that, the first man and woman could be punished for enjoying sexual pleasures which come so naturally in the life of a married couple. Like, Adam and Eve, they, metaphorically explored the beauties of heaven and felt thrilled and carefree "as the breeze".

Although the description of the poet seem to be blunt and too candid, they are expressions of truth. Chetan Kernani comments on this aspect of Ezekiels poetry. "What impresses one about Ezekiel is his sincerety. He is always himself, within his range. His powers are generalizations of his own intimately felt - experiences. His stark bluntness can be seen from the way he describes that complex relationship called 'Marriage' wherein the initial excitement "Our love denied primal fall"- is followed by a feeling of satiation:"The same thing over and over again —" (78-79).

Like all pleasures based on mundane superficiality, this too suffers from satiation or super-saturation:

"However many times we came
Apart, we came together"

Seen from a positive angle sexual encounters or coming together of two bodies becomes a means to bridge the gap between two individuals, but the sheer repetitiveness robs away the ultimate meaning and purpose of the act. Some sort of boredom and nausea is also indicated in the lines: "The same / Thing over and over again", as if the poet is sick of the pretension of togetherness in an otherwise discordant marriage where the couple no longer share common joys and frustrations. The differences, by now, are too apparent to be bridged by mere sexual intimacy. Therefore, as the marriage proceeds in years, the gap between the couple widens, ultimately, both of them experience a gnawing sense of guilt and shame, every time they come together physically. The reference to 'mark of Cain' reminds one of the biblical story of the two brothers. Cain and Abel who were the sons of Adam and Eve. Since Abel, was a favourite of God, driven by jealousy, cain murdered him, thus carrying the stigma throughout his life. After wards he was haunted and driven from here to there seeking the protection of God. Any sinful act thus generates a sense of guilt and remorse. The poet probably exaggerates here the feeling of the married couples, but it remains a truth that sensual pleasures contains the paradoxes of both attraction and repulion within itself.

However, Ezekiel does not quite let himself go, for realizing that marraige is an essential institution, he withholds the details of a downward curve in marraige. In a light and comic way he reverses his discouraging attitude because he himself is a 'frequent wedding guest'. The "suffering rest", probably suggests that, apart from the disillusionment associated with sexual pleasures there are other problems too in marriage. But he, as a poet and a guest is decent enough to keep those as secrets. He would like the newly weds and unweds to believe that marraiges are nevertheless 'mysteries' making it impossible to say away from its irresistible attraction.

In one sense "Marriage" suggests and end in a failure of a relationship. But with failures one is able to give shape to some thing meaningful in future. Improvement is not possible without realizing and overcoming the inherent weakness. As Indernath Kher comments : "All these above failures and self analyses contain the directive toward some meaningful action. Paradoxically speaking, the poems succeed as failures, because without failures one may not perceive the dichotomy at the heart of existence itself. The action which is generated by these poems manifests itself in the form of ecstatic love, in an existential plunge into the world and in the prayer for a poetics" (156-157).

The Visitor:

While Ezekiel used free verse in many of his earlier poems, before moving on to the deliberate metrical regularity of *The unfinished Man,* from mid 1960 onwards his poems become more suited for oral delivery and shows more freedom of structure.

"The Visitor", which belong to the collection *The Exact Name* (1960-65), deals with one of the simple beliefs and superstitions in Indian life, in a colloquial manner. Underneath runs a light satire and criticism of the Indian way of life. A very common superstition in India suggests that the cawing of a crow foretells the arrival of a visitor. The whole poem revolves round the expectation and the subsequent disillusionment of the poet regarding the arrival of this visitor.

The number 'three' is usually associated with magic and mysticism. Therefore when the crow at the poet's window cawed three times, it was a sure sign of the arrival of a visitor. The crow is described with some detail : it had ominous eyes fixed on the poet, the wings were raised to convey a sinister look. Moreover, its body was tense and its neck craned out like that of a quarrelsome woman. Evidently it was not a harbinger of very good thoughts. Its voice and presence filled the atmosphere of the whole room. The crow was able to transmit the message to the poet who was then absorbed in his own altruistic thoughts. His mind and concentration was on the noble thoughts concerning welfare of the earthly creatures, so that he felt that he was floating or sleepwalking. The cawing introduced a jarring and a discordant mote to that blissful experience and the poet prepared himself to meet the visitor with whom he would have to adjust.

All day he waited, following the folk belief and vividly imagining whether the fellow would be a good natured man ("an angel in disguise") bringing him favours, or an abominable individual likely to lure him with forbidden truths. In case the visitor proved satanic then he would leave the poets restless and dissatisfied.

But nothing matched his apprehensions and fears. The real visitor was a very harmless and prosaic penson. He did actually come, thus proving true the ancient folk belief but he had nothing significant to share or to contribute.

"…. his need :
Only to kill a little time".

The endless thoughts and guesses which crisscrossed the mind proved futile. Since the visitor was a harmless fellow, his intentions were good and so the poet felt sympathetic for him. He almost represented the unfortunate, miserable humanity. However nothing significant passed between them. Even the cigarette smoke was more meaningful than their talk. The visitor significantly remains anonymous, thus indicating the triviality of the whole encounter.

The encounter serves as an example for the poet, to prove that miracles do happen, but only in the mind of an individual. The mind in fact is a wondrous "mill", as expressed earlier by the poet in poems like 'Philosophy'. It can be wonderfully creative and fantasize about things which do not exist in reality. Compared to this imaginary world of the mind, the reality is ordinary and a collection of mundane day-to-day things. The poet failed to understand "precisely this". Thus a figure embroidered in a carpet may appear extraordinary to

the mind but real life is composed of nothing but repetitive and cyclical occurrences of "sex and the seasons". Most events in real life are monotonous and ordinary which do not require the mind to be torn apart in moral dilemma concerning good and bad.

Although the poem begins with a reflection on a particular folk belief, if ends with a comment on general human situation.

Bruce king feels. "The poem shows what should be known. "The ordinariness of most events" (100).

Good-bye Party for Miss Pushpa T.S.

Chetan Kernani says "The typical strength of (Ezekiel's) poetry arises from the fact that he has his ideas firmly rooted in the Indian soil" (80-81). It could be the sorry picture of downtrodden India in "The Truth about the flood" or the comic handling of the Indian use of English language as in "The Professor". Whatever he writes, never the less has a ring of sincerity. Even when Ezekiel is experimenting in levity and frivolity of Indian English there is a serious flavour.

"Goodbye Party Miss Pushapa T.S. is included in the collection of later poems—*Hymns in Darkness* published in 1976, although it belongs to the group of poems in 'Indian English' written in (1967-72). They are a part of Ezekiel's commitment to 'stay where I am' and treat ordinary life Ezekiel is one of the few poets to have considered the use of pidgin English and 'Goodbye Party for Miss Pushpa T.S, deals with this. As R. Parthasarathy says. "(It) imitates the idiolectal features of English used by Gujarati Speakers. Some of these features are also present in other Indian languages : the use of the present progressive tense for the simple present tense, un English collocation of lexical items, and literal translation of phrases and idioms. (Intro-8).

The poem is not a simple satire of the Indian use of English. On the other hand it reflects the idiosyncracies of the speaker and his culture. Since language reveals the speakers mind and social context; cliches, triteness. unintended puns are among devices use to imply hypocrisy, pretence, limited opportunities and confusion "Good bye Party for Miss Pushpa T.S" is a satiric self - revelation of the speaker. The occasion of a farewell party arranged prior to Miss Pushpa's travel abroad is a mere alibi to expose the confusion going on in the speaker's mind regarding the details of the purpose of the trip, Miss Pushpa's lineage or subtleties of her nature.

The situation is demeaning to Miss Pushpa who is required to sit and listen to such a speech and is afterwards expected to do the "summing up". The lady is going abroad probably for higher studies or a friendly tour. While the speaker addresses her in an uncoventional way : "our dear sister", he is coufused about the enact date of her journey, "in two three days". The attempt to mix a little french ("bon voyage"), with his awkward English, makes the delivery all the more humorous and out of place. In an attempt to appreciate the good nature of Pushpa, he hopelessly confuses the audience with her 'external and internal sweetness' but does not understand why she keeps on smiling. Repitition of certain words and use of continuous tenses in wrong places, makes the speech typically Indian in flavour. Lack of knowlege is also manifested in the speakers ignorance of the details of her family-although he says that she belongs to a high family and her father a famous advocate he cannot remember 'now which place'.

Typically enough, like most habitual and narcissistic speakers, he drifts off into speaking about himself quite forgetting that the tribute is to Miss Pushpa and not himself : 'Ah, yes, once only I stayed in Surat/with family members/of my uncles very old friend, ', mentioning other irrelevant details, like the culinary skills of someone else's wife.

Talking about the popularity and the good spirit of the lady, the speaker is unable of convey anything meaningful except uttering a few grammatically wrong English sentences :

"I am always
appreciating the good spirit. Pushpa Miss is never
saying no.
whatever I or any body is asking she is always saying yes,"

He merely repeats and concludes with what he started with - wishing Miss Pushpa good luck for her voyage.

Apparently the poem would seem to be a bitter and cynical attack on the inability of Indiaus to use English language correctly and in the right context, but what redeems the poem is the friendly attitude of the poet. There is a tenderness on the part of Ezekiel which does not render his comments harrsh to the readers. As Gieve Patel says in the Introduction to the *Collected Poems of Nissim Ezekiel* (1952-1988) : "We see friendliness redeeming most of the sexual encounters. It redeems also the very Indian Poems in Indian English, prevents them from becoming unkind caricatures of people who do not know the language they use, in fact gives their language warmth and a kooky status." (XXVI).

Suggested Reading

Poetry of Kamala Das

1. Das, Kamala. *Summer in Calcutta.* Calcutta : Writers Workshop. 1965.
2. Das, Kamala. *The Descendants.* Calcutta : Writers Workshop. 1967.
3. Das, Kamala. *My Story*. New Delhi : Sterling Publishers, 1976.
4. Dwivedi, A. N. *Kamala Das and her Poetry.* Delhi : Doaba House, 1983. (All references in the text as Dwivedi.)
5. Ed. Iqbal Kaur. *Perspectives on Kamala Das's Poetry.* New Delhi : Intellectual Publishing House, 1995. (All references in the text as Kaur).
6. Iyengar, K. R. Srinivas. *Indian Writings in English*. Bombay : Asia Publishing House, 1962.
7. Kohli, Devindra. *The Poetry of Kamala Das*. Calcutta : Writers Workshop, 1968.

Poetry of Nissim Ezekiel

1. Ezekiel, Nissim. *Collected Poems* (1952-1988). Delhi : O. U. P, 1989.
2. Das, B. K. *Critical Essays on Poetry*. Ludhiana : Kalyani Publishers, 1993.
3. Ezekiel, Moses. *History and Culture of the Bene Israel in India.* Nadiad : n. p, 1948. Iyengar, 4. Srinivasa K. R. *Indian Writing in English.* 5th ed. New Delhi : Sterling Publishers Private Ltd., 1985.
5. Karnani, Chetan *Nissim Ezekiel* New Delhi : Arnold Heinemann, 1974.
6. Kernani, Chetan. *Indian Writing in English.* New Delhi. Arnold Associates, 1995. King, 7. Bruce. *Modern Indian Poetry in English.* Delhi : O. U. P, 1987.
8. King, Bruce. *Three Indian Poets : Ezekiel, Moraes, and Ramanujan* : 2nd ed. New Delhi: O. U. P, 2005.
9. Kulshrestha, Chirantan. ed. *Contemporary Indian English Verse* (*An Evaluation*). New Delhi : Arnold Heinemann, 1982.
10. Naik M.K, Desai S. K, Amur G. S. *Critical Essays on Indian Writing in English.* Karnatak University, Dharwar : Macmillan, 1968.

Assignments

Kamala Das

(a) Long questions

(i) Discuss the various themes in the poems of Kamala Das in your syllabus

OR

Which according to you is the most important thematic focus in the poems of Kamala Das in your syllabus

OR

Discuss the role of memory in the poems of Kamala Das

OR

Do you regard the poems of Kamala Das prescribed in your syllabus as an expression of the 'feminine voice'? Give reasons for your answer

OR

Discuss the theme of death and decay as evident in Kamala Das's poems in your syllabus with suitable examples from the poems.

2. Discuss Kamala Das as a Confessional Poet

OR

Who are the 'Confessional Poets'? Would you regard Kamala Das also as one such poet? Give reasons for your answer

OR

Discuss the various elements of confessional poetry as evident in the poems of Kamala Das in your syllabus.

3. Discuss Kamala Das's style of poetry with examples from the poems prescribed in your syllabus

OR

Would you agree with P.Lal's view that prose would have suited Das's creations better? Give reasons for your answer

OR

Discuss the various images and symbols used in Kamala Das's poems

OR

Discuss Kamala Das's style with special reference to her diction and versification.

(b) Short Questions :

1. Short questions may be asked from the various images used in the poems in the syllabus.
2. Shorter form of the questions may be asked by quoting lines from the poems.
3. What is the name of Kamala Das's autobiography?
4. What is Kamala Das's real name?
5. Why is Kamala Das known as a bilingual writer?
6. What is the name of the only novel written by Kamala Das in English.

Nissim Ezekiel

Long questions :

1. Bring out the allegorical significance of the poem 'Enterprise'.
2. Write a note on the argument of Ezekiel, in the poem "Philosophy".
3. Bring out the conflict between tradition and modernity in Ezekiel's poem "Night of the Scorpion".
4. What light does 'The Visitor" throw on Nissim Ezekiel as a poet ?
5. Bring out clearly the irony and the satire in the poem Goodbye Party for Miss Pushpa T.S□.
6. Analyse "Marraige" as a poem of paradoxes.

Short questions :

1. Explain the meaning of the line "a shadow falls on us and grows" (line 15) in the poem "Enterprise".
2. What made the poet expect a visitor at his house ? What were his fears and apprehensions ?
3. Explain the allusion "mark of Cain" in the poem "marraige" ? Why did the couple feel so ?
4. What does Ezekiel think about the discoveries of geology and astronomy ?
5. Exlain the significance of the line :
   "The mundane language of senses sings/Its own interpretations."
6. What made the scorpion bite the poet's mother ?
7. What measures did the poet's father take to case the pain of the poet's mother ?
8. List the qualities which made Miss Pushpa popular among everyone.

Block II: *Nectar in a Sieve* by Kamala Markandeya

Unit 6(a): A Brief History of the Indo-Anglian Novel

Unit 6(b): Kamala Markandeya: Life and Works

Unit 7(a): Title of *Nectar in a Sieve*-Source and Significance

Unit 7(b): An Analytic Reading of *Nectar in a Sieve*

Unit 8(a): Character Study-(i) Rukmani, (ii) Nathan, (iii) Doctor Kenny and (iv) The Other Women of the Village

Unit 8(b): Thematic Study-(i) Novel of rural India and Theme of Hunger
(ii) Tradition and Modernity
(iii) East-West Encounter

Unit 6(a): A Brief History of the Indo-Anglian Novel

English East India Company (formed in 1600) brought with its trade, its language too, first in the form of its English knowing clerks, and later on by introducing English into its main stream of education. The beginning of Indian literature in English is traced to the end of the 18th Century. We had some early prose writers then. Raja Rammohan Roy (1772-1833), a social reformer, was the pioneer of Indian writing in English. There were some other prose writers also like Ram Gopal Ghose (1815-68), Krishna Mohan Banerji (1813-85). *A Journal of 48 hours of the year 1945* by Kylash Chunder Dutta was published in The Calcutta Literary Gazette (6th June, 1835). This was the 'earliest fictional effort' (Naik), although not novel proper. This literary fantasy underlines how Indian English fiction from the very beginning was nationalistic in spirit. Shoshee Chunder Dutt's (1825-1886) *The Republic of Orissa : Annals from the pages of the Twentieth Century* was published in the *Saturday Evening Hurkaru* (25th May, 1845). In this tale, British people are defeated and a republic is established in Orissa. The action takes place in the second decade of the twentieth century. But the stream of Indo-Anglian novel starts with Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyaya (1838-94). He wrote his first novel in English — *Rajmohon's Wife* which was serialized in the Calcutta weekly, *The Indian Field* in 1864. But it was published in book form in 1935. The novel deals with the social issues of the day. It depicts the effects of a bad marriage on the woman — the suffering of a middleclass house wife, Matangini at the hands of her husband, Rajmohan. But Bankim Chandra discontinued writing in English and switched to his mother tongue.

The second notable Indo-Anglian novel was written by Lal Behari Dey — *Govinda Samanta, or the History of Bengal Raivat* (1874).

Taru Dutt, better known as a poet, may very well be the first woman novelist in Indian English. Her unfinished English novel — *Bianca or the Young Spanish Maiden* was published in Calcutta in 1878. Another woman writer, Krupabai Satthianandhan (1862-1894) is known for her two autobiographical novels : *Kamala : A story of Hindu Life* (1894) and *Saguna : A Story of Native Christian Life* (1895). Shevantibai Nikambe, a social reformer and educationist wrote *Ratnabai : A Sketch of Bombay High Caste Hindu Wife* (1895).

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, we find that many wrote historical romances. Shoshee Chunder Dutt, for example, wrote *Shunkur : A Tale of Indian Mutiny 1857* and *The Young Zamindar* (1883). Both the novels depict the greatness of Indian cultural heritage. Mention should also made here of Chakravarti Khetrapal's *Sarala and Hingana* (1895), T. Ramakrishna Pillai's *Padmini : an Indian Romance* (1903) and Balkrishna's *The Love of Kusuma : An Eastern Love Story* (1910).

It was only with the Gandhian struggle for freedom that the Indo-Anglian novel really came to its own. M. K. Naik, in this connection points out : *"...the Indian English novel of the period was deeply influenced by the epoch-making political, social and ideological ferment caused by the Gandhian movement."*

K. S. Venkataramani's two remarkable novels which have Gandhian impact are : *Murugan, the Tiller* (1927) and *Kandan, the Patriot : A Novel of New India in the Making* (1932). A. S. P. Ayyar, an ICS Officer who could not write contemporary politics because of his official position, wrote *Baladitya* (1930) which is about the defeat of invading foreigners and *Three Men of Destiny* (1939)

which is about the aftermath of Alexander's invasion of India.

But the main exponents of the pre-Independence novel were Mulk Raj Anand (1905-2004), R. K. Narayan (1907-2001) and Raja Rao (1908-2006) who began to write in the early thirties. Mulk Raj Anand lived by socialist principles that inspired his works. His primary aim was to record the lives of the underprivileged and downtrodden class in India. *Untouchable* (1935) is a novel on the life of a Sweeper boy Bakha. *Coolie* (1936) is about Munoo, a labourer. *Two Leaves and a Bud* (1937) deals with the suffering and misery of Gangu — the worker on the tea plantations of Assam. This novel is followed by a group of three novels — *The Village* (1939), *Across the Black Water* (1941) and *The Sword and the Sickle* (1942) known as Lal Singh trilogy. The events of a single day, in the life of Ananta, the coppersmith are recorded in his *The Big Heart* (1945). R. K. Narayan is another prolific writer in this group. Narayan's fiction is remarkable for capturing the ironic humour, the human foibles of ordinary men and women. His *Swami and Friends* is set in the fictional town of Malgudi. The imaginary town of Malgudi, which is the location of all his fiction, represents South-Indian small town. Malgudi is perhaps the single most endearing 'Character' R. K. Narayan has ever created. *Bachelor of Arts* (1937) is his another popular novel. Raja Rao's single novel which was written before Independence is *Kanthapura* (1938). This novel also shows a writer depicting the changes that took place in the making of the modern nation. The Post-Independence era ushered in a new trend in writing novel. The emphasis shifted from the nation as a composite whole to the inner life and character of the individual. The trinity— Anand, Narayan and Rao continued their long career even after Independence. Anand's *Seven Summers* (1951) is the first volume of his fictional autobiography in which Krishna Chander is the protagonist. *The Private Life of an Indian Prince* (1953) deals with the sufferings of Indian Princes represented by Victor. His noted works also include *The Old Woman and the Cow* (1960), *The Road* (1963), *The Death of Hero* (1964), *Morning Face* (1970) [won Sahitya Akademi Award in 1972] and *Confession of a Lover* (1976).

R. K. Narayan was also at the height of his power after Independence. His inimitable simplicity sways the reader. His remarkable novels include *Mr. Sanpath* (1949), *The Financial Experts* (1952), *Waiting for Mahatma* (1955), *The Guide* (1958) [won Sahitya Akademi Award], *The Maneater of Malgudi* (1962), *The Vender of Sweets* (1967), *The Painter of Sighs* (1976), *The Grand Mother's Tale* (1993).

Raja Rao's second novel *The Serpent and the Rope* (1960) won him the Sahitya Akademi Award. This is a Philosophical novel with autobiographical undertone. Rao's other important novel is *The Cat and Shakespeare* (1965). As a philosopher novelist Rao tried to expose Indian philosophy through his novels. All the three writers won Sahitya Akademi Award. But while Anand is a reformer, Narayan, a moral analyst, Rao is a philosopher.

There have also been a number of other major novelists after Independence. Bhabani Bhattacharya (1906-1988), a social novelist, vividly portrayed the picture of the hungry Bengal in his *so many Hungers* (1947), set during the years of Bengal famine. His *Shadow from Ladakh* (1966) is set against the background of the 1962 war with China. This novel won him the Sahitya Akademi Award. His other novels are *Music for Mohini* (1952), *He Who Rides a Tiger* (1952), *A Goddess Named Gold* (1966), *A Dream in Hawaii* (1978).

Manohar Malgonkar (1913–) can also be called a social novelist. His *Distant Dream* (1960)
gives a graphic picture of the new Indian army. *A Bend in the Ganges* (1964), perhaps his masterpiece is almost a documentary of the struggle for independence.

Nirad C. Choudhuri (1897-1999) was another internationally renowned Indian writer whose autobiography *An Unknown Indian* (1951) catapulated him into a celebrated international author.

Khushwant Singh's (1918–) first and most famous novel, *Train to Pakistan* (1956) deals with the impact of partition on the life of an Indian village. Later novelists like Kamala Markandaya Anita Desai, Nayantara Sahgal,

Arun Joshi captured the spirit of an Independent India, struggling to break away from the British and traditional Indian cultures and established a distinct identity.

Kamala Markandaya's career and works have been discussed in the section that follows. Anita Desai's career began with *Cry, The Peacock* (1963) which deals with Maya who is trapped in a bad marriage to Gautoma who is much older. Her other notable novels are *Voices in the City* (1965), *Bye- Bye Black bird* (1971), *Where shall We Go This Summer ?* (1975), *Fire on the Mountain* (1977), *Clear Light of Day* (1980), *In Custody* (1984), *Fasting Feasting* (1999). Desai's focus is on the loneliness and alienation of the individual character, usually woman. They are struggling with the forces of existence. Nayantara Sahgal is the only political novelist in

Indian English fiction. She tries to depict in her novel the struggle for identity of the post-Independent Indian woman. *A Time to be Happy* (1958), *This Time of Morning* (1968), *Storm in Chandigarh* (1969), The *Day in Shadow* (1971), *A Situation in New Delhi* (1977), *Rich Like Us* (1985) are her popular novels. Arun Joshi's career starts with *The Foreigner* (1968). He has a number of novels to his credit, including *Strange case of Billy Biswas* (1971), *The Apprentice* (1974), *The Last Labyrinth* (1981) [won him Sahitya Akademi Award]. Joshi's heroes also search for meaning in life, for an identity beyond the given. Here mention should be made also of Rama Mehta's *Inside the Haveli* which won the Sahitya Akademi Award. Thus the novels before 1980s are either historical, socio-political (before Independence) or the novels of identity (after Independence), having major themes, as identified by Prof. Meenakshi Mukherjee are 'The Making of Nation', 'East-West Encounter' and 'Renunciation as an Ideal'.

In the next decade (1980s), India emerged as a major literary nation with the publication of Salman Rushdie's Booker-Prize winning *Midnight's Children* in 1981. It took readers all over the world, by storm. It is a seminal work which has changed the very way in which Indian English novels had been written before it. It was in this year that "modern Indian literature was born". As an iconic text of the post-colonial literature it celebrates the "hybridity of the migrant and argues against alternate Indian visions of purity or continuity or possibility of cultural oneness." Rushdie won the Booker of Booker's prize for *Midnight's Children* in 1994. His other novels include *Shame* (1983), *The Satanic Verses* (1988).

Rushdie is followed by a host of other novelists. Amitav Ghosh (1956-) for example, is one of the popular contemporary Indian novelists in English. He is the author of number of novels like

The Circle of Reason (1986), *The Shadow Lines* (1990) [won Sahitya Akademi Award], *The Calcutta Chromosome* (1995), *The Glass Palace* (2000), *The Hungry Tide* (2004) and his most recent book *Sea of Poppies* (June 2008) which is very popular with readers. Ghosh has won a number of awards for his works including Padmashri (2007) by the India Government. Much of his fiction is set against the backdrop of historical events — British colonization, Partition of India and the consequent partition of Bengal, the Bangladesh War, the opium wars. *The Shadow Lines* is included in your course and therefore, I would not like to make any discussion of this work in details.

Vikram Seth's *Golden Gate* has also brought him world-wide success. His another popular novel is *A suitable Boy*. Other novelists of repute of contemporary times include Sobha De *(Selective Memory)*, Alan Sealy *(The Trotternama)*, Sashi Tharoor *(Show Business, The Great Indian Novel)*, Gita Hariharan *(The Thousand Faces of Night)*, Upamanya Chatterjee *(English, August, The Mammaries of the Welfare State)*, Chetan Bhagat *(One Night @ the Call Centre, The Three Mistakes of My Life)*, Raj Kamal Jha *(The Blue Bedspread)*, Mukul Kesavam *(Looking Through Glass)*, Manju Kapoor *(Difficult Daughter)*, Amit Chaudhuri *(A New World)*, Pankaj Mishra *(Butter Chicken in Ludhiana, The Romantics)*, Vikram Chandra *(Red Earth and Pouring Rain, Love and Longing in Bombay)* and Samit Basu *(The Game World)*.

But the Latest Indian writer who has taken the world with a storm was Arundhati Roy, whose the *God of Small Things* won the Booker Prize (1997) and became an international best seller. Among the other internationally acclaimed contemporary writer of Indian origin, mention should be made of Kiran Desai who has won the Man Booker's Prize for *The Inheritanee of loss* (2006) which explains what it is to be an immigrant and Jhumpa Lahiri for her collection of nine short stories, *Interpreter of Malkdies* which won the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 2000. Her second book was a novel, *The Namesake* (2003). There are again a number of diasporic writer, including Sunetra Gupta, Rohinton Mistry, Firdaus Kanga, Sudhir Kakar and many others. The novelists who began to write in the pre 1930s wrote English with stiff correctness, always conscious that it was a foreign language. Their works and their English were imitative of the British Novelists of the time. The next group comprised novelists like Bankim Chandra, began writing in English but switched to writing in their mother tongue. However, the novelists who rose in the 1930s, such as Anand, Narayan and Rao were eager not to write novels that were imitations. They made a conscious decision to write in English as if it were their own mother tongue. They tried hard to make their language 'Indianized' by literal translation into English of Indian expressions, idioms, proverbs etc. They sought to re-define English and make it Indian enough, so that it could be used to communicate the Indian culture and social values to English speaking readers world-wide. But the result was not always happy one. Expressing the emotions of Indian characters in English was a major challenge. But Rushdie, unlike the novelists who preceded him, uses the hybrid, 'Hinglish' (a mixture of Hindi and English) to communicate the world view and emotions of his characters. It is easily recognizable as the

speaking voice of common man or woman in India. This is something which is not found in the novels of Narayana, Anand and Rao. Thus with the advent of Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* Indian novel writing in English has come into its own.

Unit 6(b): Kamala Markandaya: Life and Works

Kamala Markandaya is the pen-name of Kamala Purnaiya Taylor. She was born in 1924 in an affluent and aristocratic Brahmin family of Mysore, now part of the Karanataka state. She got her primary education casually, and at intervals, in various schools in Mysore. At the age of sixteen Markandya attended the University of Madras in 1940, where she studied history. She started her career as a journalist. From 1940 to 1947 she worked as a freelance journalist for a weekly newspaper in India and also published several short stories in Indian newspapers. She also worked and lived in a South Indian village. During the war she also worked for the army in India, but returned to journalism soon after it was over.

She had settled to England since 1948, following her marriage to Bartand Taylor, also a journalist. There she tried to get a job as a journalist, but failed. For sometime she worked as a proof-reader, as a Secretary in some private firms and in other dull jobs. After a few years she took up writing novels and became a full-time writer. She was awarded the *National Association of Independent Schools Award* (USA) in 1967 and *English Speaking Union Award* in 1974. Markandaya made England her home, but she made many visits to India over the years, returning to stay in touch with her culture and to find inspiration and information for her novel. At the age of 80, Markandaya passed away in 2004. She is respected for her accessible writing style and the range of experience expressed in her novels — social consciousness, personal relationship and the desire for independence. As a diasporic writer she has a number of novels to her credit.

PUBLICATIONS

Novels

1. *Necter in a Sieve***,** London, Putnam, 1954; New York, Day, 1955.
2. *Some Inner Fury*, London, Putnam, 1955; New York, day, 1956.
3. *A Silence of Desire*, London, Putnam, and New York, Day, 1960.
4. *Possession*, Bombay, Jaieo, London Putnam, and New York, Day, 1963.
5. *A Handful of Rice*, London, Hamish Hamilton and New York, Day, 1966.
6. *The Coffer Dams*, London, Hamish Hamilton, and New York, Day, 1969.
7. *The Nowhere Man*, New York, Day, 1972; London, Allen Lane, 1973.
8. *Two Virgins*, New York, Day, 1973; London, Chatto and Windus, 1974.
9. *The Golden Honeycomb*, London, Chatto and Windus and New York, Crowell, 1977.
10. *Pleasure City*, London, Chatto and Windus, 1982; as *Shalimar, New York, Harper, 1983.*
11. *Bomay Tiger* (Published posthumously by her daughter), Penguin Viking, 2008.

Analysis of Novels :

Nectar in a Sieve is the first novel of Markandaya, which brought her the greatest recognition as a novelist. It has been translated into fifteen languages. It is a restrained as well as touching account of the life of an Indian peasant woman, Rukmani, and her struggle for survival and her abiding love for her husband, Nathan. The story is told in the first person narrative. The novel deals with the struggle that occurs "between man and overpowering hunger, before which honour, morality
and even God do not count".

Some Inner Fury deals with a dilemma between personal-relationship and racial prejudice — between passion and patriotism. Mira, the heroine is a young Brahmin woman who falls in love with a visiting Englishman, Richard. But they are torn apart by the Quit India Movement of the time. The novel presents the compelling political forces of Indio-British turmoil.

Silence of Desire is concerned with spiritual realities and modern quest for scientific truth. Dandekar, an ordinary clerk felt suspicious about his wife, Sarojini even after fifteen years of their happy married life because Sarojini had been visiting Swami very often. She actually developed an ulcer in her uterus and refused to take medical aid. But when Swami disappeared from the town, Sarojini agrees to undergo an operation that proved to be successful. Thus to some extend, Dandekar is secular and modern, and the situation enables the author to reflect on the tensions, the strength and the inadequacies and aspirations of middle class Indian life.

Possession takes us from India to London and then back home as its theme is wider. The artist Valmiki is discovered by an English lady, Caroline. Caroline transports Valmiki to England where he becomes a celebrity. But Valmiki finally returns to India. The relationship between Valmiki and Caroline appears to offer itself as a tiny image of India's being taken by Britain and is symbolic of the struggle between Indian spiritual values and western materialism.

A Handful of Rice is the story of a young villager called Ravi, a common man of society. He journeys to town where he becomes part of the underworld. But when he falls in love with Nalini he decides to leave his criminal career. He gets married with Nalini. But the death of Apu, Nalini's father causes burden on Ravi's shoulder. He becomes harsh and begins to beat his wife. Through his character Markandaya shows how the wicked prosper and the honest suffer. The novel reflects the conflict between "the moral idea rooted in honesty, and the moral fact that honesty buys no rice and pays no bills.

The Coffer Dams presents the impact of technology on traditional India society. The novel starts with the construction of the great dam across a wild river. The dam is completed somehow, but the whole land is in danger of inundation. The novel is a highly contemporary examination of the activities of a British engineering firm which is invited to build a dam in India.

The Nowhere Man foreshadows many diasporic issues with which we are preoccupied today. The main characters of the novel are Indian immigrants in England who belongs neither to India nor to England — nowhere men. The novel "talks not only about the violence of racism but also about other diasporic realities — educational degrees that are not given accreditation, the resistance of immigrants to the expectations of the 'host' culture, chasms of communication between generations, cultural values and needless cultural baggage ..... when Srinivas, after thirty years in England ten years longer than he spent in his native India), during which time he has sacrificed a son to England's war, is heckled by racist hoodlums to 'go back to your country', he is bewildered. ..... No matter what we ourselves may feel about our present homeland, too many see us only as aliens who belong elsewhere, not here".

Two Virgins presents the impact of modernity on the rural life. It is a story of two sisters of different temperaments — Lalitha and Saroja. Lalitha, lured by the glamour of the city trades leaves for the city and experiences its harsh reality. Saroja, in contrast remains in the village and learns from the mistakes of her sister.

The Golden Honeycomb is quite different from the other novels of Markandaya. It is a historical novel which covers the period between the late nineteenth century and the First World War. Ravi, the protagonist is the son of Bawajiraj III. But he rejects the princely life and leads the people's protest.

Pleasure City again shows the effect of western technology on distant corners of India. It is the story of an isolated fishing village. That village is transferred into a beautiful resort.

Bombay Tiger is Markandaya's unpublished eleventh novel, brought to light very recently by her daughter Kim Oliver. It is a story about two boys, Rao an Gokhale, totally opposites in character. Rao is shy and retiring while Gokhale is amoral and aggressive. They set out for the golden city of Bombay in search of their fortunes. Rao is materially unsuccessful and Gokhale who takes on the Bengali name - Ganguli grows from a wheeling dealing brick maker to an aggressive industrialist. His downfall is due to a fatal weakness—his love for his daughter. But at the end of the book he is given a second chance. The novel is readable for Markandaya's insights into characters.

Unit 7(a): Title of *Nectar in a Sieve*-Source and Significance

The title of Markandaya's masterpiece, *Nectar in a Sieve* is taken from Coleridge's poem, *Work Without Hope* (composed in 1825) which the novelist uses as the epigraph for her novel. *Work without Hope* is a sonnet written in Shakespearean style and the title is derived from the concluding couplet. The sonnet runs thus :

Work Without Hope

All nature seems at work. Slugs leave their lair —
The bees are stirring - birds are on the wing -
And Winter slumbering in the open-air,
Wears on his smiling face a dream of spring !
And I the while, the sole unbusy thing,
Nor honey make nor pair, nor build, nor sing.

Yet well I ken the banks where amaranths blow,
Have traced the fount whence streams of nectar flow.
Bloom, Oye amaranth ! Bloom for whom ye may,
For ye bloom not ! Glide, rich streams, away !
With lips unbrightened, wrethless brow, I stroll :
And would you learn the spells that drowse my soul ?
Work without hope draws nectar in a sieve
And hope without an object cannot live.

The title of the novel is an enactment of the concluding couplet. The last line in particular gives us a hint of the theme of the novel that hope cannot exist without a purpose. Nectar means 'a sweet liquid produced by flowers and collected by bees for making honey' (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary — A. S. Hornby) and sieve means a small, circular utensil of steel with holes in the bottom to separate gain from chaff. The peaceful rural life with natural beauty is obviously as sweet as 'nectar'. But that is short-lived. The villagers always hope for a better life. But they hope without an object. Thus their work without hope draws nectar in a sieve.

In course of the novel the truth of this observation is illustrated. It is applicable to the general situation of the novel as well as the characters who figure in it. Hope never deserts Rukmani and Nathan. Some time one hope is destroyed to be replaced by another. At the very out-set Nathan hopes to buy a house like Rukmani's father one day : "..... in a few years we can move — may be even buy a house such as your father's" But heavy rains have destroyed their harvest and hope.

When Dr. Kenny urges them to demand more, Rukmani hopes that the little rice she has been able to purchase will last them until "times are better". But after some days they have to live on dried fish, roots and leaves. They make preparation for next sowing and dreams of better days. Nathan hopes that his sons will help him on the land. But they belong to the new generation.

They are reluctant to work as peasants. Arjun and Thambi join the tannery. The economic condition of the family is improved a little bit no doubt for some time. But a strike is called in the tannery against the anti-labour policy of the employers. As a result, Arjun and Thambi are dismissed with the other striking workers. Finally they (Arjun and Thambi) decide to leave the country for Ceylon. Murugan too gets a job of servant in the city with the help of Dr. Kenny and leaves their village. Though Rukmani is not happy as her son — are leaving her one after another, Nathan advises her not to think only of sorrows. She should also think of the jays that are still with them : "Look at our land — is it not beautiful ? The fields are green and the grain is ripening. It will be a good harvest year, there will be plenty." He hopes that they will be able to pay the landlord, eat and perhaps save a little and even pay a visit to Murugan.

Inspite of Nathan's hope they have to face a drought and their condition becomes more pathetic. They face starvation. Many times they eat whatever they can find to ward off the pangs of hanger. Nathan still hopes that "It will not hbe long before the harvest.... only a little time before the grain is ripe?

There was hope as long as there was land. Apart from the natural calamities a man-made disaster shatter, them. The tannery is encroaching upon the land and Nathan is evicted from his land. Rukmani Nathan decide to go to Murugan. Hope keeps them going on at the city too, though repeated neverses take place. They are completly ruined. They start working as stone-breakers to save money with the hope of returning to their village. But Nathan dies. Even after Nathan's death Rukmani's hope does not desert her. Puli is now her only hope. She persuades him to go with her. After her return to the village she finds an object of hope in her children — Selvam and Ira. She knows that "work without hope draws *'nectar in a sieve'* and hope without an object cannot live." Thus just as nectar "if put in a sieve drops down and gets spoiled in the same way, the traditional culture of Rukmani's village, its simplicity, its slow and calm beauty and human values are destroyed by the intrusion of modernity".

The nectar of rural existence is marred by the sieve of tannery. The title is poetic as well as symbolic.

Unit 7(b): An Analytic Reading of *Nectar in a Sieve*

Chapter 1

The narrator of the novel is Rukmani, the fourth daughter of the headman of a South-Indian village. Rukmani's elder sisters - Shanta, Padmini and Thangam are married long before Rukmani's marriage. All the three sisters are well married and with rich dowries. Rukmani too dreams of a 'grand wedding'. But 'four dowries is too much for a man to bear' As a result she is married to Nathan, a poor tenant farmer.

After the customary ceremonies Rukmani leaves by bullock - cart for Nathan's house. Rukmani's first impression of her new house is not very happy. When she enters the hut she falls down due to the cramps in her legs. Nathan consoles her. "Perhaps you are frightened at living here alone — but in a few years we can move — may be even buy a house such as your father's." Rukmani visits the brook which runs near their paddy field. There is a beautiful description of the natural beauty of the brook and paddy fields. Here all the village women assemble to wash clothes. Rukmani happens to meet Kali, wife of their neighbour, Janaki, the wife of the village shopkeeper and Kunthi, youngest of the three, pregnant and disdainful.

Chapter 2

Rukmani visits Kunthi's house to help her deliver a child as the mid-wife delays. Though Kunthi is not agreed to accept help, Rukmani thinks this is a sign of concern for her. At leisure hours, she takes up writing to keep herself in touch so that she can teach when her child is born. Nathan praised her for being so clever at reading and writing :

"You are clever, Ruku, as I have said before".

He does not alow Rukmani to work in fields now. One day while tending the creepers of pumpkins, she touches the tail of snake. She cries and the snake disappears. Nathan listens to her cry, he comes and cuts the snake to pieces with his scythe. For Rukmani it is an unfortunate and awkward happening. Now a premature but beautiful child Irawaddy is born. Nathan in the beginning is indifferent to "Ira" as he wishes for a son to help him on the land in future. But when Ira at the age of ten months calls him 'Apa' he begins to 'take a lively interest in her'.

Chapter 3

Ira becomes a girl of six but Rukmani does not conceive. Rukmani's mother becomes consumptive and dies, and during her final illness she gives Rukmani a small stone of lingam, 'Symbol of fertility'. Here she meets Doctor Kenny who had cured her mother's barrenness. Kenny promises to help her also. Now Rukmani starts to visit Kenny's hospital stealthily. She becomes pregnant and gives birth to several sons in succession — Arjun, Thambi, Murugan, Raja, Selvan and Kunti.

Now Rukmani feels a lot of difficulty to feed them. She has to sell the vegetables to Old Granny first and later to Biswas, a money -lender, She is also able to save a rupee or two for Ira's dowry:

"And every month I put away a rupee or two against the time Ira would be married."

Chapter 4

Suddenly a tannery is established in their village within two months. Kannan, the village cobbler is most unhappy as it would destroy his business. After some period, a white man, the foreman, and the officials with their wives and children — come. Kunthi becomes happy as their backward village will soon have modern amenities, shops and tea-stalls and even a bioscope, perhaps. But Rukmani hates the tannery as it ruins the peaceful and simple life of countryside. Kali is also aware of the evil effects of this. She warns Rukmani not to allow Ira to move about freely. Sivaji, the agent of the Zamindar was 'kindly' and 'humane'. He allows equal distribution of field dung between Rukmani and Kali. One morning when Rukmani is busy to pick up cow-dung, she feels that some one is watching her. It is Dr. Kenny. She recognises him. She is very grateful to Dr. Kenny. She takes him to her house. Kenny also shows affection for her children there. Nathan comes back and makes 'nakaskar'. After this Kenny comes frequently. He brings her a little cow's milk whenever he can, as their goat has been sold.

Chapter 6

Ira Attains the marriageable age. Rukmani and Nathan realize that. They ask Old Granny to act as go between for the arrangement — Old Granny gets success in seeking a suitable match for Ira. Ira is beautiful. So she is married for a cheap dowry to a man who owns property. Everybody appreciates the match and the marriage is as lavish as they can afford.

Chapter 7

As Rukmani and Nathan have been pre-occupied with Ira's marriage, they have not taken care of the thatching of the roof. This year monsoon breaks in early and it rains continuously for eight days : "It rained so hard, so

long and so incessantly that the thought of a period of no rain provoked a mild wonder. It was as if nothing had ever been but rain and the water pitilessly found every hole in the thatched roof to come in, dripping on to the already damp floor." Many huts of the villagers have been washed away. Besides, the storm has played havoc in the village. Rukmani and Nathan become penniless. They go to Hanuman first for rice and then to Biswas who gives then two 'ollocks' of rice for two rupees. On the outskirts of the village they happen to meet Dr. Kenny who urges them to demand more and rages against their acceptance of suffering with resignation, and
the hope that time will improve :

" 'Times are better, times are better', he shouts. 'Times will not be better for many months.Meanwhile you will suffer and die, you meek suffering fools. Why do you keep this ghastly silence ? Why do you not demand — cry out for help — do something ? There is nothing in this country; Oh God, there is nothing". They pass their days first on rice then on dried fish and on roots and leaves.

Chapter 8

Work at the tannery starts and Kunthi's two eldest sons work there. The tannery is a 'boon' to Kunthi as their village is no longer a village, but a 'growing town'. She maintains her physical beauty, though she is a lady of Rukmani's age. She makes mysterious visits to the town. Janaki's husband is unable to compete with the other bigger shopkeepers. As a result, their shop closes down and they leave the village for some unknown place. The tannery flourishes. It swallows the land of many villagers. The officials of the tannery have also increased. Apart from the whiteman, there are many other Muslim officials and their families. Their wives remain burka-clad and Rukmani feels sorry for them.

Chapter 9

Ira is returned to her home. Her husband frankly tells Rukmani that as Ira is a barren woman and he has waited five years he takes the decision to return her back. Nathan is not ready to blame Ira's husband. He thinks everyman needs children. He accepts it as destiny. But Rukmani feels that
her own story is being repeated in Ira's life.

Arjun, Rukmani's first son feels tired of hunger and decides to work in the tannery because he is less interested to be a tenant farmer like his father. A few days later Thambi too joins him. Nathan feels hurt to know that his sons are reluctant to do work as peasants. However, the economic condition of the family improves a little bit. Now Rukmani is able to store half a bag of rice and nearly a pound chillies, buy clothes and thatch their hut.

Chapter 10

The festival of Deepavali approaches. This is first time the family celebrates the pomp and ceremony of the festival. Rukmani gives two annas to each child for fire works and the children become very happy. They visit the town to enjoy bonfire. Rukmani too wants to enjoy the present moment fully, but the thought of Janaki once disturbs her mind. Anyway, they return happily and Nathan sings loudly all the way back.

Chapter 11

Nathan has to attend the funeral of one of their relatives. Rukmani finds an opportunity to visit Kenny stealthily to request him to remedy Ira's barrenness. Kenny assures to do what he can. As Rukmani returns she hears some one calling her name. It is Kunthi. She accuses Rukmani of having a secret love affair with Kenny. This makes Rukmani very angry and she beats her. Kunthi warns her she would never forgive Rukmani and would one day have revenge for this insult. Under Kenny's treatment Ira is cured. Rukmani then goes to Ira's husband. She informs him that Ira can bear child. But Ira's husband has already married and can not take Ira back. Hearing this Ira suffers a lot. Meanwhile, Rukmani gives birth to another child, Kunthi. Kunthi's arrival brings a strange change in Ira. She is happy in company of Kunthi. She cares him with a motherly devotion.

Chapter 12

One day in each week the tannery remains closed. Arjun and Thambi help their father in farming. The rest of the week they work at the tannery. One day when there is no work to be done on the fields, Rukmani and Nathan visit the tannery to meet their sons. They come to know that a trouble is going on there. As the workers have asked for more money their eating time has been reduced. So a strike is called against the anti-labour policy of the employers. The workers declare that they will not start work until their lunch hours is restored and their wages increased. At last hired for jobs as labourers in the tea plantations of Ceylon, Arjun and Thumbi decide to to go there to make their living. At the time of their departure they know very well that they will never come back. Murugan, the third son of Rukmani goes to city to become a servant with the help of Kenny. Rukmani is grateful to Kenny who often brings the news of his whereabouts. Rukmani once asks Kenny after

the later's family. Kenny confides : "I have the usual encumbrances that men have — wife, children, home — that would have put chains about me, but I resisted and so I am alone."

Chapter 13

The days of happiness do not stay for long. Soon fear assils them as they have to face drought this year. But they have to pay to their dues. Sivaji comes to collect his master's, dues. He is sympathetic with them and agrees to accept half of the amount. At last Rukmani and Nathan have to sell several of their possessions — earthen pots, brass vessels, a handful of chillies, the bullocks and even the tin trunk which Rukmani brought with her as a bride. But their dues cannot be met even halfway. The drought continues until their condition become more pathetic. At last one day the rain comes. But it gives no joy to them.

Chapter 14

After the rain seeds are sown with the blessings of the goddess. A few weeks later tender shoots appear. But again there is a conflict between hope and fear. Fear is more powerful — fear of dark future, fear of hunger and even the fear of death. Once Nathan cried out and jumped up in his sleep out of fear. Rukmani, too in her dream sees some 'shadowy figure' taking away the rice from her secret hoard. She then decides to divide the rice there into twenty-four portions, one for each day. Seven days go on thus and on the eighth day Kunthi comes in a wretched condition. She blackmails Rukmani to part with a portion of that. Otherwise she will disclose Rukmani's intimacy with Kenny. Though Rukmani is enraged, she gives seven days rations to her. That night Rukmani is shocked to find her stock theft. She accuses her children. But Nathan confesses that he has given it to Kunthi. Rukmani is shocked more to hear from her husband that he too is the victim to Kunthi's evil charms. Nathan continues that he is the father of Kunthi's son. Kunthi made Nathan her lover skilfully long before and the love affair continues even after Nathan's marriage. Rukmani, too confesses her relationship with Kenney. Both of them feel relieved. A stronger bond is built between them. After this they face starvation. Many times they eat whatever they can find to ward off the pangs of hunger. Nathan still hopes that the next harvest will come soon. Kunthi, the youngest child of the family suffers most, though Ira takes great care of him. The drought, in fact, tests their characters as well as their moral strength.

Chapter 15

One day the dead body of Raja, Rukmani's fourth son is brought by some people who claim that he has stolen the skin of a calf, perhaps to sell it for money. Rukmani and Nathan's power of endurance is tasted once again. Nathan prepares bier which is taken away by men. Three days later, two tannery officials come to tell that they are not responsible for Raja's death. They want to compensate his death, but Rukmari does not accept it. She is too overwhelmed to understand the officials.

Chapter 16

Rukmani, inspite of fear, hunger and death does not lose strength. She always talks of 'reaping'. But another disaster strikes their lives. One early morning, hearing the footsteps of a shadowy figure entiring their hut, they discover to their great surprise that it is Ira. Now it is evident that Ira has become a prostitute to keep her family alive, particularly Kunthi. It is also clear to Rukmani that it is Ira who is responsible for the improvement in Kunthi, not her prayers. Rukmani then tries to forbid Ira from going out in future. But Ira is determined to do what she thinks proper. She is no longer an obedient girl "to be forced into submission, but a grown woman with a definite purpose and an invincible determination''. Finally both Nathan and Rukmani accept this strange change. Ira often purchases rice, salt and milk for Kunthi with her earnings. But Nathan prefers to go hungry rather than touch the food she purchases whereas Rukmani resings herself to the circumstances. Kunthi improves day by day, but after a few days he becomes so feeble that he can not struggle any more. He dies.

Chapter 17

When Kunthi is gone, ironically enough there is an abundant harvest. Nathan is very happy. They forget their darkpast and laugh. They also make plans for future. Nathan hopes to clear off his debts. They are greatful to God too.

Chapter 18

One day Rukmani goes to sell vegetables to the market. On the way Biswas gives her the news of Kenny's arrival. She then visits Kenny with garland in hand. She tells Kenny how her two sons- Raja & Kuti pass away. She also askes after him. At this point Kenny is slightly irritated. He informs her that his wife and children have left him. They speak of Ira and her pregnancy. He advises her what Nathan also tells her, not to care for the opinions of the people.

Chapter 19

Kenny's return means the beginning of another change in their lives, particularly in the life of Selvam. Selvam discovers his inadequacy in farming. He becomes an assistant of Kenny to build a hospital. Rukmani thanks Kenny for his consideration. While talking to Rukmani, Kenny explains that one should demand the things one needs, and not suffer in silence, as Rukmani philosophically do.

Chapter 20

The year passes by. In the new year Ira gives birth to an albino child, Sacrabani. None knows about the father of the child. People come and go from far and near to see the child. Nathan declares that a naming ceremony will take place on the tenth day from birth. On that occasion the so-called well-wishers visit with their gifts. Old Granny gives a rupee, taking responsibility for Ira's misfortune. Kali talks to Rukmani about the baby's deficiencies. But Selvam strongly says that it is only a matter of colouring and it is not for anyone to judge which colour is right. Kali then chastized by Selvam leaves the place.

Chapter 21

The construction of the hospital buildings is delayed for different reasons. It takes seven years to be completed. In the meantime, Old Granny dies in the street when there is none to look after her. She dies of starvation. Rukmani is shocked at the death. Kenny often goes to the city to collect money to run the hospital smoothly. Now Selvam is able to treat minor cases. He is learning the profession very fast. This is the only silver lining in the life of Rukmani.

Chapter 22

There is a good understanding between Selvam and Ira. Selvam cares too much for Sacrabani and treats him as a normal child. Sacrabani is isolated from other children because of his birth and colour of his skin. Poor Sacrabani does not understand the attitude of the other boys and the meaning of 'bastard' as called by someone. Ira tries to explain, but fails to satisfy his curiosity. She is very unhappy as she has to tell many lies to hide one lie.

Chapter 23

Rukmani's third son, Murugan who is a servant in the city, marries a girl from the town. But poverty and Nathan's bad health prevents them attending his marriage. Nathan's health is deteriorating day by day. Kenny advies Rukmani to give Nathan a good and balanced died. But they can not afford it. Nathan is worried as he has no man to help him in his work. Kenny feels guilty of taking away their youngest son for his own benefit. Rukmani tells him that hers son never loves land, he has chosen his own vocation. Nathan's condition is improved a little bit. Rukmani is happy to see him once again doing work. But suddenly an unforeseen man-made disaster comes to shatter them. Sivaji comes to tell them that they have been evicted from the land as the land lord has sold his land to the tannery official. As tenant farmers they have no option but to be evicted. Finally they decide to go to Murugan to live in the city, leaving Selvam and Ira with her son.

Chapter 24

Rukmani and Nathan then encounter city life. They go out by a bullock-cart and reach the outskirts of the city. They have Murugan's address with them but they are told that Koil street where Murugan works is about fifteen miles from that place. They walk hither and thither and feel bewildered by the number of people on the streets and the trafic and noise, to all of which they are unaccustomed. A kind man advises them to eat and sleep in the nearby temple. So they reach the temple where food is being given to the beggars. People knock each down to get the food. Rukmani is given only one portion which she shares with Nathan. They leave their luggage to reach the place. But when they go to retrieve their luggage, they find that it has been stolen, That night, as they sleep, their meager sum of money is also stolen from the fold of Rukmani's sari.

Chapter 25

Next morning when they decide to buy some food, they are made aware of their plight, having lost everything. Being helpless and hopeless, they again go out in search of Murugan. They ask a group of beggar boys the way to Koil street. One of the boys, Puli takes them to the house of doctor Birla where Murugan was employed. There they come to know from the servant of doctor Birla that Murugan has left the place nearly two years ago and people say that he works for the Collector on Chamundi Hill. Sympathising their straitened circumstances, doctor Bira a lady asks her servant to provide them with food before they leave. Next morning they depart to find the way to Chamundi Hill.

Chapter 26

The Collector's house on Chamundi Hill is simple enough to find. There they meet Murugan's wife, Ammu with her children. She tells that their son has left her two years ago and nobody knows where he has gone. Rukmani is shocked to realise that her son has deserted his wife. Ammu is too poor to feed them, but invites them to eat with her before they leave. Then they part from Ammu with a sigh.

Chapter 27

They come back to the temple. But they are not welcomed by the regular beggars in the temple their presence means less food for others. Nathan is completely ruined. He wants to go back to their village: ''Whatever happens, whatever awaits us, we must return''. But they have no money to pay the fare to the village. Rukmani decides to make use of her learning. So she starts reading and writing letters for other to earn money. One year later, Rukmani meets Puli, the child who guided them to Koil street. He demands money for his services. They satisfy Puli of their precarious position. Puli advises them to work as stone-breakers. Gradually Nathan and Rukmani learn the art of stone-breaking and try to save the money required to return to their village. They invite Puli to go along with them. But Puli is reluctant to leave the city where he can look after himself.

Chapter 28

As the days go by, they began to count their savings–four, five, six rupees. They hand over their savings to Puli. They have full faith in him. He is more or less like a son to them. Meanwhile Nathan's condition becomes worse and wretched. One morning when it has been raining for a long period, he falls down. His body is as chill as the wind. People carry him to the temple. Rukmani tries to comfort him, with the help of other workers, but no one can afford even a cloth to protect him from the cold.

Chapter 29

Nathan is laid down on the paved floor and Rukmani sinks down beside him. Somebody brings a light, a hurricane lantern, somebody else with water. Rukmani takes his head in her lap. Nathan's head keep twitching from side to side. He calls his sons and mutters words that Rukmani does not understand. He asks Rukmani not to cry, as ''what has to be, has to be.'' They spent his last moment together, expressing their love for each other.

Chapter 30

Rukmani convinces Puli to come back to the village with her. Puli agrees to her at last. They are welcomed there by Selvam and Ira. Rukmani introduces Puli to her children as her adopted son. She wants to speak about their father's last moments later. Now she feels peace in the company of Ira and Selvam. The novel ends with the note of optimism.

Unit 8(a): Character Study-(i) Rukmani, (ii) Nathan and (iii) Doctor Kenny

Rukmani

Inspired by Markandaya's experience of Gandhian idealism, Rukmani has been portrayed as an idealized character. She is the first person narrator and the protagonist of the novel, *Nectar in a Sieve.* She represents the womenfolk of rural India. Her life is a microcosm of the lives of teeming millions in rural India, particularly of the tenant-farmers. She is a traditionalist at heart. Her life is centred arond her husband and children, to whom she is devoted. She is also devoted to her religion as a Hindu woman. She accepts the age-old customs and traditions of her people without question. But if the exigencies of the situation demand, she is willing to compromise it. She is reluctant to allow her sons to join the tannery, as it is meant for the lower class untouchables, but concedes to the reality of the situation.

She is also an educated woman who can rise above her rustic ignorance to take the friendly help and advice of a British doctor. Thus she combines the traditional woman's role of ''Sati-Savitri'' with that of the ''New Woman''. Rukmani is a Mother of sorrows. Her suffering springs mainly from poverty and natural calamity. Her sufferings start at the very outset of the novel. Inspite of being the daughter of a village headman, she is married to a tenant farmer who is 'poor in everything'. But her enormous capacity for adjustment is remarkable. She never complains to her husband for anything. When Ira, the barren daughter is returned by her husband, Rukmani does not blame her husband, for it is accepted that men require children. Even when she learns that her husband fathered another woman's son, she neither strikes out at him nor crumbles: "Disbelief first, disillusionment, anger, reproach, pain. To find out after so many years, in such a cruel way.... He had known her not once but twice, he had gone back to give her a second son. 'And between, how many times', I thought,

bleak of spirit, 'While her husband in his impotence and I in my innocence did nothing'. ...At last I made an effort and roused myself. ''It is as you say a long time ago'', I said wearily. ''That she is evil and powerful I know myself let it rest''.

She endures blow after blow from life : poverty, famine, the divorce of her barren daughter, the deaths of her sons, her daughter's prostitution, and finally her husband's death. She accepts the blow and moves on in life. In addition, when her son Raja is murdered, even her thoughts do not expres rebellion. She moves from numbness to grief: "For this I have given you birth, my son, that you should lie in the end at my feet with ashes in your face and coldness in your limbs and yourself departed without trace." Three days later when two tannery officials come to tell her that they have no responsibility, she tells them what they want to hear : "What compensation is there for death ?' I felt confused, I did not understand what he was
getting at." When the officials turn to leave, she realizes that one of them feels 'shame and misery' and
tries to make him feel better : " 'You should not care,' I said very softly to him alone. 'It does not matter.'" Her goodness and inner strength prevent her from becoming hard and bitter.

No pain or injustice can cause her to rebel or seek revenge. Markandaya subeverts Rukmani's only violent reaction when she physically attacks a shadowy figure in her home, thinking it a woman who has previously robbed her family of precious rice during a famine the woman turns out to be her daughter, Ira. Though she does not support Ira's profession, she is able to conform to the changing requirements of the time and accept the food bought with their tainted money. The heaviest blow of all comes. When the extension of the tannery brings about their eviction. Rukmani is honest enough to realize that they can not in all reality condemn the tannery : "...the tannery cannot be blamed for every misfortune we suffered. Tannery or not, the land might have been taken from us. It had never belonged to us, we had never prospered to the extent where we could buy."

They have, therefore, no other option but to leave their village. Rukmani accompanies her husband. When Nathan falls seriously ill, she earns money by reading and writing letters for others to give medical aid. But finally her efforts go in vain, her husband dies. Rukmani's humanitarian attitude is obvious in her adoption of an orphan, Puli. She takes him away to her village. She sees suffering as good for the spirit and endurance as a necessity, because she cannot change her situation:

"What is our companion from birth to death, familiar as the seasons of the earth, varying only in degree. What profit to bewail that which has always been and cannot change?"

Through out the novel Rukmani remains a simple character. She finds happiness in the simple, everyday life of a farmer's wife. Her friends and neighbours like Kali and Janaki can easily teach her planting the seed, milking the goat, charning butter from milk. She derives pleasure from growing the best vegetables in her garden. She is also economical and manages to save some of her produce which she carefully stores away. She is unaffected by the superficial splendour and glamour that invites the village at the advent of the tannery, which attracts and excites the more self-seeking Kunthi. She is not even allured by the vastness and modernity of the city. To her it is only the village with its verdant beauty affords great charm.

Thus, Rukmani's simplicity, her patience, her submission to her fate and her tolerance and acceptance of the ups and downs of life easily win reader's sympathy. Dr. A. V. Krishna Rao has rightly pointed out "The real truth of the novel is the spiritual stamina of Rukmani."

Nathan

Nathan, the husband of Rukmani, is the main male character in the novel. He is next to Rukmani. His married life with Rukmani is an ideal life. There is no conflict between them. Nathan, too is the representative of the typical Indian peasant — simple, illiterate, hard-working and passionate about his love for the land. From the very beginning of their married life Nathan is patient and considerate husband. During their journey to his village he soothes her. In the early months of their marriage, Rukmani practically knows nothing, but Nathan shows great patience and understanding for the efforts she makes to adjust to her new life. Rukmani records : "what patience indeed my husband must have had, to put up with me uncomplainingly during those early days of our married lives!". He always encourages her. He even appreciates the vegetables she grows and calls her 'a clever woman'. During Rukmani's pregnancy he is concerned about her health and admires her ability to write as he himself is an illiterate.

Like Rukmani, Nathan too is a traditionalist. As a typical rural husband he does not pay much attention to their first-born who is a girl, till at ten months, the girl calls him 'Apa'. He does not complain when Rukmani fails to

give him a son for seven years. But when Ira's husband brings Ira back after five years of waiting, Nathan patiently accepts the fact saying "He is justified, for a man needs children."
When he comes to know about Ira's profession, he declares clearly that he will accept nothing, bought with the tainted money of Ira, though he is in a wretched condition : "I will not touch it". Rukmani says, "...his spirit was very strong, and he was an uprightman."
Nathan is a practical man. He expects that his sons will work on the land, but when they are less interested to do so, he does not force them. Again, when their sons leave for Ceylon, Rukmani is desolate, and Nathan conceals his own sorrow to confort her by distracting her to natural beauties like lush green paddy fields. Thinking of the harvest soothes them both.
Nathan always hopes for a better future. But he becomes the instrument of irony of fate. He hopes to buy a new house like Rukmani's father. But heavy rains have destroyed his hope and the harvest. Then there is utter drought and his paddy fields are all scorched. He along with his family members bodly faces starvation, lives on grass and wild plant and sells all their goods in order to pay off the dues of his landlord. When he is happy at the prospect of a good crop, the unexpected again happens. His land is swallowed by the tannery and his family is evicted from the land which he loves so much. Thus he suffers patiently both at the hands of man and nature and endures heroically the suffering which is the lot of many peasants like him. Finally he decides to go to the city where his son Murugan works. But there he has to live the life of a beggar on the charity and shelter provided by a temple. Then he hopes to earn money to return to their village and works as stone-breaker. But one day drenched in rain, sick and exhausted he breathes his last in the lap of Rukmani.
Nodout it is he who is unfaithful to his wife as he has an affair with Kunthi, but he confesses everything honestly. His confession begets hers, and ends in a reconciliation that brings a new peace into their lives and makes it possible for them to endure the inexpressively hard life that follows. Despite a few shortcomings, his heroic qualities can not be ignored, specially his belief in the power of patience and tolerance makes his personality very charming. His life story illustrates that man is but a plaything in the hands of Destiny. Markandaya, in this regard agrees with Hardy.

Doctor Kenny

Dr. Kennington or Kenny as he has been popularly called is a British doctor working in the villages of South India. Though he is a foreigner, he can speak the local language well. Markandaya presents Kenny in order to throw light on the East-West conflict and assimilation. When Rukmani is first introduced to him, during her mother's illness, she observes him keenly : "He was tall and gaunt with pale skin and sunken eyes the colour of a Kingfisher's wing, neither blue nor green."

Kenny comments on Rukmani's distressed appearance induces her to tell him about her story, after some hesitation. When Rukmani expresses her barrenness, he agrees to help her, but with his characteristic stright forwardness, makes no promise. However, very soon she becomes pregnant again and in due course six sons are born to her. He also cures Ira of her barrenness. Gradually, Kenny becomes a friend of Rukmani's family. Sometimes he gives Rukmani the economic support she needs to reinstate her family. He brings gifts for the children, sends milk for Kuti, the youngest son of Rukmani when they can not afford to buy it, sends Murugan to the city to work as a servant and takes selwan as his assistant in his dispensary. But their cultural disparity is so vast that Rukmani describes him as a man half in shadow half in light, defying knowledge. Kenny tells Rukmani that he has the usual encumbrances such as wife, children home. His wife has left him and his sons have been taught to hate him. Infact, he has sacrificed his conjugal happiness and the pleasures of sweet home for the service of humanity. Though he is not rich, his decision to construct a hospital in the village with long and patient effort to relieve the suffering of the teening masses is marked by a sense of humanitarianism within him. He has been born to England, but close to work in South India and even learnt the tocal tongue in order to converse with the people, and believes this to be the country of his adoption. He often feel lonely and suffers an identity crisis.
Kenny is the representative of the Western philosophy. He wants the poor villagers to stand up against injustice and oppression. He repeatedly advises them to cryout for help, and not to accept their 'eternal, shameful poverty' without protest. He often calls them 'neck, suffering fools' who accept starvation and calamity in

'ghastly silence'. His harsh words are actually the expressions of his love for them. But he is frustrated by their passive acceptance : "There is nothing in this country, oh God, there is nothing !"

Unit 8(b): Thematic Study-(i) Novel of rural India and Theme of Hunger, (ii) Tradition and Modernity and (iii) East-West Encounter

Nectar in a Sieve deals with several significant themes — the theme of rural India, the theme of hunger, the theme of tradition and modernity and the theme of the East-West encounter.

Novel of rural India and the theme of hunger:

The subtitle of the novel has been illustrated through the life of Rukmani and Nathan which is narrated against a rural background and thus makes it a great novel of Indian rural life. The novel presents hunger and destitution. Srinivas Iyenger says in this connection: "Markandaya writes that fear, hunger and despair are the constant companion of the peasant — fear of the dark future, fear of the sharpness of hunger, fear of the blackness of death."

The novel is set in a village where hunger is caused mainly by natural disastery — heavy rains utter drought. Rukmani, the narrator-heroine is married to a tenant - farmer, Nathan, who is hard-working and considerate, but who is unfortunately dependent on nature. During the first eight years of their marriage they live happily inspite of their poverty. But after her six sons are born in quick succession, Rukmani is no longer able to provide sufficient food for them. She goes to sell her vegetable in the market, first to Old Granny and then to Biswas who offers a better price. During these years also they have no cause for complaint. But after Ira's marriage Nature strikes her a below, perhaps the cruelest and crudest in its nature. There is heavy and incessant rainfall for eight days which destroys the paddy field. They have nothing to eat. They have to eat literally what they find — salted fish, roots and leaves and the prickly pear. When Ira is returned to their house, as she has borne no child after five years of marriage, there is another mouth to feed. Arjun, being tired of hunger decides to work at the tannery. He claims, "I am tired of hunger and I am tired of seeing my brothers hungry. There is never enough, especially since Ira came to live with us". Next year, a severe drought takes place and it brings complete ruin to the farmer. Rukmani and Nathan have to sell all their possessions to meet the half dues. The drought continues for long and atlast rain comes, but it is too late to do any good. Rukmani remembers : "But in us there was nothing left- no joy, no call for joy. It had come too late". Markandaya has given a vivid and graphic account of the pain of hunger in the following lines "...hunger is curious thing : at first it is with you all the time, waking and sleeping and in your dreams, and your belly cries out insistently, and there is a gnawing and a pain as if your very vitals were being devoured, and you must stop it at any cost, and you buy a moment's respite even while you know and fear the sequel. Then the pain is no longer sharp but dull, and this too is with you always, so that you think of food many times a day and each time a terrible sickness assails you, and became you know this you try to avoid the thought, but you cannot, it is with you. Then that too is gone, all pain, all desire, only a great empteness is left, like the sky, like a well drought, and it is now that the strength drains from your limbs, and you try to rise and find you cannot, or to swallow water and your throat is powerless, and both the swallow and the effort of retaining the liquid tax you do the utter most."

How hunger can generate moral lapse is evident from the characters of Kunthi, Ira and Raja. Kunthi's hunger drives her to blackmail both Nathan and Rukmani, threatening to expose their secrets. Raja to satisfy his family's hunger makes an attempt to steal a calf-skin, in order to sell it and thereby to get some money from it. But Ira's degradation is more pathetic. Hunger draws her into prostitution, as she is unable to endure watching her little brother, kuti to die before her eyes. On the otherhand, in the case of Nathan, hunger causes malnutrition, disease and death. Nathan does not touch a morsel of what is brought with Ira's earnings. Out of frustration he grows weaker and suffers from rheumatic fever. He becomes weak and is often forced to lie down in the mids of work. Kenny advises Rukmani to give Nathan a good and balanced diet, but it is beyond their means. When Rukmani and Nathan go to city his health grows worse. But he continues to work as a stone breaker and ultimately dies of the hardship of profession.

There are also some other examples in the novel which express deeply the theme of hunger. Old Granny dies of hunger because there is no one to look after her, since nobody can afford to do so. The beggars who gather at the temple driven by hunger do not welcome Rukmani by Nathan. For the lesser the number, the larger the quantity of food for them.

The theme of tradition and modernity:

Markandaya's *Nectar in a sieve* depicts the conflict between tradition and modernity. Industrialization mars the happiness of rural life. The joy of Rukmani's married life is ruined by the advent of tannery. It is constructed in Rukmani's village, with the intention of following it up with other urban facilities, such as shops, tea-stalls and even a bioscope. Though Kunthi accepts it as socially uplifting. But as it encroaches on the village, the houses are pulled down to provide additional space and it no longer remains a playground for children. Rukmani resents the fact that "birds have forgotten to sing" and prices have risen after it has been installed, and feels intuitively that it will prove their undoing.

Rukmani's intuition proves true. The tannery swallows up the land of Nathan. He is evicted and uprooted like others villager as the tannery oweners intent upon expansion, purchase further land from the Zamindars.

The impact of the modernization is felt throughout the novel. Arjun, Rukmani's eldest son, being tired of hunger joins tannery and Thambi follows him. Obviously their economic condition for the lime being, improved. But they are dismissed as they do not conform to the management's demand and accept the injustice, perpetrated on them. Finally they have to leave their native place for the sake of money, knowing that they may never have a chance to return. The chakkli, Kannan also loses his profession as the cobbler when the tannery comes into operation, as he realizes that it is impossible for him to compete against.

The tannery is also indirectly responsible for Raja's death and Ira's immoral profession. Raja is hit by the guards on the head as he attempts to steal a piece of calf-skin. He dies on the spot. In case of Ira, "the truth is unpalatable". Partly it is the evil effect of industrialization as she chooses to go against her upbringing.

Thus the tannery is not only a symbol of modernization which creates work for the unemployed, it is also an instrument of subordination and dehumanization. Srinivas Iyengar points out: "The novel as a whole is deeply disturbing protest against the onslaught of modern technological ruthlessness against simplicity and humanity of an earlier order of life."

East-West Encounter:

The Post-Independence Indo-Anglian novelists tend to concentrate on the level of individual character as well as on the level of ideas. The East-West encounter has become one of the recurrent themes of their novels. This is also true of Markandaya's novels. Margaret P. Joseph points out that "she is particularly sensitive to the clash of east and west and the tension born of this clash."

In *Nectar in a Sieve* it is predominantly confined to the relationship between Dr. Kenny and the Indian villagers, especially Rukmani. Rukmani first meets Kenny at her father's house dering her mother's illness. She unconsciously stares at him as he is the first English man Rukmani has ever seen. She is surprised to hear local language when he speaks to her. Kenny's comment on Rukmani's distressed appearance induces her to tell him about her story. Kenny agrees to help her. Very soon iender Kenny's treatment she becomes pregnant and Rukmani feels indebted to him.

After this, a friendly relationship is built between them. Kenny sometimes brings gifts of food for her children and provides her with the economic support for her family. He sends Murugan to the city to work as a servant and takes Selvam as his assistant. But the cultural disparity between them is evident from their conversations. When Kenny, the western doctor urges, " 'you must cry out if you want help. It is no use whatsoever to suffer in silence. Who will succour the drowning man if he does not clamour for his life ?", Rukmani's response marks Oriental submissiveness and power of endurance : "Want in our companion from birth to death, familiar as the seasons of the earth, varying only in degree. What profit to bewail that which has always been and cannot change ?". But Kenny, the Westerner, believes that, "there is no grand are in want or indurance." In contrast, Rukmani, the Indian woman, sees saffering as good for the spirit and endurance as a necessity, because she cannot change her situation. Her oriental mind argues that complaint is a sign of weakness, and one's wants are myriad. Therefore there is no use of complaining about thing which will not change.

Inspite of their disparities Rukmani and Kenny appreciate the other's moral worth and positive qualities. Rukmani is grateful for Kenny's help while Kenny finds a welcome and warmth in her house that appeals to him. He tells Nathan that he is "not so poor, for the women in your house do you credit." Thus East and West may have diametrically opposite premises of thinking and reasoning, but this is no bar to mutual appreciation and harmonious relationship.

Suggested Reading

1. M. K. Naik — *A History of Indian English Literature*
2. K. R. Srinivas Iyengar — *Indian Writing in English*
3. Meenakshi Mukherjee — *The Twice Born Fiction*
4. Margaret P. Joseph — *Kamala Markandaya*
5. Anil K. Bhatnagar — *Kamala Markandaya* : *A Thematic Study*
6. A. V. Krishna Rad and K. Madhasi Menon — *Kamala Markandaya* : *A Critical Study of Her Novels.*
7. Ramesh K. Srivastava — *The Novel of Kamala Markandaya* : *A Critical Study*
8. Uma Parameswaran — *Kamala Markandaya*
9. Shared Shrivastava — *The New Woman in Indian English Fiction* : *A Study of Kamala Markandaya. Anita Desai, Namita Gokhale and Sobha De*.
10. A. A. Sinha — *The Novels of Kamala Markandaya and Arun Joshi*.

Assignments

Long Questions :

1. Rukmani is both "of the Sati-Savitri archetypal pattern" and "the New Woman". Comment
2. "Nathan and Rukmani are the true representatives of rural society." Discuss
3. Dr. Kenny in *Nectar in a Sieve* is both a "sympathetic observer of the Indian scene" and a "representative of the ... West." Comment.
4. How far has Kamala Markandaya been successful in presenting the theme of hunger, starvation and degradation in *Nectar in a Sieve* ?
5. How does Kamala Markandaya present the East West encounter in *Nectar in a Sieve* ?
6. What are the evil effects of the industrialisation on Indian rural life ?
7. Examine the significance of the title *Nectar in a Sieve*.
8. Bring out the significance of the sub-title "A Novel of Rural India."
9. How far is it appropriate to refer to *Nectar in a Sieve* as "a novel of rural India" ?

Short Questions :

1. Name some minor characters in the novel *Nectar in a Sieve*.
2. Why Rukmani, being a daughter of village headman, had to marry a tenant farmer ?
3. Why did Ira's husband return her to her parents ?
4. Why did Rukmani's two sons decide to go to Ceylon ?
5. Who blackmailed Rukmani and why ?
6. Why did Old Granny pass away in the street ?
7. What did the officials from the tannery say to Rukmani over Raja's death ?
8. How did Doctor Kenny criticize Rukmani's "passive suffering"?
9. Reproduce in your own words Rukmani's description of her bridal night.
10. Describe in your own words the situation leading to the death of Nathan.

Block III: *The Shadow Lines* by Amitav Ghosh

Unit 9(a): Amitav Ghosh-Introduction

Unit 9(b): The Story Line

Unit 9(c)-i) Structure of the Novel

ii) Narrative Technique of Amitav Ghosh

Unit 10(a)

Unit 10(b)-i) The Title: Analysis

-ii) Criticism of the Ideas of Nationalism, Patriotism and Political Freedom

-iii) As a Bildungsroman

An Overview of Indian Writing in English

Indians writing in English are not a new breed. Ever since the introduction of the English language and Western thought to Indian schools, colleges and universities, we have Indians writing social, political, historical or religious treatise and books in English. The reason is more than obvious. The ideas they were exploring, the debates they were arguing were mostly imported from Europe through the English language. Eminent national leaders like M. K. Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru chose to write their spiritual autobiographies, history of India or letters to the daughter in English. But when it comes to writing fiction in English, it becomes less than obvious why novelists dealing with themes and subject- matters exclusively Indian still chose to write in English. Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay, arguably the first Indian novelist, wrote his first novel *Rajmohan's Wife* in English .Probably, in colonial India that was the natural choice. Since then there has been a steady trickle of fiction-writing in English culminating in the works of Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan and Raja Rao. But Bankim Chandra switched to Bangla to write *Durgeshnandini*. He declared literary independence by choosing his mother tongue Bangla over English.

All major Indian writers had to negotiate the paradoxical situation in which Bankim Chandra found himself. Many of them chose English as they felt, like Arundhati Roy, that English was the skin of their thought. They have written in English to explore their Indian experience. As a result, English has undergone considerable changes in their hands. R. K. Narayan wrote stories about Malgudi and its people in English which are replete with words taken from his mother tongue. This was inevitable and gives the stories a flavour which is typical of the Southern part of India. They also have brought Indian literary tradition to their English writing like Raja Rao's adoption of the form of Sthalapurana in *Kanthapura*.

The trickle became a steady shower after 1981 when Salman Rushdie published *Midnight's Children*. Rushdie, an expatriate Parsee, who was born in Mumbai, wrote about India and not his country of adoption. Novelists of the post-'47 generation encountered a literary scene which was essentially different from the one known to the writers of the colonial era. The imperishable empire of the English language established its hegemony, as far as one can see, permanently only after the political freedom came. Migration and expatriation on a large scale are also postcolonial phenomena. Today there are large Indian communities settled in the United Kingdom or the United States of America or in many other parts of the globe. The spread of English literacy in India has widened the readership even further. There are publishers, both foreign and Indian, who are ready to invest a lot of money in this genre of writing. Above all, cultural globalization of the last two decades has somewhat homogenized at least the urban middle and upper class lives all over the world. Both the writers of fiction in English and their readers come from this class. So, wide readership and easy marketability are almost guaranteed.

We can divide the Indian writers of English fiction in three categories. There are writers who live in India, writers who are born and brought up in India but live elsewhere and writers who are neither born nor brought up in India, live abroad, only have Indian parents to justify their inclusion in this group. No wonder that writers who live in India write about their Indian experience. But why writers belonging to the two latter categories also choose India - her locale, people, history, culture, politics, literary tradition - when they come to write fiction is a question that need to be addressed. They have out-voted Bankim Chandra in their choice of language but almost whole-heartedly mandated his choice of subject.

If we look back, within a very short span of time Indian fiction written in English has got a tremendous fillip. Arundhati Roy received Booker for her debut novel *God of Small Things*. Jhumpa Lahiri won Pulitzer for her short story collection *Interpreter of Maladies*. Awards are only a measure of the visibility of the genre. Scores

of writers have written good, immensely readable novels about varied subjects from Mughal miniatures (Kunal Basu) to European classical music (Vikram Seth). It is time for the critics to consider a literary canon different both from the literature written in the regional languages and the one written by native speakers of the English language.

Unit 9(a): Amitav Ghosh-Introduction

Amitav Ghosh is a major novelist of our time. He was born in Kolkata in 1956. His childhood was spent in Kolkata, Dhaka and Colombo. He graduated from Delhi University and went to Oxford to do a D. Phil in Social Anthropology. He now lives in New York. In an interview published in *The Sunday Statesman* dated October 15, 2000, he says "I spend about 3 or 4 months every year in Calcutta and the rest of the year I am in New York," also "I feel completely at ease there and I feel completely at ease here and I enjoy both - I feel very privileged that it's possible to do this." These two statements clearly show how Ghosh has been successful in negotiating his biculturalism just as writers in a previous generation had been in negotiating their bilingualism. Here is a writer who has been educated both in India and abroad, lived at many places across the globe and assimilated various cultural influences. In a way he represents the post-'47 generation of educated, urban, middle class Indian.

Amitav Ghosh's first novel, *The Circle of Reason*, was published in 1986. About this book, Anthony Burgess wrote in *New York Times* "… a remarkable achievement.... Technically a lot of us can learn from Mr. Ghosh. Finally, it is the intelligence, manifested in a brilliant handling of language that impressed us." Two aspects of this novel to which Burgess draws our attention are its technical accomplishment and its use of language. It is a wonderful first novel that marks the beginning of a new tradition in Indian English fiction. Ghosh's departure from the traditional themes of this kind of fiction, conscious attempts at breaking down the form and structure of the well-made novel and sensitive, poignant and sophisticated use of the English language have inspired a whole new generation of writers whom Rukun Advani has christened the Ghosh generation. *The Shadow Lines* was published two years later in 1988 and received the Sahitya Academy Award in 1989. His other works include *In An Antique Land (1992), The Calcutta Chromosome (1996), Dancing in Cambodia, At Large in Burma (1998), Countdown (1999), The Glass Palace* (2000) and *The Hungry Tide(2004).*

The Glass Palace is a monumental work of historical imagination. It is a story which covers three generations. It reaches epic proportion as it grasps the reach and fall of empires across the twentieth century. About the sweep of history in this book, Ghosh says "My view of history is that I don't have answers to the big questions. My interest in history is only in as much as it presents unrepeatable circumstances for individual predicaments. My interest is in the character and not in a vision of history." But in spite of himself he does reveal a vision of history not only in this book but also in other books like *The Shadow Lines* and *In An Antique Land.* The best part of Ghosh's historical imagination is his capacity to weave together personal lives and public events, as A. K. Ramanujan has pointed out. It is this quality along with his experimentation in form and technique that has marked him as an outstanding novelist of the present generation.

Unit 9(b): The Story Line

The story line in *The Shadow Lines* is rather thin. There is no plot as such; if by plot we mean sequential development of action where events or incidents are bound in causal relationship. There is a boy-narrator who has not been named in the story. He is the only child in a family of four. There are the parents. The father is a junior executive in a company, the mother a housewife. There is the widowed grandmother who is the headmistress of a local girls' school. They live in a flat near Gole Park in Calcutta.

The grandmother was born and brought up in Dhaka. She spent her girlhood in a big house in Jindabahar Lane. Theirs was a big joint family - the grandmother, her sister, their parents and grandparents, Jethamoshai - her father's elder brother - and his family which included three cousins roughly of her own age, as well as a couple of spinster aunts. But after the death of the grandfather of the grandmother the house was divided and a wall was erected to separate the two parts of the house.

As a young woman the grandmother harboured revolutionary dreams. Those were the days of terrorist movement against the British imperial rule. She was married off to an engineer who worked with the railways

in Burma. She lost her husband when her son, the narrator's father was only ten years old. She came back to Calcutta to teach in a school and never went back to Dhaka till 1964 almost forty years after her last visit.

Grandmother's sister, Mayadebi, is a beautiful woman who got married to the son of Justice Chandra Sekhar Datta-Chaudhuri. The story revolves round the grandmother's and Mayadebi's families. Mayadebi's husband is a career diplomat who lives in far- off cities, coming to Calcutta only once in two/three years. They have three sons. The eldest is Jatin, an economist with the UN who is "always away to somewhere in Africa or South-East Asia, with his wife and his daughter Ila." Ila is about the same age as the narrator. She is, like her grandmother Mayadebi, a beautiful girl. The narrator falls in love with her; unrequited love that haunts him all through his boyhood as well as early manhood days.

Mayadebi's second son is Tridib who lives with his grandmother in a sprawling mansion in Ballygunge, Calcutta. He conducts research in archeological sites associated with the Sena dynasty of Bengal. Tridib is the friend, philosopher and guide to the narrator. He taught the narrator to use his imagination - a tool with which he could visualize the places he had never been to, to fill up the gap between available pieces of information and to correlate events and incidents, far apart in time and space, to read meaning into them. Tridib's is the most pervasive influence upon the narrator. Two of the most important coordinates in the story are Tridib's visit to London in 1939 and his death in a riot on the streets of Dhaka in 1964. The story of Tridib's visit to London brings the Price family into the orbit of the narrative.

Mrs. Price's father, Lionel Tresawsen, was a friend of Tridib's grandfather. The friendship continued through subsequent generations. Her brother Alan, her husband and she herself remained lifelong friends of Tridib's parents. Mrs. Price's daughter May started a pen-friendship with Tridib that turned into a love affair. May came to visit the narrator's family in Calcutta and accompanied Tridib and the grandmother on their fateful journey to Dhaka. Ila is married to May's brother Nick. The narrator comes to know the Prices first hand when he goes to London "to collect material from the India Office Library... for a Ph. D. thesis." The narrative that Ghosh builds up around these characters touches their lives at critical moments in history like the Second World War and Partition of India. There is Mayadebi's third son Robi who is a contemporary of both Ila and the narrator. Through them England and India meet on humane ground; their private relationships stretch far beyond the ruler-subject binary. There is no linear progression in the narrative. The story begins and ends in the narrator's memory and imagination.

Unit 9(c)-(i) Structure of the Novel and (ii) Narrative Technique of Amitav Ghosh

Structure of the Novel

The book is not structured in the convention of a well-made novel. Ghosh did not divide his novel into chapters. There are two parts in the novel — 'Going Away' and 'Coming Home'. These two divisions are almost self-explanatory. In the first section he concentrates on pre-war London and in the second, on post-partition India. The structural unity of the novel consists in the repetition of experiences in both the parts. The image of journey is central to the novel and acts as a unifying force between the two sections.

In the first section of the book, the narrative moves between two visits to London- one made by Tridib, the other by the narrator and the two visits are separated by almost forty years. On his first visit to London he is continuously haunted by Tridib's first visit there, of 44 Lymington Road where he stayed with the Prices. In 1939 Tridib's father Shaheb, as he was jocularly referred to by his elder sister-in-law, took some photographs of Alan Tresawsen, Mrs. Price's brother and his friends. The story-teller recounts in detail what Tridib told him about one of those pictures. It focused on the tragedy of war as well as on 'exhilaration' - a sense of compassion and fellow-feeling brought about by the shadow of impending death. In that picture besides Mayadebi, Mrs. Price and her husband Snipe, there are four others - three young men and a young woman of whom three would be dead within two years. With the war hovering on the horizon they knew death was "the most real of their realities". Even before the start of the war they knew that none and nothing of their world would survive. The agony of young intelligent people who knew they were condemned to death simply because some fanatics have got their priorities wrong brings them to merge with larger and diversified groups of people - here, there, everywhere - who die in violence committed either in the name of patriotism or religion. Couple of pages later there is a vivid description of the house where on that fateful night of September 1940 Dan and Allan died in bombardment. This incident finds an echo in another incident that is described in the 'Coming Home' section.

In a place as far away as Dhaka in 1964, Tridib dies in mob violence. Ghosh here places a communal riot in erstwhile East Pakistan on the same platform as bombardment in World War II. For him even a small event like a riot did have as much historical importance as a global war, as all were results of the politics of hatred, though perhaps on different scales and provided insight into the personal and human aspects of political violence.

Another point in the structural unity of the novel may be found in the May-narrator relationship. The story-teller first saw May in Calcutta when he was a young boy. For him it was wonderful to have a memsahib as a guest. He was fascinated by the instruments that May played and knew instinctively that there existed a very special bond between May and Tridib. Seventeen years later when he meets May in London as an adult, it turns into a friendship. The narrator, as he was not accompanying Tridib, May, Tha'mma, and the rest of the family on their visit to Dhaka, came to know about Tridib's death much later. Attending circumstances of the tragedy remained a mystery to him till he met May. Much significance is attached to his understanding of Tridib's death to which May provides the clues. The novel ends with their physical union which is suggested through religious terms.

In the 'Going Away' section May also goes away from England to India where she has the most traumatic experience of her life. The second part 'Coming Home' is both literally and metaphorically so. The narrator comes back home to India and both he and May come home to rest in 'knowing'. The development in their relationship that leads to knowing, to resolution of mysteries is like a thread that runs through the narrative and holds it together. The structure of the novel is largely dependent upon the concentric circles of thematic unity.

'Going Away' deals with the going away of the grandmother as well. She went away to Burma and came back to Calcutta, a place which was not her home by birth but becomes so by default as Dhaka after partition in 1947 becomes a foreign country. The ambivalence in her attitude is representative of the attitude of a whole generation of uprooted Bengalis who could never understand whether they 'went away' when they left East Pakistan or 'came home' when they came to West Bengal. The cyclical pattern of going away and coming home is repeated in the second section. The grandmother goes to Dhaka as the guest of her sister and brother-in-law who is posted there as a foreign diplomat. The irony involved in the situation is heightened when their Jethamosai refuses to go away from Dhaka and to come home to Calcutta. Like repetition of experience, resolution of mystery and anti-climactic revelation also function as a cohesive force in the novel. Ila, the fairy princess of the boy-narrator's imagination is exposed in the second part of the novel. Beautiful, wealthy, westernized, much traveled Ila, who prided herself on being free, unconventional, rebellious turns out to be a woman trapped in a faithless marriage. The narrator's relationship with Ila undergoes a sea-change in their adult lives. Once the story-teller commented that the inequality in their needs of each other exalted Ila's position in their relationship and that she took part of his life hostage. This was in the first section of the book but in the second section he redeems his freedom. He is no more the subaltern in relation to her and becomes an equal when he feels sympathetic to Nick Price as he is tormented by Ila, in her own way, for his sexual delinquencies.

As May and the narrator come closer, Ila and the narrator drift apart. There is a thesis-antithesis movement in these relationships which is neatly distributed in the two sections of the book. So, though there is no conventional plot in the novel, the structural fabric is tightly woven. Ghosh wields almost a vice-like grip over the narrative, which is never slack, digressive or unfocussed. The taut, terse strings of description, recollection, analysis and reconstruction that build up the novel are some of its high points.

Narrative Technique

The shadow Lines is a first-person narrative. What generally happens in a first-person narrative is that the reader receives all relevant information and judgment about situations and characters from the narrator. The inherent disadvantage of a first-person narrative is the absence of multiplicity of voices that add to the richness of meaning in a novel. Ghosh is well aware of this limitation. He has recourse to the use of the technique of resistance built in the narrative that to some extent absolves the novel of its narratorial hegemony. One such point of resistance consists in the narrator's idolization of Tridib as against the grandmother's disapproval and criticism of him. She considers Tridib a hardcore gossip-monger but the story-teller knows he is far from it; actually, he is a recluse who is most comfortable in the book-lined room in his Bullygunge residence.

There are other moments in the novel when alternative points of view are offered. Ila is a case in point. Her westernized ways and rebellious spirit is considered by Tha'mma as licentious and whorish. Ila herself adds to the image of a reckless girl. She tells the narrator made-up stories about boy-friends culled from various places. She tells the narrator later that she did all these because somehow she felt he only expected her to be like that. It

is reasonable to guess that the discrepancy among her perception of things, the narrator's perception of things and the reality is a clever manipulation of various points of view.

In the novel May also provides additional information and sometimes sheds light on incidents that the story-teller does not know about. Ghosh tries to accommodate other people as repository of documents and information. He does not presume knowledge of every secret on the part of the narrator and thereby separates the narratorial voice from the authorial voice. Long after Tridib's death he comes to know from May that they corresponded regularly, that she once received a letter from Tridib containing pornographic details. This letter reveals to him the other side of Tridib's personality which was unknown to him: that Tridib was a die-hard romantic who imagined himself in the role of Tristan and May was his love from across-the-seas. He also learns the details of Tridib's death from May.

Other people's memory play an important role in the narrative technique of *The Shadow Lines*. The story-teller's recollections are combined with Tridib's; the grandmother's and May's recollections, are filtered through his memory and understanding. We have a feeling that there are people other than the narrator who contribute to the development of the narrative. By letting other people tell, at least a part of their stories, the author manages a kind of plurality of voices in the novel. Ghosh maintains a reasonable distance between the author and his subject. The narrator is presented as a faithful recorder of stories told to him by other people. Grandmother's stories of Dhaka and Burma are reproduced faithfully. There are references to contemporary incidents, attention is paid to minute details of time and place, there are photographs - all of which lend authenticity and credibility to the stories either lodged in memory or reconstructed from the debris of history.

Another thing that deserves mention here is Ghosh's use of time. There is no chronological time in the novel; the narrative moves back and forth in time. Since he deliberately breaks down the sequential time, Ghosh keeps a close, almost fastidious watch over dates and years mentioned in the novel. So we know that the narrator was born in 1952, thirteen years after Tridib made his visit to London in 1939. After the initial sentence, the narrative continues for a couple of pages in the boyhood days of the narrator in the early sixties and it is first hand memory. Then suddenly in the middle of a page, without any prior intimation, the story moves forward two years and in the next sentence seventeen years. The narrator was describing what happened in the Gole Park adda one day when May's name cropped up. In the next paragraph he jumps to his first visit to London where he meets May for the second time. The first meeting with May is pushed aside for many more pages. The time-span of the novel is not vast — something like forty years. But the movements in time are rather abrupt and deliberately so ; for Ghosh is not primarily trying to tell a story. He is constructing a narrative which is rich in interconnectedness and imparting meaning to incidents that, taken in isolation, loses out on significance.

Unit 10(a): Characters in the Novel

In a postmodern fiction characters are no longer studies in psychological models. The conventional art of characterization that puts a premium on the rotundity of the characters, their complexities and their multifaceted existence can hardly be found in *The Shadow Lines*. Here characters, like events, are part of the structural strategy. The grandmother, Tridib, May and Ila — all are very different from fully- realized, flesh- and-blood characters of conventional novel. They are like key instruments in the analysis and understanding of reality as it reveals itself in the course of the narrative.

(i) The Grandmother

Tha'mma or the grandmother is the matriarch of a middle-class Bengali family. Her life has been difficult as she was widowed with a minor son. Her pride and sense of self-respect stopped her from seeking help from relatives particularly her wealthy sister. She has the confidence and assertiveness of a self-made person. She is involved in a family power game with her daughter-in-law, loves her grandson and is possessive about him. A strict disciplinarian, she is sceptical about all things unconventional, non-utilitarian and male. She does not approve of Tridib because she thinks he simply wastes his time, does not do anything worthwhile, is not inclined to use his family connection and earns no money.

She dislikes Ila even more. She considers Ila's western ways of life licentious. She is also sarcastic about her brother-in-law whom she calls Shaheb and his daughter-in-law, Ila's mother who is nicknamed Queen Victoria. When she realizes that her grandson has completely been enthralled by Ila, she goes to the extent of calling her

"The English whore", and to reclaim him complains to the Dean of his college about his alleged visits to prostitutes in Delhi. As the narrator reflects after her death she was too passionate a person to fit into the late bourgeois world that he inherited where examinations are the most important things. This passion sets her apart. With her penchant for working hard, earning money and maintaining respectability, she could have been an ordinary middleclass elderly woman. But the Tha'mma in *The Shadow Lines* gains in singularity as she becomes the medium through whom the narrator learns his first lessons in history and politics.

As a young girl in Dhaka the grandmother was inspired by the anti-Imperialist movements of the *Jugantar* and *Anushilan samities*. The nationalistic fervour that she imbibed in her college days never left her. When in 1965 the war between India and Pakistan broke out she donated her gold chain to the war fund. Her rationale for this action reveals to the narrator the jingoistic, restrictive and warped face of nationalism. In her distorted imagination wars become important because they are catalysts in nation-building. As she tells her grandson England became a nation only through the wars that English people fought together. Violence and bloodshed are essential ingredients for strengthening nationhood. War with Pakistan is the fittest occasion to prove one's Indianness. She is completely puzzled to realize that her place of birth, Dhaka, now belongs to a foreign country but has no problem in branding all her erstwhile neighbours as enemies. This duality in her attitude makes her the most important site to foster the debate about nationalism, patriotism, meaning of political freedom and communal violence in this novel.

(ii) Tridib

Tridib is almost the narrator's alter-ego. In the vey first page of the novel the boy declares that "In the end since I had nothing to go on, I had decided that he had looked like me." His assumption of an imaginary physical resemblance to Tridib is actually far deep-rooted. He has modeled himself, from his childhood, on Tridib. As he himself says "Tridib had given me worlds to travel in and he had given me eyes to see them with." Tridib is a widely-read person, well-versed in subjects like -"Mesopotamian stellae, East European jazz, the habits of arboreal apes..." etc. He is not a worldly-wise person, he never tries to use his family connection to get him positions and earn money. He is quite happy to live in his very private world of books. He is a romantic person, almost incurably so, as we can see from his letter to May Price. He wants to meet her in a ruin, somewhere outside the periphery of the known world and meet as two complete strangers. Tridib's role in this novel is more important than his character. He is projected as the source and the rallying point of some major ideas in the novel.

The boy-narrator in the novel moves between the past and the present, uses his imagination wonderfully to collate and interpret facts which he sometimes knows first hand but most of the times through stories told by Tridib and others. Tridib teaches him how to use his imagination. Tridib is an overwhelming presence in this novel and continues to live in the memories of May and the narrator. As May finally comes to realize Tridib's death in mob violence on the streets of Dhaka is a "sacrifice", she and the narrator share a relationship which could have been the relationship between May and Tridib, had he lived.

(iii) Ila

Ila stands in a diametrically opposite pole to Tridib so far as a sense of history and imagination are concerned. The narrator, to his utter dismay, realizes that the exotic-sounding names of places that Tridib used to point out to him on the tattered Bartholomew's Atlas have no attraction for Ila. For her "day-dream names like - Addis Ababa, Algiers, Brisbane are actually a 'worldwide string' of departure lounges...each with Ladies hidden away in some yet more unexpected corner of the hall". For her London metro is a faster mode of transport only. She is unable to realize that places are not there, they are invented in the individual's imagination. This lack of imagination in Ila does not detract from the narrator's attraction for her. She is the beautiful woman who always seems to hold sway over male fancy. Even when she was as young as fourteen she used to make up stories about dashing, handsome boy-friends. This is not so much as to make the narrator jealous because she was not aware of his feelings for her but her emotional insecurity prompted her to do this. As grown-ups when they meet in London, the narrator comes to know about Nick's extra-marital affairs. We get to see an Ila who presents a completely different picture from the one we have so far seen. She is beautiful, wealthy, westernized, arrogant, confident, contemptuous of patriarchy and male chauvinism, imagines herself in the role of a revolutionary. But when the facade breaks down she is revealed as a woman weak, insecure, spiteful and still incapable of emerging out of the hopeless situation. As she herself says "Could I ever have imagined... that I, Ila

Datta-Chaudhuri, free woman and free spirit, would ever live in that state of squalor where incidents in one's life can be foretold like teasers for a bad television serial?" Her excuses that she loves Nick too much and can't leave him and that she is about as chaste as any woman the narrator is likely to meet and that all the stories of flirtation are actually stories and nothing more than that sound cliché . She comes off as a spoilt child, as a woman full of pretension, unable to face life as it is.

(iv) May Price and Nick Price

Compared to Ila, May is a woman who shows courage, grit, tolerance and finally a kind of knowledge about life that comes only with living through it. She is a musician and plays for an orchestra, a job in which she does not have any heart. It is just a means of livelihood. She says that she spends most of her time "Working for Amnesty and Oxfam and a couple of other relief agencies..." As is evident to the narrator she has a great deal of satisfaction in her work. She lives alone in a bedsit and lives a rather spartan life. She is hated by her brother for her honesty. When she asks Nick to stop lying about the Kuwait business Nick tells her that she has to remain unmarried because nobody would like to have a woman for a wife who is brutal in her penchant for telling the truth. This single incident reveals the difference between the brother and the sister. May is capable of commitment and emotional fidelity, where as Nick is flirtatious, full of sham, lacks in seriousness. He plays an important role in the narrative. By virtue of being Ila's lover and then her husband, he is the narrator's rival. The contrast between these two men, one who falls for Ila, and the one Ila falls for brings into relief how Ghosh has used certain characters for the variety and richness of the narrative. The personal relationship between the white and the non-white characters is explored through Nick-Ila and MayTridib relationship. Nick though he was ashamed to be seen with Ila because she is Indian marries her because her father has money. There is racial prejudice and overruling consideration for money, both existing simultaneously. When it comes to May and Tridib there is no such calculation. For Tridib, who is fascinated by the story of Tristan, a man without a country who falls in love with a woman from across the sea, May perfectly answers his quest for love. A very romantic world is juxtaposed against a very materialistic one.

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(vi) Robi

Of the other characters in the novel Robi deserves special mention. He belongs to the peer group of both Ila and the narrator. Robi is conservative and almost a male chauvinist. He won't allow Ila, his niece, to drink in a hotel bar in Calcutta or dance with a stranger. He thinks it does not become an Indian girl to do things like these in India. He is no iconoclast and accepts dualities and differences in cultures. Well educated and widely travelled Robi was rather simple. He never argues, always abides by the rule; has no difficulty in compromising with what he considers not-so-right but nonetheless harmless activities. He can drink in his hotel room but not in a bar in a Calcutta hotel. Ila considers him a hypocrite and a petit-bourgeois. But as the author points out Robi is much more than this. He has abundant physical courage and is never afraid of making judgments as his physical

courage ensures that he does not have to defend them. Yet Robi is sensitive enough to carry the burden of unnamed and unfathomable fear that shattered him on the day of Tridib's death to which he was an eye witness. Even in his adulthood he remains particularly sensitive to the issues of political violence and nationalistic chauvinism. He serves as a centre of consciousness that empathizes with the narrator's disturbed and thoughtful mind.

(vii) The Boy-Narrator

The boy-narrator is the most fully realized character in the novel. Ghosh has managed to combine a child's view of things and a young man's understanding of them in him. The narrator lives two lives. He is a child and an adult simultaneously and probes deeply in his own psyche with such competence that his mind becomes a fertile site for understanding and interpreting everything that happens in the novel - whether past or present, whether public or private.

As a middle-class Bengali boy who goes to school in Calcutta, comes back home to a protective family, he lives a very ordinary life. He plays cricket in the Lake in the afternoon, hangs about in the addas around Gole Park but his distinction lies in his capacity for imagination. His childish imagination is excited by Tridib's stories about his visit to London. It is as though he himself has been there. His capacity for sharing experience vicariously makes him familiar with every member of the Price family whom he has seen only in photographs and with London topography which he knew by heart. This leads him to emote well with people in pre-war Europe not only in England but also in Germany. He exactly knows how the young people must have felt then. He is intelligent, sensitive, has an understanding of people and places that invariably comes with the privilege of being the narrator in a first person narrative.

He falls in love with his beautiful second cousin Ila. He is always aware that in his conservative middle class Bengali milieu, anything other than demonstration of brotherly affection would not be well received. That is why probably he reluctantly admits it even to himself. His visits to prostitutes in Delhi during his college days render him human- with the weakness and vulnerability of flesh getting predominance over other things.

Just as his personality in his childhood is defined in terms of his relationship with his grandmother and Tridib, his adult personality is defined in terms of his relationship with Ila, to some extent, and with May where Tridib is a continuous presence. When May visited the narrator's family in Calcutta he was a mere boy. He was obsessed with May who played on her recorder in the evening, and who, as his child's intuition told him, had a very special relationship with Tridib. When he comes to London as a young man and meets May, he is led into an adult world where relationship between a man and a woman works at various levels. He is not sexually attracted to May. He tries to understand her life and work with Tridib being an abiding influence. It is in recollection of Tridib that they really touch each other's lives. But in a night's drunken excitement he tries to force himself upon May. This violation of gentlemanly code of conduct does not destroy their relationship. They try to communicate to each other their understanding of Tridib's death- the cause and the onus of responsibility in a wider context. This brings them closer and in the physical consummation of this bond much of the narrator's doubts, fears and misunderstandings are laid to rest. He becomes a mature man capable of a relationship that transcends sexual passion.

Unit 10(b) -(i) The Title: Analysis, (ii) Criticism of the Ideas of Nationalism, Patriotism and Political Freedom and (iii) As a Bildungsroman

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Analysis of the title

The metaphor in the title of the novel epitomizes the author's distrust of all kinds of borders - domestic or international. The story of division starts in the grandmother's childhood. She was born in Dhaka in colonial India and was brought up along with her beautiful sister Maya in a house in Jindabahar Lane. It was a Hindu undivided family till her father and Jethamoshai quarreled and erected a wall to divide the house in two equal halves. This is the first of the many walls – corporeal or metaphorical - that give the novel its lines - imaginary, symbolic, overwhelmingly powerful shadow lines. The grandmother as a young girl invented many stories about the other part of the house which at one point of time was her own but now has become so alien that she never sets foot there and so unfamiliar that it exists only in imagination. She used to tell her younger sister Maya stories about the topsy-turvy house where people have breakfast in the evening and broomsticks are used for brushing teeth, rather than the floor. The story in a way is a microcosmic representation of the story of

partition in the subcontinent. In 1905 when Lord Curzon divided the state of Bengal people on both sides of the provisional border protested so strongly that the British Government was compelled to revoke its decision. They spoke the same language, sang the same songs, and had four thousand years of shared history. But only after forty-two years a line was drawn on the map, an invisible and incorporeal wall was erected and the neighbours became foreigners at the stroke of midnight.

The grandmother came to Calcutta in 1935. She had not visited Dhaka for a long time, still it was her home, her own country. But after 1947 when it became an alien land she experienced partition for the second time in her life. It is not only an imaginary line on the map. It is capable of evoking some of the strongest human emotions - love, pity, fear, courage, compassion, hatred and complete realignment of many cherished ideals. Seventeen years after the partition of the country she goes to Dhaka. Her old Jethamoshai is still living alone in Jindabahar Lane. Before going to Dhaka she asks her son whether she will be able to see the 'border' from the aeroplane. She is told that the question of her seeing the border doesn't arise as there is no wall or line or anything like that. She wonders why it is so difficult for people from Calcutta to travel to Dhaka or vice versa. Here is a shadow line which is far more difficult to cross than any concrete boundary. It is such a powerful symbol that it can alter the destiny of people, of nations and redefine ideas like nationalism and political freedom. Atlases and maps are important symbols in the novel. Lines drawn arbitrarily along the length and breadth of the globe define nationality. Patriotism which is considered to be a noble sentiment is not absolute as the grandmother's story proves. When in 1965 the war between India and Pakistan breaks out she donates her gold chain to the war fund. This gold chain which she never took off was given to her by her late husband. She does not hesitate to part with it for a noble cause that is the sovereignty of her country. Her motherland is fighting enemies who just twenty years back were compatriots. A line drawn on a piece of paper changes her loyalty, her sense of belonging and inspired in her a sense of patriotism which she never experienced since her college days. She tells her grandson how intensely in those days she wanted to help, to work for the revolutionary parties that waged a battle against the all powerful British Empire. The irony involved in drawing and redrawing of lines is brought out by the story of a woman who keeps on changing her nationality as these lines both uphold and subvert the very purpose of their existence.

The grandmother's Jethamoshai stayed back in Dhaka though the rest of the family migrated to Calcutta. When the grandmother goes to meet him and requests him to move to Calcutta he tells her that he doesn't believe in lines drawn on maps. On the same visit to Dhaka Tridib is killed in a communal riot. Communal violence - its cause, consequence, British manipulation and the resultant partition of the country on the basis of the two-nation theory is a well-discussed area. In this novel Ghosh enlarges its scope even further. He relates a particular incidence of communal violence to the politics of violence played in the name of nationalism or patriotism all over the world. When Tridib dies in Dhaka the grandmother's passion for revenge and retaliation seeks legitimate release in supporting the cause of the Indian army that fights the Pakistanis responsible for her nephew's death. The grandmother is almost like an everyman on the soil of the subcontinent. She symbolizes an ordinary man's agony at loss in senseless violence, his thirst for revenge, thereby becoming a loop in an endless chain of actions and reactions which have no beginning or end All these happen simply because some people have decided to draw a line somewhere which was supposed to stop all violence, settle disputes and initiate a process of permanent peace. But the mockery of the whole exercise is that though the two nations are not separated in peace they are very much interlinked in violence. The shadow line does not fulfil its purpose of division but reinforces the idea that the twin cities of Dhaka and Calcutta remain mirror images of each other as they always have been during the four thousand years of their shared history. The narrator realized this when he was a student in Delhi. Political disturbances in Kashmir find echo in Khulna and Calcutta. Nothing much happens in states contiguous to Kashmir. Physical proximity and the shared inter-state border do not incite public frenzy. What happens in Kashmir has immediate repercussion in Calcutta because both the places are linked in history, in shared memory of hatred and violence. Though most of the places in South-East Asia are physically much closer to Calcutta they don't share any history or memory. They are as far away as foreign countries are supposed to be. Ghosh here uses a brilliant conceit to bring home the dichotomy inherent in the situation. He places the point of a compass on Khulna and tip of the pencil on Srinagar :

"Khulna is not quite one hundred miles from Calcutta as the crow flies: the two cities faceeach other at a watchful equidistance across the border. The distance between Khulna and Srinagar, or so I discovered when I measured the space between the points of my compass was 1200 miles, nearly 2000 kilometers. It didn't seem

like much. But when I took my compass through the pages of that atlas, ... I discovered that Khulna is about as far from Srinagar as Tokyo is from Beijing, or Moscow from Venice, or Washington from Havana, or Cairo from Naples. Then I tried to draw a circle with Khulna at the centre and Srinagar on the circumference. I discovered immediately that the map of south Asia would not be big enough. I had to run back to a map of Asia before I found one large enough for my circle. It was an amazing circle." So physical contiguity, emotional distance, political division all are treated in a comprehensive manner in the novel and the title is an apt pointer.

The metaphor of shadow lines further points to other themes in the novel. There are shadow lines between facts and meaning of history, between geographical places and places invented in one's imagination, between personal memory and received version of history, between imagination and reality. The shadow lines shift, blur the division, create and recreate. One's perception of history, of geography, even of reality is sometimes different from that of other people. The shadow lines crisscrossing this vast non-material space remain a persistent preoccupation of the novelist.

Criticism of the Ideas of Nationalism, Patriotism and Political Freedom

The World War II, Indian independence and the Partition of the country have provided Amitav Ghosh with historical facts against which he studies the historical truths - the meaning of nationalism and of political freedom in the modern world. Second World War was generated by militant nationalism. In the nineteenth century the ideology of nationalism was central to the political thought of the period. But after the experience of two world wars it became suspect and by debunking the ideology Ghosh has allied himself with a considerable number of modern western scholars like Elie Kedourie and Benedict Anderson.The revisionary and negative view of nationalism has been explored with intensity and depth in *The Shadow Lines*.

The narrator's knowledge of war was not gained from books but from the experience of his uncle Tridib who taught him to use imagination; and by using this faculty he conjures up certain vivid pictures which by imperceptible degrees merge into a perception of history. Tridib showed him pictures of Allan Tresawsen and his friends. Most of these young people died in the war. They were casualties of ruthless nationalism. These pictures also make palpable the fear and anxiety in England : "...In the foreground of one of these pictures, there is a large, shallow pit. Snipe has been digging that pit for the last two weeks in the back garden. This pit is intended to be the foundation of an Anderson air raid shelter, his second line of defence against the expected German bombs." The death and destruction in the wake of the world war fought in the name of nationalism has, for the author, the same significance as death and destruction unleashed by religious and patriotic fervour in the Indian subcontinent. Each provided insight into the personal and human aspects of what is essentially political violence, may be on different scales. Ila who is a member of socialist movement in Britain feels proud of being a part of history. She thinks Allan and his friends who were witness to war and fascism, events important in history, must have been as happy as she is in her political activism. But she fails to understand the agony that is there. The most incisive criticism of the concept of nationalism and its natural corollary patriotism is to be found in the thought and the action of the grandmother. She was born and brought up in British India. To her nationalism was a hallowed word , the mainstay of political thought in colonial India which meant hatred of things British and in her desire to win political freedom she dreamt of killing English officials. She even considered war as a necessary evil which inspired patriotism and thus strengthened the foundation of a nation. She thought that English were a nation because they were reborn in the same pool of blood during wars, blood of their fathers, brothers, or sons; while India was yet to emerge as a nation as blood of near and dear ones shed in a war had not baptized he Indians. This firebrand nationalism outlived its utility in the later half of the twentieth century and degenerated into politics of hatred. What was basically a clash of political aspirations was sometimes distorted into senseless animosity. This limited view of nationalism was shared not only by the Indians like grandmother but also by Irishmen like Mike who thought for a person to be rightfully Indian it was necessary to kill Englishmen. Thus nationalism and war in the European context, nationalism, political freedom and partition in the Indian context become related things in the author's
historical consciousness.

In 'Coming Home' Ghosh comes back to the Indian subcontinent, to Calcutta and Dhaka, where he tries to find out the meaning of political freedom. Indian nationalism which was the chief weapon of the freedom fighters in their struggle against foreign rulers could not even ensure the territorial integrity of the country. After the Partition - the price we are supposed to have paid for our political freedom - nationalism in the Indian context

changed its meaning to exclude people on the other side of the border but could not include everybody on this side of paradise. There are several points of view from which independence, communal riots and partition are seen.

There are people like the story-teller's grandmother who are born and brought up in Dhaka but came to Calcutta long before partition. Unlike so many of their brethren they did not have to feel the pang of being uprooted and to face the daunting task of rebuilding lives from the debris of history. To them 'refugee' was a term of abuse. But even if they did not suffer materially, their emotional wound took a long time to heal and left a deep scar. When seventeen years after the Partition, the grandmother was going to visit her sister Mayadebi in Dhaka she was told that at the airport she would have to fill in the disembarkation card her nationality, her place and date of birth she got visibly nervous. As the story-teller realized years later "...that she would have to fill in 'Dhaka' as her place of birth on that form" rattled her, "...at that moment she had not been able to quite understand how her place of birth had come to be so messily at odds with her nationality." This dichotomy in situation gave rise to confusion and bewilderment in the minds of people even long after partition became a part of the history of the subcontinent. Emotionally they could hardly accept the Radcliffe line and in their own minds wondered like the grandmother "whether [they] would be able to see the border between India and East Pakistan from the plane", and when told otherwise failed to understand "what was it all for then - partition and all the killings and everything - if there isn't something in between?" This is the question which the author addresses .The schism in our national life was formalized by drawing a line on the map. This tragedy brought out the worst as well as the best in human beings on this subcontinent. There have been crude barbarity and also demonstration of noblest sentiments on both sides of the border. Lakhs of Hindus had to leave their dream behind to swarm to the suburbs of Calcutta. Not a few Muslims like Saifuddin the mechanic had to suffer the same fate. What did political freedom mean to these people? Who can know the feelings of thousands of innocent people who lost their friends and relatives in the communal frenzy ?

Tridib who accompanied the grandmother on her 1964 visit to Dhaka was killed in communal frenzy. The sense of agony and desperation is turned into anger in the grandmother after Tridib's death. The personal tragedy transformed the meaning of border for the grandmother. Previously she was sceptical about the line, now it becomes something which defines her nationality. When in 1965 the war between India and Pakistan broke out she saw in it a threat to the freedom of her grandson, the future of the nation. The meaning of freedom comes to include fighting away the Pakistanis who barely twenty years ago were her countrymen. For the grandmother her nationality is not only political or emotional but also territorial.

But there are people like grandmother's Jethamoshai or Saifuddin's father who decide to ignore the border altogether. For them nationality is defined in terms of the place of their birth and residence. Remaining true to territory and not shifting from it is their way of defying the political partition which sought to change their nationality. They did not think it worthwhile to leave their homes just because some politicians were drawing a line somewhere. As Jehtamoshai put it " once you start moving you never stop ... I don't believe in this India-Shindia ... but suppose when you get there they decide to draw another line somewhere? What will you do then?"

Many years after all these happened the narrator when he tried to revive his memory of the 1964 riot in Calcutta, discovered the irony of the entire political process known as our independence and partition of the country. As a school boy in Calcutta he had a terrible memory of the 1964 riot. Memory of not what he saw or heard but far more powerful memory of what he felt in his child's perception of the whole thing. The theft of Hazratbal, a holy relic enshrined in a mosque near Srinagar, triggered off communal riots in Khulna It spread to Dhaka and found its echo in Calcutta.

As a student in Delhi he discovered to his consternation that none of his colleagues who all were brought up in Delhi had the faintest memory of the riot. One of them was a bit surprised that he remembered a riot in Pakistan so well. For people of Delhi a riot in Khulna or Dhaka is just a piece of news ; but not so for somebody in Calcutta. He realized "the simple fact that there had never been a moment in the four-thousand-year-old history of that map, when the places we know as Dhaka and Calcutta were more closely bound to each other than after they had drawn their lines... a moment when each city was the inverted image of the other locked into an irreversible symmetry by the line that was to set us free - our looking-glass border."

Robi's loss in the 1964 riot was no less than that of many others. He was too young to register anything other than fear;fear that haunted him in his nightmares. In his adult consciousness Tridib's death signified the futility

of political freedom. He has developed that objectivity which gives him a dispassionate, analytical outlook. He could relate his plight with those of many others in the subcontinent and knew if they could not outgrow the grandmother's hysterical reaction posterity would never forgive them. The country was freed, somebody drew the line and everybody was led to believe that the monster of religious communalism was laid to rest. They hoped peace, stability - things people associate with the right to self-determination of a nation - would come. But as a member of post-'47 generation he has seen how the euphoria evaporated. He felt that nobody seemed to know the meaning of freedom. If they did there would not have been so many killings in Assam, the North East, the Punjab, Tripura and Sri Lanka. People who kill or get killed do so in the name of freedom, patriotism or nationalism. Robi's words have the ring of truth that has emerged from the postcolonial experience in the subcontinent; "And then I think to myself why don't they draw thousands of little lines through the whole subcontinent and give every little place a new name? What would it change? It's a mirage, the whole thing is a mirage."

Thus Ghosh has drawn parallels between war and riot, Europe and Indian subcontinent to show how all violence whether committed in the name of nationalism or freedom is to be given no other colour. The barriers of nation, country and time dissolve in the consciousness of the author. We realize how political expediency continues to suffocate human aspiration.

As a Bildungsroman

There is an element of bildungsroman or the growing-up theme in the novel. The boy-narrator grows up into a mature adult through the exercise of imagination, through delving deep into other people's memory, through reconstructing history, and finally in the vision of a utopia where lines and boundaries both criticize and validate his historical consciousness. The detailed analysis of the various aspects of the novel reinforces the idea that the theme of growing-up is closely related to and supported by other major themes.

Review of Criticism

Meenakshi Mukherjee in an article entitled "Maps and Mirrors : Coordinates of meaning in *The Shadow Lines"*, writes about the importance of maps and atlases in the novel. For her this novel has an ancestry in the children's books in Bangla which abounded in stories about African forests, Arab deserts and glaciers. Even adult literature dwelt on the attraction of unknowns spaces. For example she cites Bibhuti Bhushan Bandopadhyay's two part novel *Pather Panchali (1929)* and *Aparajito (1931)*. Apu, the chief protagonist of the novel, goes to distant places of South-America and Japan. This wanderlust is found in the Ghanada stories by Premendra Mitra and in a lesser degree in the Feluda stories by Satyajit Ray. Mukherjee feels they have a distinct influence on the fictional figure of Tridib as a traveler/ imaginist. She writes "The reiterative use of the two images - mirrors and maps - interact in the novel to stretch the narrative beyond mimetic realism to incorporate an element of mystery, a bafflement at the frontiers of knowing .... Barthlomew's Atlas is for him no longer a safe guide to a neatly compartmentalized world; the solid lines dividing countries turn into glass, through which it is clearly visible that Chiang Mai in Thailand is spatially closer to Calcutta than New Delhi, Chengdu in China is nearer than Srinagar is. The material world represented by maps has not changed, ... the defamiliarizing perspective in *The Shadow Lines* initiates an interrogation of the organizing principles of division." Suvir Kaul emphasizes the role of memory in the narrative technique of *The Shadow Lines*.

He writes in "Separation Anxiety: Growing Up Inter/ National In *The Shadow Lines* that there is a connection between the bildungsroman elements in the novel and its meditations on nationalism, nation-states and international relations: " In the novel the narrator's coming to maturity involves his extending the lessons of the shadow-lines that Tha'mma reluctantly learns, as she moves from her nationalist certitudes to an awareness that borders confirm identity even though they are meant to affirm difference. Even as she loses her belief in the ability of borders to demarcate that space called home, she recovers the faculty she had repressed as useless: memory. She had long insisted that 'nostalgia is a weakness ... it is everyone's duty to forget the past and look ahead and get on with building the future', but her return to Dhaka reminds her that dislocated people like her 'have no home but in memory'. Once in Dhaka, she asks constantly for the Dhaka that surrounded her family house, but that home town exists only in the stories she tells her grandson and in his ability to 'see' the house

and its lane, 'for her memory had shone upon them with the interrupted brilliance of a lighthouse beam.' " Rajeswari Sunder Rajan's essay "The Division of Experience in *The Shadow Lines* studies the many oppositions that are there in the novel. She begins with an examination of the gendering of the categories 'active' and 'passive' in the novel. Active corresponds with the male, passive with the female. There are other categories of difference between passive and active attitudes in the sphere of politics. Tridib's love for May and the narrator's love for Ila is considered romantic and passive. In this novel, the male characters are passive in the sense that they are all observers of events rather than participants; whereas both Ila and the grandmother get involved though briefly in larger movements. She has some misgiving about the narrator's control over the story.

"Given this powerful control of meaning by the narrative voice, how much credence are we permitted to grant the grandmother's socially conventional disapproval of Tridib as a 'time-waster', or Ila's mockery of Alan Tresawsen and his friends? Do these judgments not serve rather to place them as 'other' outside the pale of a certain fraternal bonding among the idealized male figures? It is not a question of 'fairness' to these interlocutors: the narrator does recognize his grandmother's courage and admire her achievement; he does grant Ila's quixotic honesty and respond to the pathos of her predicament with pity. All the same, what remains with us at the end is the punishments visited on both, endings which have a curiously harsh air of retribution about them." A. N. Kaul's "A Reading of *The Shadow Lines* firmly refutes the idea that the novel is a study in the meaning of political freedom in the modern world and he thinks that Ghosh's proclamation of the death of nationalism is premature. For him there are other themes in the novel. "What are these themes ? Neoplatonism, I think, would be a good overall description, and the handiest way to paraphrase most of the themes would be to borrow ideas and phrases from some well-known English Romantic poets".

"However as regards the overall statement that the novel makes, it can be said in conclusion that it is a restatement of a well- established idealist position cast in the form of an equally well-established literary genre. Of the more modern works in this genre, Conrad's *The Shadow Line"* comes inevitably to mind, a novel which like his tale ('The Secret Sharer') deals with the obstacles that must be overcome on the roads to selfhood and maturity ... in the long tradition of the so-called bildungsroman maturity involves an accommodation to and in the real world, based on the recognition of the world as it is, of things as they are,..."

Suggested Readings

1. Bhatt, *India and Indian Nityanandam* (eds.), *The Fiction of Amitav Ghosh*, New Delhi. Creative, 2001.
2. Dhawan, R. K. (ed.), *The Novels of Amitav Ghosh*, New Delhi. Prestige Books, 1999.
3. *The Shadow Lines*, New Delhi : OUP, 1995
4. Bharucha, Nilufer, E. and Vrinda Nabar (eds.) *Mapping Cultural Spaces* : *Postcolonial Indian Literature in English : Essays in Honour of Nissin Ezekiel*, New Delhi : Vision, 1998.
5. Bhargava, Rahul (ed.), *Indian Writing in English : The Last Decade*, New Delhi : Rawat, 2002.
6. Khair, Jabish (ed.), *Amitav Ghosh A Critical Companion*, New Delhi : Permanent Black, 2005.
7. Kirpal, Vinay (ed.), *The New Indian Novel in English* : *A Study of the 1980s*, New Delhi : Allied Publishers, 1990.

Assignment

1. Comment on the significance of the title.
2. Analyze the structure of the novel. How is it different from a conventional well-made novel?
3. What are the characteristic features of Amitav Ghosh's narrative technique in *The Shadow Lines* ?
4. Consider *The Shadow Lines* as a novel about growing-up.
5. Can *The Shadow Lines* be read as a study in the meaning of nationalism and political freedom ?

Block IV: *The Fire and the Rain* by Girish Karnad

Unit 11(a): Indian English Drama: A Critical Introduction
Unit11(b): Introduction to Girish Karnad
Unit 12(a): The Source Text
Unit 12(b): Textual Analysis of *The Fire and the Rain*
Unit 13: Themes-i) The Myth
ii) Play Within a Play
iii) The Fire Takes its Toll
iv) The Miracles
v) The Rains
vi) The Reality

Unit 11(a): Indian English Drama: A Critical Introduction

Indian drama in English came into existence only after the influence of the British drama in the 18th century when the British introduced English in India mainly for their own benefits. Their main intention was to ensure administrative benefits by creating a class of employees who could speak and write in English, and also to preach Christianity. But, it turned out to be boon for the Indian people who got a chance to learn a new language and a culture. Gradually, the Indians came to be influenced by the rich culture and literature of the British, leading to a cultural encounter and exchange. The British theatre groups performed various plays in India including the plays by Shakespeare in places like Bombay, Madras, and Calcutta which started influencing the Indian literary minds to explore them further and follow their writings. Under this Western impact, many playwrights in India started writing plays in English. The first play in English was written by Krishna Mohan Banerji entitled *The Persecuted* in 1831. However, the real journey of Indian English drama began with Michael Madhusudhan Dutt's *Is This Civilization?* that appeared on the literary horizon in 1871. But the growth of this genre has been very slow since its inception. Only in the contemporary period we have seen the emergence of a few playwrights writing plays originally in English and representing the various aspects of the Indian society and thereby supplementing the notion that theatre is a mirror to the society.

The Slow Rate of Growth of Indian English Drama

There are many reasons why Indian English drama has failed to garner the popularity that it deserves; or why it has failed to grow as an independent genre of Indian English Literature. One of the major reasons for this seems to be the fact that people in India, especially in the rural or semi urban areas are still unable to accept English as a language of communication and expressing emotions. The plays written in English are mostly influenced by western realism in terms of clothing, communication, and approach to life and so on. So, the majority of the Indian audiences do not feel the personal connect. They are not comfortable watching an English play. They can accept the stage construction and setting, but not the English language and the life style represented. For them, these plays lack the natural flavour, and hence they do not appeal to their minds. Another reason of their lack of popularity is that the actors who have a marked mother tongue influence fail to deliver the dialogues convincingly in English, thus leading to the failure of a performance.

However, after a long silence of many decades, Indian drama in English gathered momentum in the 20th century. This began only with the postcolonial period of Indian history. The plays written during this period follow the pattern of western realism and focus on the social, political and economic changes/problems of the time. Thus, Indian drama in English is a recent development with the playwrights like Mahesh Dattani, Manjula Padmanbhan, Dina Mehta, Ahishek Majumdar, Badal Sircar, Asif Currimbhoy, Pratap Sharma who have started scripting plays in English. All these writers belong to the postcolonial period of Indian drama and they have contributed a substantial number of plays to this new genre. These plays have achieved popularity among the urban youths and adult, but are yet to reach the rural audience. However, these plays do not follow the pattern prescribed by the *Natyashastra*; instead they mostly follow the western realistic tradition to represent the existing socio-political issues.

These post-independent / contemporary playwrights take up issues related to the urban, middle class, English speaking society which is undergoing a noticeable cultural change. Issues relating to the contemporary period such as violence, castes, homosexuality, patriarchy, gender, identity, and migration to name a few have become

the major focus of these plays. The theme and plot structure of these plays follow the pattern of Western realist drama. The characters are realistic; they are very much a part of our everyday life. These plays represent the various strata of our society and are meant for the ordinary, middle class urban Indians. Simultaneously, the stage setting of these plays (including lighting and stage décor) has also undergone many changes with the advent of new technology. Indian drama in English does not have any resemblance to its predecessor Sanskrit drama. It is a blending of Indian and Western culture and both create a combined and unique postcolonial culture which is an attempt to reject the colonial influence and give Indian theatre its own distinctive identity. Social realism gets upper hand in the writing of this period. Social realism is the mode of writing which discusses or represents the everyday realities pertaining to the poor and marginalized classes through art and literature. Realism is an approach that attempts to describe life as it is. Although, realism is not limited to any one century or group of writers; its origin is generally attributed to the 19th-century French novelists like Flaubert and Balzac. In drama, Henrik Ibsen is the pioneer of this style of writing.

Another area where Indian drama in English has to face challenges and criticisms is the field of language. The plays written and performed in English are still struggling to occupy a space in the world of mainstream Indian drama. A cursory glance would reveal that drama written originally in English is still in its formative stage. According to Dnyaneshwar Nadkarni, these "Anglophone" playwrights need to be "butchered" and "castrated". Commenting on his response to the plays written in English, Christopher Balme points out that the Indian English playwrights and their plays from its beginning till date have suffered from economic, artistic, and ideological pressures of being submerged in a rich theatrical culture of popular, religious and commercial performance traditions (Balme 2009: 345).

However, despite the various challenges faced by these playwrights, they have started writing in English under various constraints. These playwrights include – Mahesh Dattani, ManjulaPadmanabhan, Pratap Sharma, Gurucharan Das, Dina Mehta, Poile Sengupta and a few others. Meanwhile, the plays written by these playwrights are rarely staged as performances often are failures because of the lack of audience's support, except in the case of metropolises where they do receive adequate audience support. While drama in English is constantly struggling to stand and popularise itself, the plays written in regional languages by playwrights like VijayTendulkar, Girish Karnad, Badal Sircar, Usha Ganguli, and Mahesweta Devi thrive.

Among the playwrights who have started writing plays in English originally, it is the plays of Mahesh Dattani depicting the issues pertaining to contemporary urban India that have become successful in achieving wide popularity both in India and abroad. Simultaneously, a gradual shift in the audience's response to the plays written in English and their performances on stage is noticeable, especially among the young generation. Dattani's plays have been successful in catching the attention of audience, and also in changing their perception about theatre in English. Plays like *Thirty Days in September, Tara, and Bravely Fought the Queen* have achieved significant popularity while the plays of Dina Mehta and Manjula Padmanabhan, written in English are still awaiting such a platform both in terms of staging and academic popularity. On the other hand Vijay Tendulkar's plays, originally written in Marathi and translated into English, are widely staged and read. In this regard, Vasudha Dalmia points out that both English and Hindi continue to share the honour of being the two important target languages of translation in the 1970s. When the question of print arises, the English language occupies an important position, as it can contribute for national visibility of the plays. But in the field of performance, Hindi and other regional languages always get the upper hand (2006: 7).

As we look at the current scenario, we see a number of young playwrights coming up with their theatrical debut in English. Bangalore based Abhishek Majumdar is one such playwright whose plays has been performed many times in India and abroad and are included in academic syllabi. The metros like Bangalore and Mumbai are providing a good platform and scope for the young playwrights to write plays in English, and thereby generate audiences, too. Many organisations India and abroad have started sponsoring playwrights in India to write in English, given the increasing foreign interest in Indian English literature.

Simultaneously, we see another trend in Indian theatre which also focuses on representing the contemporary Indian society, and makes an attempt to rescue Indian theatre from the bondage of colonialism by going back to Indian roots and traditional performance art. So we have the playwrights who follow the Western realist traditions to represent the Indian society while on the other hand we have the followers of the "Theatre of the Roots" movement who attempt self-representation through the use of myth, history, folk tale and other traditional modes. The socio-cultural changes that took place in India during the post-independent period

shaped the present state of Indian drama in English, as also in the regional languages. The practitioners coming in the later phase of modern Indian drama "Indianised" this genre by adding Indian traditional modes of performance that existed in the pre-colonial past.

Thus, in Indian theatre we see two trends developing simultaneously. One is the theatre of the roots and the other is Western realistic theatre. Theatre of the Roots is kind of reaction against the Western realist practices in Indian theatre.

Western Realism and Contemporary Indian Drama

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Thus, in Indian theatre we see two trends developing simultaneously. One is the theatre of the roots and the other is Western realistic theatre. Theatre of the Roots is kind of reaction against the Western realist practices in Indian theatre.

As we have already mentioned that the practitioners of Western realist tradition tend to write social realist drama by representing the social reality as it is, both in English and regional languages. In the post-independence period, playwrights like Mahesh Dattani, Vijay Tendulkar, Tripurari Sharma have written plays representing the existing social realities without taking recourse to myth and history and other traditional forms of representations. Among these playwrights, it is Mahesh Dattani who writes originally in English for an urban audience. These playwrights particularly write for a proscenium stage, a remnant of British influence. The British rule brought Indian theatre into direct contact with Western theatre; and from then onward, Indian theatre picked up the tradition of realism. For the first time in India, the writing and practice of theatre is geared fully towards realistic or naturalistic presentation and the stories of common people gained much importance in these writings. The contemporary Indian theatre developed during the middle 19th century contains many plays which are based on social realism and in many Indian languages. It used the proscenium stage for representation. The first proscenium theatres were established in Bombay and Calcutta in the 1860s. Then it passed to the North and South Indian states. These new forms of the Indian theatre had started overshadowing all other traditional forms of theatre. These plays particularly focus on the life of the poor and marginalised class of our society, representing their everyday lives and being critical of the social structures which create such circumstances. The growing modernist sensibility in India which developed with the coming of the British in the eighteenth century helped in the growth of the social realist plays in the post-independence period which explores as well as represents the various aspects of Indian society. According to Nandi Bhatia, the works of the playwrights and practitioners of the mid-1960s to the mid 1970s, a period known as the Renaissance of Indian theatre, reveals intense experimentation that saw on the one hand the collapse of well-made play while on the other hand simultaneously engaged with the Western forms like Brechtian forms in combination with local forms and conventions (xxv Bhatia)

Commenting on the practice of Western realist tradition by a number of contemporary Indian playwrights, Habib Tanvir says that the urban theatre of Indian only practically reflects the fundamental features of Indian

culture. It is imitative by and large and tries to ape the conventions of the Western theatre. At its worst, it represents the pale copy of the most worn-out Western theatre traditions and at its best it reflects new Western forms recently evolved through a rigorous process of experimentation. However, there are theatre groups in Bombay, Calcutta, Delhi and many other places who have engaged in experimentation with Indian folk theatre form, creating original work of a valuable nature (in Bhatia 2009: 64). By this statement Tanvir refers to the Theatre of the Roots movement started by the theatre persona like Girish Karnad and many others.

Theater of the Roots

The Theatre of the Roots which we have already mentioned in our above discussion is a post-independence phenomenon in the world of Indian theatre. This movement is led by a group of playwrights who wanted to free Indian theatre from the Western influence by revisiting the Indian past and trying to make it alive in drama. Since, these playwrights turn to their root to create a world of modern Indian theatre, this movement is known as the Theatre of the Roots movement. The playwrights belonging to this group encourage the growth of Indian drama in regional languages. Erin Mee refers to this effort as an act of decolonizing Indian theatre. According to Mee, the theatre of roots, street theatre, and English language theatre are three among the many kinds of theatre flourishing in India today, on the proscenium and non-proscenium stages in various locations of the country in different languages, structures, and forms (1997: 4-5). These playwrights have made a concentrated effort to go back to the traditional roots and liberate Indian theatre from the Western impacts. Girish Karnad, K.N. Panikkar, Ratan Thiyam, Habib Tanvir are some of the leading spirits of this movement.

According to Suresh Awasthi, who coined the term Theatre of the roots, the modern Indian theatre is a product of a colonial culture and that it needed a break, to go back and search for roots most intensely to match its violent dislocation from the tradition. Besides, it is a rejection of the proscenium stage by the directors and playwrights and the use of a variety of performance spaces to establish a close relationship between audience and the actors (in Bhatia, 2009: 296-298).

Although the practice of following Western realist tradition has been criticised and challenged, the Theatre of the Roots could not exactly free Indian theatre from the Western influences that continues to exert its impact upon Indian art and literature.

Emergence of the Women Playwrights

Another important aspect of modern Indian theatre is the emergence of women's theatre in India. "Women's theatre" refers to the whole gamut of productions and scripts by women about women, and characterized by the consciousness of women as women; while women conscious plays may include plays about women by man as well. Consciousness raising regarding the issues concerning women's existence seems to be major aim of both woman conscious plays and women's theatre. Many women's organizations in India during the 1980s and 1990s adopted the concept of street theatre as a powerful medium for creating awareness on a variety of social issues including the issue of violence against women.

Women's theatre is an exclusively women's domain while the feminist theatre in the Indian context, unlike in the West, also includes plays about women by men. For example, the plays such as *Silence! The Court is in Session* by Vijay Tendulkar, and *Nagamandala* by Girish Karnad are also considered feminist plays. The well-known street play *Women* (Aurat) by Jan Natya Manch (People's theatre of India) led by Safdar Hashmi - a male playwright, is also popularly known as a feminist play.

In the Indian context, Tutun Mukherjee offers an appropriate and convincing definition of the term women's theatre; it is a politically nuanced theatre that is oriented towards change and produced by women with feminine concerns. She calls it a forward-looking step trying to break away from reductionism, and locates gender identity in the flux of socio-historical processes. It is the product of feminism; feminine awareness shapes the making of the play (2005:14). An important strand of women's theatre in India is its intervention in areas which directly concern women. It has been used to voice those issues which are largely suppressed or considered as non-existent by mainstream theatre (Subramanyam 2002: 31). The mainstream theatre in India is dominated by the male authored plays, representing the issues concerning women from a socially/ideologically constructed male perspective. The entry of the plays by women playwrights into the mainstream theatre world of India is only a recent phenomenon.

In the recent past, a striking growth is seen in the field of women's theatre. One of the important factors that help in the emergence of the women playwrights is the re-discovery of women's theatre history in the West in 1980s. This development encourages the women playwrights across the globe to write "women's theatre".

In the Indian theatrical scenario, the appearance of the women playwrights is a rather late development. The achievements of women in the field of theatre have not received adequate importance yet. Tutun Mukherjee says that in India, the emergence of women's theatre history is a late nineteenth century phenomenon. Before that also plays were written about women and women were a part of dramatic performance, but they remained hidden. In the entire history of development of Sanskrit drama, there was hardly any discussion of a play written and directed by a woman. There were women performers, dance choreographers, but they were not visible till the late nineteenth century (2005:6). A remarkable increase in women's participation in theatre as playwrights/director/performers was seen in the last three decades of the twentieth century. The lives of Indian women are far more circumscribed than their Western counterparts; and the Indian women playwrights try to represent it via their dramatic writings. These playwrights share the same thematic pattern such as the representation of women's relationship, their struggles, and their journey towards emancipation and so on. They are not resistant to the influence of Western feminism, but their chief motive seems to be to sensitise the receiver of their text to the problems faced by women in the Indian society (Mukherjee 2005: 15).

Off late, a number of playwrights like Dinta Mehta, Poile Sengupta and Manjula Padmanabhan have started writing plays in English scriptin the concerns of women in India. Besides, there are a number of playwrights such as Mahasweta Devi, Usha Ganguli, Shanta Gokhale to name a few whose works have been translated into English and made available in both regional languages and in English by scholars like Tutun Mukherjee. Mukherjee's *Staging Resistance: Plays by Women in Translation* is a noteworthy collection of plays written by women in India, a supporting document of women's theatre in India which contains a number of plays written by women about women. The plays included in this deals with the various problems faced by women in Indian society.

While discussing Indian theatre in the present time, we often tend to use the two terms "modern" and "contemporary" very loosely to refer to the theatre developed in the post-independence period, without taking into account the fact that the influence of modernity in India was felt in the pre-colonial period itself, in the late eighteenth and nineteenth century. Hence, the term contemporary would be more convincing to refer to the theatre developed and produced during the post-independent period.

Unit11(b): Introduction to Girish Karnad

Born on 19 may 1938 in a Konkani speaking family in Mathern, Maharastra, Girish Raghunath Karnad earned international fame not only as a major modern Indian playwright, but also as a versatile film actor, director, screen writer, poet, critic and translator. Winner of Padma Bhusan, Padma Shri, and Jnanpith awards, Karnad served as the Director, Film and Television Institute of India (1974- 75), President, Karnataka Nataka Academy (1976-78), the Indian Co-Chairman for the Joint Media Committee of the Indo-U.S. Sub-Commission on Education and Culture (1984 –1993), and Chairman, Sangeet Natak Academy (1988-1993). The long list of honours and awards for his contribution to Indian films includes the laurel for acting in the best Kannada film *Sanskara* that won President's Golden Lotus (1976), National Award for the best script for *Bhumika* (1978), B.F.J.A. award for being the best actor in *Swami* (1978) Golden Lotus for directing the best non-feature film *Kanaka Purandara* (1989) etc.

Karnad's initial schooling was in Marathi. Having had graduated from Karnataka University, Dharwar in Mathematics and statistics, he went to England for higher studies, did Master of Arts in philosophy, political science and economics at Lincoln and Magdalene colleges, Oxford as a Rhodes scholar. On his return to India, he joined Oxford University Press, and remained with the concern for seven years.

Karnad's dramatic career began early. Speaking of his vocation as a dramatist Karnad says that it has been a matter of surprise to himself that he wrote his very first play Yayati (1961) neither in English, the language in which he dreamed of earning international literary fame, nor in Konkani, his mother tongue, but in his adopted language Kannada. "A greater surprise was the theme of the play for it was taken from ancient Indian mythology, from which I had believed myself alienated." The play fetched Karnad instant success. Translated in various languages, the play has been performed in different parts of the country, and abroad. Based on the Mahabharata tale of Yayati, the play uses the mythical characters to highlight the ironies in the contemporary Indian situation. Karnad's second play, Tughlaq (1964) on the historical character Md. Been

Tughlaq, is a compelling allegory on the Nehruvian era. The play virtually established him as a promising playwright of the time.

Karnad resigned his post at Oxford University Press to devote himself fully to his creative writing and performance. Play writing is "most important and interesting," he said in an interview. During 1987 –88 he had been a visiting professor and a Fulbright Scholar- in –Residence at the university of Chicago. His close contact with the American theatre personalities, the trainee actors, and the U.S. audience had a lasting impact on his writing and theatrical presentations. For over four decades Karnad has been composing top-notch plays mostly in Kannada. His well known plays include *Yayati, Tughlaq, Naga Mandala, Hayavadana, Agni mattu Male (The Fire and the Rain). Maa Nishaadha,* and *Taledanda.* Karnad trans-created *Naga Mandala* and *Agni mattu Male* in English, commissioned by Guthrie Theatre, U.S.A. Both the plays have been staged in the U.S. with a significant number of American actors.

Mythology and History in the Plays of Karnad

Critics largely locate Karnad's "uniqueness" in his subtle reflections on the contemporary Indian socio-political-cultural scenario through the idiom of the past. A write up in *Indian Express* (1999) highlights that Karnad projects "the conflict of the modern man through symbols and tales which are almost "puranic', but which have acquired meaning as Karnad re-told and re-interpreted them." Reflecting on the dramatist's frequent use of myth and history Lakshmi Chandrashekhar, herself an academic and an active member of the Kannada Theatre Association says, "Karnad has been accused of escaping into the past. But the use of mythology in most modern literature validates individual experience and universalizes it. And I think Karnad has been able to do that." In this regard Karnad himself once said jokingly to an interviewer, "I cannot invent plots therefore I use myths. I cannot invent stories and therefore I go to history."

A section of critics, however, are of opinion that Karnad actually belongs to the generation of English educated Indians, who self-consciously alienate themselves from the ancient Indian value system that fosters Indian myths, legends and forms the baseline of Indian culture. In view of these critics, Karnad's entire venture at re-reading Indian myths and history in terms of the contemporary issues in dramatic forms has been done with an eye to projecting the Indian past from the Western perspectives. Karnad's rather non-traditional if not negative approach to the Indian past is reflected in his interviews and write-ups. In the introductory essay to his *Three Plays* (Oxford University Press) he recollects going to England for higher studies with the manuscript of *Yayati* with him, and how he kept on brooding over the myth. "The myth had nailed me to my past."

Recounting his own orientation to drama, Karnad says that having had grown up in a small town in Karnataka, he had an early exposure to the traditional Yakshagana performances, and to the largely mythology based plays staged by the touring 'Natak' companies. In his teens he realized that, "the plays had begun to seem quaint even silly to me." He recalls his very first visit to a Bombay theatre to see Abraham Alkazi directed Srindberg's *Miss Julie*. The play had irresistibly drawn him to Western drama. He had been especially influenced by Strindberg's mode of "laying bare the inner recess of human psyche". The mode, as it is, shocked the conservative Indian audience. Later, as Karnad read Anouille, Sartre, O'Neill and the Greek tragedians, he had a feeling that "there had been no dramatic structure in my own tradition to which I could relate myself."

Karnad on His Plays

Years later, when Karnad had been invited to write plays for Haymarket Theatre, England, he observed in *The Guardian* (8 June 2002) reflecting on the psychology of the post-Independence Indian dramatists, including himself, "I belonged to the generation that came of age after India became independent, but our colonial education had ensured that even when we are trying to prove that we did not lag behind the English culturally, we looked to them for role models…The great damage that the veneration for English drama did to Indian theatre was to uproot it from its moorings in myth and legend….I decided to go back to the theatre that colonial taste had taught us to sneer at, to the tales that were still being passed orally from generation to generation". Being conscious that a large section of his target audience, the residents of England, were totally unfamiliar with the Indian myths and legends, he clarified his dramatic strategy, "I knew that nothing would be more disastrous than to turn 'ethnic', and write for the Asian audience… .I decided that I had to address the ethnic audience as part of the mainstream, and speak of things that mattered to me". That can be taken as Karnad's self-justification for his own interpretations and alterations of the Indian myths and legends that he has done to suit the taste of the international/ multi-cultural audience.

Karnad on Post Independence Indian Theater

In Karnad's view the very modernity of the modern Indian theatre rests on the carefully cultivated "cultural amnesia" of the contemporary Indian dramatists and the audience. He points out that what is called modern Indian theatre had been started by a group of people who adopted "cultural amnesia" as a deliberate strategy. It originated in the second half of the nineteenth century in Bombay, Calcutta, and Madras, the three seaports built by the British. The three metropolises bred a middle class that aspired to be like the British in outward respects. The social values of this class were shaped by the English education it had received from the British rulers. This class frequented the new Indian plays performed in proscenium theatres, and appreciated the departures from the traditional theatrical patterns, and the traditional socio-cultural outlook as projected in the plays. Highlighting the increasing shift from the religious/ ritualistic drama to the secular on the Indian stage, Karnad cites the history of Bombay theatre. Mostly financed by the Parsi business magnets, the theatres from the very beginning had a significant number of Muslim script- writers who framed the plays in Urdu. The audience being largely the Hindus, the plays were written with a pronounced leaning towards a secular approach to life. In Karnad's words, "The consequence of this secularism was that every character on stage, whether a Hindu deity or a Muslim legendary hero, was alienated from his truly religious or cultural moorings; and myths and legends emptied of meaning, were reshaped into tightly structured melodrama with thundering curtain lines and searing climax." This certainly is not the whole story of Bombay theatre. Nor does it present a comprehensive site of the twentieth century Indian theatrical experiments and innovations either. What becomes evident, however, is Karnad's own line of defence to the charges leveled at him for de-mythologizing the myths, distancing the characters from their socio- cultural-religious moorings, and going for lurid sensationalism and melodrama in the name of secularism.

Karnad on Social Criticism in Contemporary Indian Drama

Commenting on the school of Indian drama that grew in 1930s with an objective of social reform Karnad says, "many of these new playwrights made coruscating analysis of the ills that had eaten into Indian society." But they were mostly idealists. In their plays the social ills and evils were not taken up at the individual level realistically enough. In Karnad's opinion, "Indian realism could not progress beyond the analysis of social problems…. (There) has never been a bourgeoisie with its faith in individualism as the ultimate value. Westernization notwithstanding, Indians define themselves in terms of their relationships to the other members of their family, caste or class. They are defined by the roles they have to play ...In the Indian context space in a traditional home is ordered according to the cast hierarchy or according to the hierarchies within the family." That of course is a matter of opinion. Karnad's observation virtually echoes the interpretation launched, nourished and widely spread by the Western writers. Presumably, Karnad's own plays were designed to break new grounds of realistic theatre on the Indian stage. He projects the familial, social, cultural, and existential problems through the experiences, thoughts and realizations of the individuals, who seek their identity and relationships exclusively in their own terms in defiance of the traditional value system, the cultural mores, and the patterns of familial and social relationships when need be.

Karnad Among Kannada Dramatists

It is said that a decade before Karnad was born the golden period of Kannada theatre had started. The thought provoking social plays like Kailasam's *Home Rule*, Adya's *Harijanwala*, Karanth's satirical play, *Garbha Gudi*, Muguli's *Namdhar*i, Samsa's historical play *Suguna Gambhira*, Masti's *Talikot*, Garuda's legendary play *Paduka Pattabhiseka* had set the twentieth century Kannada drama on a firm footing of its own. The progressive movement in theatre gathered momentum during the '30s.

A turning point came when World War II broke out in 1939, making the intelligentsia all over the world shaken to the roots at the crisis in civilization it signified. On the Indian scene the onrush of a series of happenings, Quit India Movement, India's Independence, the partition of the country, the subsequent communal riots, liquidation of the Indian States, the assassination of Gandhi, the Goa liberation movement had a deep impact on the creative writers including the dramatists. In Karnataka the young generation grew up in the light and shadow of the atmosphere. Post Independence Kannada stage became vibrant with the complex individual and social awareness. While a set of progressive playwrights like S. Dodamani, Archik, Venkatanna, exposed the disparities, the hypocrisy, the hollowness in the contemporary social life in sharp critical terms, others like Adya, V. G. Bhat, Bendre went for assessing human imperfections at the ethical and philosophic planes. For all their critique, the dramatists upheld the values Indian people have inherited across generations. Commenting on

the varied trends in the post Independence Kannada theatre, Professor V.K. Gokak said in a symposium organized by Sahitya Akademi, "Contribution of all these schools is unified in a rich and new life. Realism cleanses the foundations of the society, and uproots corruption and superstition, upholds the ideal of a regenerated society. Ethics pleads for a well regulated ideal of social and individual discipline… (The dramatists) reveal, each in his own way, the core of tenderness, goodness, or sweet reasonableness that may lie imbedded, whether in a traditional or in an unconventional personality. They are all, to that extent, humanists as well." Initiated to the contemporary theatre by the powerful Kannada plays, the Karnataka audience had a mixed reaction to Karnad's dramas, especially to the ones re-interpreting myths and history.

The Fire and The Rain

The Fire and the Rain is based on the *Mahabharata* myth of Yavakrida, Paravasu and Arvavasu. The myth occurs in the Vana Parva (Forest Canto), narrated by the ascetic Lomasha to the Pandava brothers as they roam across the land while in exile. Introducing *The Fire and the Rain* in the Oxford University Press publication, Girish Karnad highlights that he had read the myth in C. Rajagopalachari's translation of *Mahabharata* while in college. Since then for long thirty- seven years he had pondered over the idea of composing a play on it. When he had been commissioned by the prestigious Guthrie Theatre, Minneapolis, U.S.A. to write a play for them, he made use of the opportunity.

The Source

Commenting on the relevance of *Mahabharata* in the contemporary times, Rajagopalachari writes in the Preface to the second edition of his translation, " The realities of life are idealized by genius and given the form that makes drama, poetry, or great prose. Since literature is closely related to life, so long human society is divided into nations literature cannot escape the effects of such division. But the highest literature transcends regionalism, and through it, when we are properly tuned, we realize the essential oneness of the human family". "The *Mahabharata* discloses a rich civilization and a highly evolved society, which though of an old world, strangely resembles the India of our own time, with the same values and ideals."

Focusing on the significance of the *Mahabharata* tales, Rajagopalachari observes, "The Mahabharata has molded the character and civilization of one of the most numerous of the world's people. How did it fulfill – how is it still continuing to fulfill – this function? By the gospel of *dharma,* which like a golden thread runs through all the complex movements in the epic, by its lesson that hatred breeds hatred, the covetousness and violence lead inevitably to ruin, that the only real conquest is the battle against one's lower nature." In his article, "Indian Mythology" (*The Cultural Heritage of India*, Vol. II. Ramakrisna

Mission) Professor R. N. Dandekar has similar reflections, "If philosophy attempts to discover the ultimate truth, mythology must be said to represent the human effort to attain at least the penultimate truth, of which all experience is the temporal reflection". "Philosophy is often described as the foundation of religion, ritual as its super-structure, and mythology as its detailed decoration. In case of Hinduism…mythology is its essential constituent factor…. Mythology represents some of the distinctive features of Hinduism, tolerance, broad sympathy, liberal outlook and dynamically assimilative and at the same time elevating power." Indian culture being a Transcendentalist culture, the elevating power has spiritual connotations. It has been traditionally believed that a life lived to the full is a life lived over and above materialist pleasures and power. All *Mahabharata* myths are addressed to this end.

Unit 12 (a): The Source Text

MAHABHARATA
Trans. C. Rajagopalachari. 1951
(2005. 46th Edition)
THE MYTH OF YAVAKRIDA

In the course of their wanderings the Pandavas reached the hermitage of Raibhya on the bank of the Ganga. Lomasa told them the story of the place: " This is the ghat where Bharata, the son of Dasaratha bathed, Indra was cleansed of the sin of killing Vritra unfairly, by those waters….O Yudhisthira, ascend this holy mountain and the misfortunes which have cast a cloud on your life, will vanish. Anger and passion will be washed off if you bathe in the running waters of this river."

Then Lomasa expatiated in greater detail on the sanctity of the place. He began the story thus: YAVAKRIDA the son of a sage met with destruction in this very place." He continued: "There lived in their hermitage two eminent Brahmins named Bharadwaja and Raibhya, who were dear friends. Raibhya and his two sons, PARAVASU and ARVAVASU learnt the Vedas and became famed scholars. Bharadwaj devoted himself wholly to the worship of God. He had a son named YAVAKRIDA who saw with jealousy and hatred that the Brahmanas did not respect his ascetic father as they did the learned Raibhya.

YAVAKRIDA practiced hard penance to gain the grace of Indra. He tortured his body with austerities and awakened the compassion of Indra, who appeared and asked him why he mortified his flesh. YAVAKRIDA replied, 'I wish to be more learned in the Vedas than any has ever been before. I wish to be a great scholar. I am performing these austerities to realize that desire. It takes a long time and involves much hardship to learn the Vedas from a teacher. I am performing these austerities to acquire that knowledge directly. Bless me.' Indra smiled and said, 'O Brahmana, you are on the wrong path. Return home, seek a proper preceptor and learn the Vedas from him. Austerity is not the way to learning; the path is study and study alone.'

But the son of Bharadwaja would not give up. He pursued wit even greater vigour, his austerities to the horror and distress of the gods. Indra again manifested himself before YAVAKRIDA, and warned him, 'You have taken the wrong path to acquire knowledge…Your father learned the Vedas by patient study and so can you. Go and study the Vedas. Desist from the vain mortification of the body.' YAVAKRIDA did not heed even the second warning of Indra and announced defiantly that if his prayer was not granted he would cut off his limbs one by one, and offer them as oblation to the fire. No, he would never give up.'

One morning during the austerities when he went to bathe in the Ganga, he saw a gaunt old Brahmana on the bank, laboriously throwing handfuls of sand into the water. YAVAKRIDA asked, 'Old man what are you doing?' The old man replied, 'I am going to build a dam across this river. When with handful after handful I have built a dam of sand here, people can cross the river with ease…Useful work, isn't it?'

YAVAKRIDA laughed and said, 'What a fool you must be to think you can build a dam across this mighty river with your silly handful of sand. Arise and take to some more useful work.' The old man said, 'Is my project more foolish than yours of mastering the Vedas not by study but by austerities?' YAVAKRIDA now knew the old man was Indra. More humble this time, YAVAKRIDA earnestly begged Indra to grant him learning as a personal boon. Indra blessed and comforted YAVAKRIDA with the following words, 'well, I grant you the boon you seek. Go and study the Vedas, you will become learned.

YAVAKRIDA'S END

YAVAKRIDA studied the Vedas and became learned. He became vain with the thought that he had acquired the knowledge of the Vedas through the boon of Indra and not through human tutelage. Bharadwaja did not like this and feared that his son might ruin himself by slighting Raibhya. He thought it necessary to warn him. 'The gods' he said 'grant boons to foolish people who persistently practice penances, as intoxicants are sold to fools for money. They lead to loss of self-control, and this leads to the warping of the mind and utter destruction.' …. Bharadwaja concluded, 'Be not ruined by vanity. Cultivate self-restraint. Do not transgress the limits of good conduct and do not be disrespectful to the great Raibhya.'

It was springtime. The trees and creepers were beautiful with flowers, and the whole forest was gorgeous with colour and sweet with the song of birds. The very earth seemed to be under the spell of the god of love.

PARAVASU'S wife was strolling alone in the garden near the hermitage of Raibhya. She appeared more than human, in the sweet union in her beauty, courage and purity. At that time YAVAKRIDA came there and was so overwhelmed by her loveliness that he completely lost his sense of self-control and became a ravening beast with lust. He accosted her and taking brutal advantage of her fear and shame and bewilderment, he dragged her to a lonely spot and violated her person.

Raibhya returned to his hermitage. He saw his daughter-in-law weeping, broken-hearted and inconsolable, and learning of the shameful outrage perpetuated on her, he was seized with implacable anger. He plucked a hair from his head and offered it to the fire reciting a mantra. At once a maiden as beautiful as his daughter-in-law emerged from the sacrificial fire. The sage plucked another hair from his knotted lock and offered it as oblation. A terrible ghost arose from the fire. The sage commanded them to kill YAVAKRIDA.

When YAVAKRIDA was performing the morning rites, the female spirit went near him and with smiles and allurements, put him off his guard, and as she ran away with his water jug, the male ghost rushed on him with uplifted spear. YAVAKRIDA stood up in fear. Knowing that his mantras would be of no avail until he cleansed

himself with water, he looked for his water jug. When he found it missing he rushed to a pond for water, but the pond was dry. He went to a nearby stream which also dried up in his approach. There was no water for him anywhere….YAVAKRIDA fled for his life with the demon hot on his heels. His sins had consumed the power of his vigils and fasts. At last YAVAKRIDA sought refuge in the sacrificial hall of his father. The half blind man who was guarding the hermitage stopped him as he could not recognize YAVAKRIDA, as distorted with mortal fear, he sought to force his way in. Meanwhile the fiend overtook him and killed him with his spear. When Bharadwaja returned to his hermitage, he came upon his son's corpse, and concluded that disrespect to Raibhya must have led to this cruel fate. 'Alas! My child, you died of your pride and vanity … Why did you behave so as to be cursed thus? May Raibhya who caused the death of my only son be himself killed by one of his sons!' Thus carried away by rage and grief the sage
cursed Raibhya. Regaining control soon he exclaimed in anguish, 'I have not only lost my only son, but in the madness of my grief I have also cursed my friend and companion. What is the use of continuing my life?' He cremated his son's body and died by throwing himself on the funeral pyre.

THE TALE OF PARAVASU AND ARVAVASU

King Brihadyumna, a disciple of the sage Raibhya performed a great sacrifice at which he requested his teacher to let his two sons PARAVASU and ARVAVASU officiate. With the permission of their father both of them went joyfully to the capital of the king. While arrangements were being made for the sacrifice, PARAVASU desired one day to go and see his wife, and walking along all night, he reached his father's hermitage before dawn. Near the hermitage, he saw in the gloaming, what seemed to him a beast of prey crouching for a spring, and hurling his weapon at it, killed it. But to his horror and grief, he discovered that he had killed his own father clad in skins, mistaking him for a wild denizen of the forest.

He realized that the fatal mistake was the effect of the curse of Bharadwaja. When he had hastily performed the funeral rites of his father, he went to ARVAVASU and told him the doleful tale. He said, 'But this mishap should not interfere with the sacrifice of the king. Please do the rites on my behalf in expiation of the sin I have unwittingly committed. There is, mercifully, atonement of sin committed in ignorance. If you can be my substitute here for undergoing the expiation, I shall be able to go and assist in conducting the king's sacrifice. I can officiate unaided which is a thing you cannot do as yet.'

The virtuous brother agreed and said, 'You may attend to the king's sacrifice. I shall do penance to free you from the terrible taint of having killed a father – and a Brahmin.' The virtuous ARVAVASU accordingly took upon himself the expiatory rites on behalf of his brother. That done he came to the court of the king to join his brother and assist in the sacrifice.

The sin of PARAVASU was not washed off, since expiation cannot be by proxy. It tainted his mind with wicked designs. Having become jealous of the radiance on his brother's face, PARAVASU decided to dishonor him by casting on him an unjust aspersion and accordingly when ARVAVASU entered the hall, PARAVASU loudly exclaimed so that the king might hear: 'this man has committed the sin of killing a Brahmana and how can he enter the holy sacrificial place?'

ARVAVASU indignantly denied the accusation, but none heeded him, and he was ignominiously expelled from the hall of sacrifice by the orders of the king. ARVAVASU repeatedly protested his innocence: 'It is my brother who has committed the sin – and even then it was through a mistake. I have saved him by performing expiatory rites.' This made matters worse for him, for nobody believed that the expiation he had undergone was not for his own crime and everyone thought that he was adding false accusation against a blameless brother, to his other sins. The virtuous ARVAVASU accused of a monstrous crime, also treated as a liar, retreated to the forest in despair of finding justice in the world, and betook himself to rigorous austerities. The gods were gracious and asked him, 'O virtuous soul, what is the boon you seek?' High thinking and deep meditation had in the mean time cleansed his heart of all anger at his brother's conduct, and so he only prayed that his father might be restored to life, and that his brother might be freed from wickedness and the sins he had committed.

Lomasa narrated the story and said, 'O Pandavas, bathe here and wash off your passions in the holy river.' But learning is one thing and virtue is quite another. It is true that one should know the difference between good and evil, but this knowledge should soak into every thought and influence every act in one's life. Then indeed knowledge becomes virtue.

THE MYTH IN KARNAD'S RENDERING

In view of the theorists of Negative Hermeneutics, the purpose of interpretation of an ancient text is not to manifest or restore the text's "past meaning" in its own terms, but rather to use modern concepts to question, demystify, and undermine its meaning. Negative Hermeneutics contests the very idea that an ancient text is a revelation of meaning inherited from posterity. It is a message or proclamation addressed to the audience. The reading of an ancient text, according to these theorists, needs to be animated by "willingness to suspect". As Paul Ricoeur says, Negative Hermeneutics is a method of "reduction of illusions and lies of consciousness". In this method a new relationship emerges from the confrontation of the appearances and the bare reality that the interpreter exposes.

Whether Girish Karnad can be branded a creative writer all dedicated to Negative Hermeneutics is a debatable issue, but in *The Fire and the Rain* he certainly toes the line of negative interpretation right from the beginning. In *Mahabharata* the myth had been told to the Pandava brothers so that they understood the difference between good and evil, knew about the values on which the individual, familial, social life and relationships had been structured in India. Sage Lomasa narrated the tales in expectation that the Pandavas would have the knowledge they gather from the myth soak into their every thought and act, and attain virtue.

In contrast, *The Fire and the Rain* presents the myth as a fiery tale of unrestrained desires, unleashed jealousy, anger, hatred, revenge and malaise through which the individuals assert their self-identity, and seek their relationships to life. The characters, some mythical and some the creations of the dramatist's imagination, defy the socio-ethical mores. They view the traditional hierarchical familial and social set up with the caste and class divisions, as a persistent pressure on their life, a suffocating barricade to the free flowering of their personality. Adultery, avarice, heinous betrayal, gruesome deaths mark the course of the play. Human instincts have a language of their own. Karnad's play catches the language, highlights the significance of emotions and passions, and thus roots the play and the myth to the concrete reality of life.

Whether instinct and passions signify the only reality of human existence, whether resentment/ rejection of the traditional socio-ethical mores as such can make life more wholesome and whole, of course, is a matter of opinion. Much of the mixed reaction to Karanad's *The Fire and the Rain* centers round these issues.

Unit 12(b): Textual Analysis of *The Fire and the Rain*

Critical Opinions

• "I get the impression that from *Taledanda* onwards Karnad's plays began to turn outward in a more obvious way. He foregrounds the social context of individual conflict, something that is further developed in *The Fire and the Rain*." **Lakshmi Chandrashekhar.**

• "[Karnad] has an awesome command over his dramatic material, [and] creates chaos through this clash between ritual, reality and drama…. This play should be enacted under the open sky …[with] the location of jungle, the awesome colour and chanting of songs…" ***The Book Review.***

• "It was the script of *The Fire and the Rain* that …I found extremely powerful, contemporary in approach. Yet set in the Vedic times, it is a prime example of Indian thinking and Indian cultural ethos." **Arjun Sajnani** (The Director of the film version, *Agni Varsha*).

• "Has a lavish ceremonial gloss. It is also a very erotic movie" **Stephen Holden**, *The New York Times*.

• "Even with the requisite melodrama, it's a rollicking optimistic movie". **Jami Bernard**. *New York Daily News*.

***The Fire and the Rain*: The Text in View of Some Critical Issues**

Let us read the drama concentrating on the following areas of critical interest :

(i) Karnad's presentation of the myth /A contemporary play in the mythical framework

(ii) A lurid drama of sensations

(iii) A blend of rite, reality and theatre

(iv) A drama of revenge

(v) Justification of the title

(vi) The role of women in the play

The Tale Begins

The land has been in the grip of a ravaging drought for ten long years. With a view to propitiating the Lord of gods, Indra, the custodian of rains, a seven-year-long grand fire sacrifice (*yajna*) is being conducted under the guidance of the chief priest, Paravasu. The play begins as the fire sacrifice draws to a close. Paravasu has watched over the holy fire all these years with utmost religious austerity forsaking his wife, family and all the earthly pleasures. In *Mahabharata* the tale of Paravasu begins prior to the commencement of the *yajna*. The focal point of the myth has not been the contrast between the worldly attractions and the spiritual austerities.

Arvasu, the younger brother, (Karnard slightly changes the mythical name) is in love with a fourteen year old tribal woman, Nittilai, and is mentally all set to marring her ignoring the caste barricade. The episode is Karnad's own addition to the ancient tale. In the Arvasu-Nittilai episode Karnad highlights the caste and class difference, also the difference in the two communities to the point of open antagonism. The focus is more contemporary than mythical. During the *Mahabharata*, even the pre-*Mahabharata* period inter-cast and inter-community marriages had not been tabooed. The *Pandava* heroes, Bhima and Arjuna themselves had such marriages. Karnad makes use of anachronism as a handy device to give the play a contemporary flavour.

Prologue

The Prologue starts with the Actor-Manager seeking permission to present a strip of a play at the *yajna* precinct to enable the priests freshen their minds from the drudgery of "endless philosophical discussions, metaphysical speculations, and debates" (p.2) associated with the rite. The actors being considered "low born", the Actor-Manager is made to stand at a distance from the fire sacrifice (ref. the stage direction).

The Fire Sacrifice (*Yajna*)

The holy rite of fire sacrifice is of highest significance in Vedic culture. The rite symbolizes the unity of life, and promotes a spirit of dedication to the betterment of all. In Vedic view *yajna* makes the individual related to the cosmos. The sacred sacrificial fire, *Agni,* the cosmic energy, acts as the messenger between the divine powers and the devotee. *Agni* is also the representative of *Purusa* / Brahman, the Ultimate Reality. In offering oblation (*ahuti*) to the fire, the devotee renounces the individual claims to everything worldly, and affirms faith in the notion that everything is part of the encompassing whole (*sarvam vai purnam svaha*). Since the Vedic times Indian thoughts, values, life views and life ways have been oriented to this belief.

In *The Fire and the Rain* Karnad evades the spiritual meaning and significance of the rite, projects it as a site of a hegemonic hierarchical power structure that functions on differentiation, exclusion, and ruthless suppression of the individual pursuits of worldly pleasures, a basic human right. To the priests themselves the performance of the rite has been a dreary obligation. The prologue takes the audience into the thick of the Paravasu-Arvasu myth. The Actor- Manager reads out a message from Arvasu, an actor in the proposed play strip, to his brother Paravasu the chief priest. Being a Brahmin, Arvasu is prohibited to be an actor by profession. He has volunteered to act in the play to find entry to the sacrificial arena he had been banished from. "But today I am a criminal. I have killed my father, a noble Brahmin. I already stand tarnished. I may now become an actor…. So please do not bar the way now. (P 3)" The prologue promises a sensational drama.

Act One

The first act begins with the subtext. Arvasu and Nittilai find their cast and customs standing on the way to their love. Instead of focusing on the Indian society as a unity in diversity as has usually been done by both the pre- and post- Independence Indian dramatists, Karnad's play right from the beginning presents India as a land of widely different communities with their sharply varying custom ways.

> According to the tribal code a suitor has to present himself before the tribal elders and publicly propose marriage to the woman. All-too-conscious of his Brahminical stature Arvasu resents going through the tribal ceremony.
>
> *NITTILAI : Don't worry. It's nothing.*
>
> *ARVASU : Nothing, for the young men of your tribe! But I am a Brahmin. To say all that to a smirking, nudging, surging multitude… It's dreadful."(P.5)*

Equally uncompromising in her approach, Nittilai refuses to permit Arvasu touch her before marriage. It is against her tribal convention. "Don't I have my rights?" asks Arvasu, " I'm about to jettison my caste, my

people, my whole past for you. Can't you forget a minor custom for my sake?" More theatrical than liberal idealistic, Arvasu's reaction is sharply contrasted with Nittilai's quiet, controlled response, "It's a nice custom. Sensible. Worth preserving"(P.6). The conservative teenager tribal woman has an inner strength lacking in the elitist youth. At some distance from the hermitage of Yavakri's father (the mythical name Yavakrida altered), the couple meets Andhaka, the blind keeper. In the myth the blindness is interpreted as a symbol of the man's inadequate knowledge. The stage direction in Karnad's play spotlights his low caste ("a *Sudra* by caste" P.6), although there is not much dramatic emphasis given to his caste role throughout the play.

A polar opposite to the revered Vedic scholar in the *Mahabharta* myth, Karnad's Arvasu is a naïve Brahmin youth, isolated in the family, who sulks over the negligence and indifference shown to him by his family members. He knows that the situation has cropped up largely due to his incapacity/ unwillingness to live his Brahminic-Ascetic caste role: "I'll never be learned like father and uncle. I shall never conduct the royal sacrifice like Paravasu or perform penance like cousin Yavakri. All I want is to dance and sing and act. And be with Nittilai. It doesn't matter a flake of a cow dung to my father whether I'm alive or dead" (P.7). Arvasu has reservations regarding the family role and involvement of Paravasu's wife too, "My sister-in-law lives wrapped up in a world of her own" (P8). Not very sure if individualism is to be upheld as the ultimate value of life (Arvasu is critical of his sister in law being individualistic, while he argues in favour of his own individualistic modes), nonetheless the Brahmin youth tells the inside story of the Indian extended family. It is a negative image of the familial relationships in terms of which the Indians are said to define their identity and roles.

Yavakri's Penance and Power

The mythical Yavakrida practiced hard penance to gain the grace of Indra, so that he could acquire the knowledge of Veda directly. He announced that if his prayer was not granted he would offer his limbs as oblation to the fire. In Karnad's play Andhaka reports of a gruesome act that Yavakri has performed, "Yavakri stood in the middle of a circle of fire, and started offering his limbs to the fire, first his fingers, then his eyes, then his entrails"(P.9). The penance is described more in terms of Black Magical rites than as an austere meditation (*tapasya*).

Nittilai, an outsider to the Brahmin community and its spiritualist tradition, questions the viability of Yavakri's penance, and the mystery surrounding the heresy of Lord Indra appearing to him, "how does everyone know what happened in a remote corner of the jungle –miles away from the nearest prying eye?" (P.9) Nittilai's rationalist query acts towards de-mythologizing the myth. Karnad's Yavakri himself severely censures the very concept of Vedic/universal knowledge, and the process of attaining it both through a preceptor and on one's own capacity. He speaks of his austere penance in the forest not as a mode of self-disciplining, but as an exclusively self-tortuous physical experience, " life in the jungle is sheer hell. Flies, giant ants, beetles, pests…vipers lurking in bowls of dust…. Not demons but mosquitoes torture you." (P.13). Yavakri himself has doubts whether he really had a dialogue with Lord Indra, or it was all his hallucination, "So was it all a hallucination caused by something I'd eaten that morning? Or was it fever working on my brain?" (P.13). Karnad's rationalist realist re-reading of the myth increasingly turns it to a tale sprung from a land of superstitions and savage custom ways, an image of India nurtured with much care in the West.

Yavakri refutes the heresy that he has attained divine grace to acquire Vedic knowledge. More of a Faustian hero than an Indian sage, he rather glamorizes his own role in the entire venture, "Yes, one day I decided I had won. So I have come back" (P.14) Vedic knowledge in itself does not have any value to him. His penance has yielded him another kind of knowledge, "Some knowledge, but probably little wisdom…. I think I have some mystical powers I hadn't before. Mastered a few secret arts" (P14). It is a knowledge that gives one Satanic identity and destructive power. Yavakri brags that he compelled Lord Indra grant him the boon.

YAVAKRI : Indra came to me and said: 'You are ready now to receive knowledge. But knowledge involves control of passions, serenity, objectivity.' And I shouted back: 'No, that's not the knowledge I want. That's suicide! This obsession. This hatred. This venom. All this is me. I will not deny anything of myself. I want knowledge so I can be vicious, destructive" (P.23).

The Satanic identity Karnad's Yavakri asks for a boon, marks him more Western than Indian in his choice of a role model. To fit in another Miltonic Satan in the Indian mythical tale is an easy device to catch the Western audience. The device demythologizes the Indian myth, moping up the values it stands for. Back to his extended family, Karnad's Yavakri feels all the more intensely that his rigorous penance had been a fruitless self-

abnegation, “The day I decided my penance was over I fell down in a dead faint…. It was terrible exhaustion, the pain of sheer relief” (P.14). The man to whom penance had been nothing but years of rigorous physical torture, returns home doubly tied up to his physical self, to the demands of the body, even at the cost of familial/social relationships, codes and values. “Obsession”, “hatred”, “venom” that he claims to be his new realm are the explosions of his own unfurled desires.

Yavakri Meets Vishakha

Introducing Paravasu’s wife Vishakha the stage direction highlights, “ She must have been an attractive person once, but now looks angry and haggard” (P.12) This hard core realistic description of the lady pining for seven long years in the absence of her husband sharply contrasts C. Rajagopalachari’s version, “She appeared more than human in the sweet union of her beauty, courage and purity.” The difference in the descriptions marks the difference in the very approach of the two writers to the mythical character. Not really a chance meeting as in the myth, after three days of persistent endeavor Karnad’s Yavakri succeeds in opening a dialogue with the love starved Vishakha, his ex-fiancé, and the wife of his own first cousin, Paravasu. In the myth the sages Raibhya and Bharadwaja have been presented as two friends. Karnad makes them two brothers, and the entire tale a family feud. Yavakri- Vishakha love story moves along the typical sentimental lines, leaning heavily on the physical relationship.

YAVAKRI –Ten years ago I swore to you that I would not look at another woman. I kept my word…. Vishakha, after ten years in solitude, I am hungry for words” (PP.12-13).

“Startled, Vishakha looks at him for the first time”. She reads another meaning in Yavakri’s use of the word, hunger. All that Yavakri remembers of his affair with Vishakha are some moments of physical relationship. He desperately desires her physical company, “The smell of your body. Ten years later I opened my eyes and I knew I was hungry for that moment.”(P.14). Diametrically opposite to Paravasu’s wife in the myth, the bewildered, frightened, ashamed lady of the hermitage, Vishakha in Karnad’s play cashes the moment to openly talk about if not exhibit her loneliness and sexual starvation in the austere setup of the ascetic’s family. She speaks a matching body language to Yavakri’s, “I live in this hermitage parched and wordless, like a she-devil”(P.15). She speaks of her union with her husband, “the question of happiness receded to the background. He used my body, and his own body, … (as) instruments in a search. Search for what? I never knew. …. Nothing was too shameful, too degrading, even too painful. Shame died in me’ (P.16). In contrast to the tribal maid Nittilai, Vishakha disregards her familial and social obligations, ignores her own socio-cultural grooming that defines husband-wife, man-woman relationship in a larger framework than the barely physical, “Alone, I have become dry like tinder. Ready to burst into flames at a breath. To burn things around me down at the slightest chance.” (P. 16). Karnad’s Vishakha is not seduced by Yavakri, but finds in Yavakri a medium to meet her own sexual hunger, “I’ll give you the knowledge Indra couldn’t give you. My body –it’s light with speech now”(P.17). Vishakha and Yavakari kindle the fire of desire that burns and destroys. The play sharply deviates from the mythical perspective. In the myth the event is narrated with a highly critical sting at Yavakrida’s loss of self-control (“He …became a ravening beast with lust”) and his ruthless violation of the familial and social codes in seducing the innocent wife of another, “taking brutal advantage of her fear and shame and bewilderment.”

Fire All Around

The fire of unleashed passions that Yavakri and Vishakha light up spreads all round. Unlike the mythical sage Raibhya who took Yavakrida to task in a refined way, the sage in Karnad’s play, goes wild in anger and revengefulness. He physically assaults Vishakha– that in itself is a reflection on the position of women in the Indian upper class society– invokes a demonic spirit (Brahma Rakshsa) to kill Yavakri, and orders Vishakha herself to inform Yavakri of his move. To Vishakha’s shock and surprise Yavakri confesses that his advances to her had been his mode of revenge on the Raibhya family, “Your father-in –law will die Vishakha. Let’s see what your husband does then” (P.23). In her turn of revenge on Yavakri for the insult to her love and womanhood that his confession incurs, Vishakha herself steals Yavakri’s sacred *kamandalu*, “slowly, calmly… starts pouring the water out”. She knows the water would have incapacitated Yavakri’s assassin, Brahma Rakshsa. Karnad’s play weaves it’s own tale over the myth.

The real fiery demon in the play is the blind craze for revenge that claims almost every character for its victim. The unsanctioned, uncontrolled love of Yavakri and Vishakha fails to erect any defense mechanism to be saved from it. The act ends with Yavakri speared dead by the Rakshasa, his body lying in the arms of the blind keeper

of his father's hermitage. Andhaka laments that he could not recognize the sage's son. Did Yavakri himself behave like a son to a sage? The question is not taken up in the scene, the entire dramatic focus being on the low caste keeper having sincere feelings for his upper caste master's son.

Act Two

The turn of events increasingly lean towards a lurid drama of sensations with the characters given to the free play of their raging passions, if not perverted psychology. Unable to meet the tribal elders on time Arvasu tries desperately to explain the reasons. Nittilai's angry, humiliated brothers, none too friendly with the Brahmin youth, drive him out of the tribal locale. The injured caste and class feelings erupt in the tribal verdict that Nittilai is to marry within the tribe. At the dead of night Paravasu, the chief priest at the royal fire sacrifice, sneaks in home violating the rules of the rite. Horrified Raibhya reacts sharply. He has a suspicion that the scandal regarding Vishakha might have reached his son.

Raibhya : " You? Here? You have broken the rules! You are deliberately defying the gods!"
Paravasu : "I felt like coming home."
Raibhya : "Felt? And just walked out? With the ritual bracelet on? .... Or have they thrown you out? Your wife's reputation must have reached there by now" (P.28)

The father has an innate jealousy that instead of himself his son has been given the role of the chief priest. Karnade's twist to the original tale presents one more negative image of the Indian familial relationship.

Vishakha sticks to her guns in her encounter with Paravasu over the scandal involving Yavakri and herself, "Whatever you heard about Yavakri and me … was no rumour" (P.31). She levels her charges at both the men she came close with for treating her as a mere object in love relationship, " Yavakri and you. How much you resemble each other. You both go away when you feel like it. Come back without explanation" (P.31). She insists on viewing man-woman love as an exclusively physical affair set in the dominator-dominated framework. Her stake is to be the more dominating partner, which involves her psychological dominance over the men. The radical feminist language that Vishakha uses is more contemporary Western than ancient Indian. It not only far distances her from the mythical character, but also uproots her from the socio-cultural milieu she springs from. If Vishakha aspires to have power in one mode, Paravasu does in another. Sharply critical of Yavakri's endeavor to attain supra-human power through penance ("Torture oneself… Extend the begging bowl: Give us rains. Cattle. Sons. Wealth…. As though one defined human beings by their begging— I despise it" P.31), Paravasu talks big of his own motive behind performing the rite of fire sacrifice, "I went because the fire sacrifice is a formal rite…. It involves no emotional acrobatics from the participants. The process itself will bring Indra to me…. When the moment comes I shall confront Indra in silence. As an equal"(PP.31-32). To be an equal to God had been the aspiration of Marlowe's Faustus too. Paravasu's gross misreading of the Indian concept of penance and rite brands him a young man of the contemporary times totally unfamiliar with the Indian value system and cultural tradition. Penance/rite in whichever form is a process of self-disciplining. One needs to transcend one's egocentricity to attain knowledge/power/immortality.

The Fiery Revenge

Vishakha has her shrewd ways of taking revenge. She draws a negative image of sage Raibhya to Paravasu, highlighting him as a jealous father and a lusty father-in-law, "Something died inside your father the day the King invited you to be the chief priest…. On the one hand there's his sense of being humiliated by you. On the other, there's lust. It consumes him…. At least Yavakri was warm, … he made me forget the wizened body, the scratchy claws" (P.33). The lurid inside story, Karnad's own addition to the ancient tale, makes his Yavakri deliberately commit patricide. While the old sage collapses without a sound, Viashakha has her last laugh, "Now you will never know if I told you a lie" (P.33).

Paravasu imposes the familial duty of performing the expiatory and penitence rites on innocent Arvasu. Totally reluctant to accept the responsibility, Arvasu nevertheless abides by the prerogative, scared to defy the codes of familial hierarchy. "Say 'No', Arvasu…. Refuse. He killed his father. Let him atone for it. Don't get involved in it," (P.35) protests revengeful Vishakha. The arrogant command of the elder brother and the weak surrender of the younger project the Indian familial hierarchy as a brutal exploitative system that ruins individual life. The negative site of the familial relationships and obligations sharply contradicts the mythical perspective. The myth says, "the virtuous" Aravasu responded to his elder brother's request, and took upon himself the expiatory rites as a noble gesture to free the brother "from the terrible tint of having killed a father.".

The funeral rites of sage Raibhya completed, Arvasu joins the priests at the royal fire sacrifice. Paravasu turns pale at his presence, "words fail him." The naïve Arvasu openly speaks of patricide. Paravasu quickly takes opportunity of the public statement, victimizes the innocent brother by casting the crime/sin squarely on him, "Patricide – patricide! What is he doing in these sanctified precincts? Throw him out –out! Out! Demon!" (P.38). As the Brahmins drag Arvasu out, the baffled youth shouts, "Why? Why? Tell me why –please". The scene heavily leans on melodrama. Instead of highlighting the significant statement in the myth, "The sin of Paravasu was not washed off, since expiation cannot be by proxy", Karnad's play focuses on the theatricality of the entire episode. The act ends.

Act Three

In the myth, accused of patricide, virtuous Aravasu retreated to the forest in despair, took to rigorous austerities. Eventually, "high thinking and deep mediation cleansed his heart of all anger at his brother's conduct". In Karnad's drama driven out of the sacrificial arena, Arvasu runs high fever, is in delirium, and is chance rescued by a poor actor family. He is set on taking revenge not only on his brother, but on the entire family. "I want to make them all pay. Yavakri, Father, Paravasu. It's a conspiracy –because I wanted to marry you. Because I was ready to reject my caste, my birth. Can't you see it? I wanted to strike out on my own," he tells Nittilai, who had run away from her husband, her family, "from everything", reached Arvasu , and has been nursing him for three days, both physically and psychologically. The mythical tale is shifted to a domestic front, and to a social milieu torn with class and caste prejudice and conflicts. Karnad's play spotlights the gruesome impact of the Indian social hierarchy on the individual life, an issue given much publicity in the West regarding Indian society and culture.

The more the fire of revenge consumes Arvasu, the progeny of an ascetic Bhahmin family, the more Nittilai, the young woman from a hunting tribe, turns peace loving and compassionate. Nittilai is presented in the act as a noble savage, with all the virtues showered on her. An angelic outsider, she takes care of Arvasu's hosts, the half starved members of the actor family. "We've become dependent on her. For food. For nursing. For laughter"(P.45) says the Actor-Manager. An angelic presence to Arvasu, she sooths his worry over her unexpected decision to join him.

ARVASU : Woman, have you no brains? You only think of others! I know your people. Hunters. Once they decide on vengeance… We must leave immediately. NITTILAI : Arvasu, when I say we should go together –I don't mean we have to live together—like lovers or like husband and wife. I have been vicious enough to my husband. I don't want to disgrace him further. Let's be together—like brother and sister." (P.42).

Nittilai's words sharply contrast those of Vishakha at her intimate moments with Yavakri. The reflection is not so much on the individual nature of the two women, as on the social and cultural hierarchy they represent. Nittilai's idealistic stance hoists her as an incarnation of the traditional Indian womanhood. However, the stance is unexpected and unconvincing in the dramatic context. It soon collapses into sentimental outpourings, "You marry any girl you like. Only please Arvasu – spare a corner for me" (P. 42). Arvasu too speaks the set dialogue of a sentimental drama, "I won't marry. Ever. It's enough that you are there with me."

Love and Revenge

Arvasu's sole intent is revenge on Paravasu, the only person alive who has spoilt his life. He insists that unless the rite of fire sacrifice is purged of Paravasu's presence, the rains, the symbol of life, vitality, prosperity would never come down on the land, " If such an evil man continues as the chief priest of the sacrifice, it will rain blood in the end" (P.43). His revenge would be his symbolic oblation to the fire so that the purity of the rite is restored. The fire of revenge flares up at another end. Nittilai chance detects her brother and her husband close by in the forest, sitting by a fire, "silent and immobile." The stage direction is significant, "Nittilai enters, sees them, freezes and flees in panic. They haven't seen her. Long Pause"(P.45). Familiar with the tribal ways, she knows the two would kill her. Death knocking at her doors, she runs to Arvasu, "they're here—together! And they sat there by the fire – still. Alert. Listening. We never talk when we are in a hunt. We only listen. And my husband wasn't smiling He looked – so sad. That scares me, Arvasu. I'm still young. I don't want to die" (P.49). Arvasu fails to provide the self-sacrificing hapless woman any shelter, physically or psychologically. The dialogue between the two projects Arvasu as a miserable misfit in the role of a lover/hero in a sentimental play. A typical offspring of Raibhya family, the status conscious egocentric upper class youth is all concerned with his reputation. At the real crisis situation Nittilai does not exist for him.

ARVASU : And if you have to go you must. But what am I to do?

NITTILAI : (Angry) Why do you keep asking me? Why don't you decide? Don't push everything on my shoulders –
ARVASU (Quietly) I only meant –staying here in the city won't be easy – being spat upon, sneered at—(P.49).

Rite, Reality and Theater

The Actor-Manager offers Arvasu a role in the play, *The Triumph of Lord Indra,* he intends to stage at the royal sacrificial arena. The audience is taken back to the point the Prologue began. Arvasu finds this a convenient way to reach the arena he has been thrown out of, and needs an entry to execute his plan of revenge. Nittilai has a sharp comment on Arvasu's attraction to showmanship, "Then Arvasu will want to play the demon. … He loves all that ghoulish make- up, the roaring and thumping, the acrobatics" (P.50). The observation, in the context, indicates the youth's weak personality. Karnad's Arvasu is out and out an opposite of the mythical character. At a more serious point of discussion with Arvasu regarding his revenge on Paravasu, Nittilai speaks the ideal of nonviolence, totally unexpected of a woman from a violent tribe.

NITTILAI : Face your brother as you wanted to.
(He looks at her in surprise.)
Not in hate, Arvasu. In the play. Show him how good you are. I'm sure the play will wash off the fear – the anger—
(He nods)

The theme of purgation of the untamed passions, the thrust area of the myth, has not been worked out in Karnad's play. The rain of goodness and compassion cool down the fiery situation caused by anger and hatred if the persons involved have the will and effort to discipline their mind in that way. Expectedly, Arvasu ignores Nittilai's suggestion.

The Two Trapped Individuals

The situation turns increasingly deadly for both Arvasu and Nittilai. Inwardly shaky over the violence in the offing at the sacrificial arena, Arvasu requests Nittilai if she could watch the performance. Nittilai senses danger in her own way, "Its too dangerous …Come here after the play is over…. We'll meet at this point – and fade away" (P.51). Does she hint at the terrible fate awaiting her? Or does she dream of an escape route as any trapped individual does? Her thoughts veer round death. She reads a value in it. She speaks of the myth of Vritra, but it is more of a musing on her own end, "I like Vritra because even when he is triumphant he chooses death. I always wonder if the flowers didn't know they were to fade and die, would they have ever blossomed?" (PP.51- 52). She smiles and takes leave, wishing Arvasu's dance would bring down rains. The act ends.

The Epilogue

The epilogue is a play within a play. The play the Actor-Manager presents in the sacrificial arena is based on the myth of the killing of *Vritrasura*. As in the main plot, here too Karnad projects the myth frequently bifurcating the story line, and shifting the focus from the core values the mythical tale centers on.

Unit 13: Themes

The Myth

Indra and *Prajapati Tvasta* were enemies. *Tvasta* begot a son named *Visvarupa* for the purpose of Killing *Indra.* Since *Visvarupa's* mother was an *Asura,* he loved mingling with the *Asuras. Indra* considered the behaviour of *Visvarupa* as wickedness. He cut off *Visvarupa's* head. The sin of killing a Brahmin (*Brahmahatya*) visited him. When *Tvasta* heard that his righteous son was killed by *Indra* unreasonably, he made burnt offerings in anger with incantations, for eight days. On the eighth day an extremely bright male person (*Vritrasura*) arose from the fire pit, who declared that he had the power to drink up the ocean dry, or to smash the mountains, or prevent the sun or the moon from moving. *Tvsta* ordered him to kill *Indra*.

Hearing about the prowess, strength, and the martial radiance of *Vritrasura, Indra* grew afraid of him, and sent him a proposal that he would give him half his position. *Vritra* agreed, was taken to the palace of *Indra.* The celestial maiden *Rambha* engaged him in amorous play, and made him drunk till he got unconscious. *Indra* took the opportunity, sent his thunderbolt. It took away Vritra's life. Instantly *Indra* became affected with the sin of

Brahmahatya. (*Padma Purana: Brahmahatya.* Ch. 23-4). (Ref. *Puranic Encyclopaedia*. Ed Vettam Mani. Motilal Banarasidas. 1964-75)

The Myth in Karnad's Play Within a Play

In Karnad's Epilogue the Vritra myth is presented as a spectacle of violence, each mythical character and each mythical event as a mask to bring to the fore the real drama that happened between the two brothers, Paravasu and Arvasu in the sacrificial arena without the knowledge of the others present around.

Arvasu puts on the mask of *Vritra*, gives a wild roar, and dances violently. The audience responds with enthusiasm. The play is on. The Actor-Manager playing the role of *Indra* speaks of conducting a fire sacrifice in memory of Brahma, the Father of all Creation, and welcomes *Visvarupa* to the rite, but not *Vritra* accompanying him, because he is a demon, *Rakshasa.* That can be read as the dramatist's dig at the caste hierarchy even at the celestial level. While *Visvarupa* mimes pouring oblations to the fire, *Indra* moves behind and plunges his thunderbolt into *Visvarupa's* back. The very gesture of stabbing makes Paravasu watching the drama jump to his feet. "No. No. Wrong! That's wrong!" he cries out, and finds Brahama Rakshasa, his own father's creation to kill Yavakri, standing next to him. The two myths merge. Paravasu has a dialogue with Brahama Rakshasa, or is it a dialogue with his own conscience? The others on the stage freeze. Paravasu apparently corrects what he considers to be a misreading of the myth, but actually he recapitulates his own panicky situation when he had committed patricide and after it: " *Indra* didn't mean to kill him…. He saw a face by the altar. Whose face was it? The face of my dead father? Or of my brother who is simpleton, yet knows everything? Or was it my own face? Cold fear tore through him…. There was no choice now but to go on, to strike" (P.56). The drama within the mind of the character that the words indicate is largely avoided throughout Karnad's play. In the Epilogue too the instant actions and reactions of the characters are made use of to enhance the theatricality of the spectacle.

As Brahama Rakshasa disappears, the stage "frozen till then leaps to life." *Visvarupa,* in keeping with the myth, dies, his last words vibrating across the arena, "Brother, why this treachery?" Arvasu acting as *Vritra,* mimes entering the enclosure. He repeats *Visvarupa's* words. The words are his own as well, his charges at Paravasu he could never utter in person, "Why, Brother? Why, why, why? …. And why are the vultures, sparrows, kites and eagles reeling in such frenzy over the sacrificial sanctum? …. Another treachery! Another filthy death! How long will this go on? How long will these rats crawl round my feet vomiting blood? I must put an end to this conspiracy—Wait Indra" (P.56). The lurid drama of sensations reaches the climax. The *Vritra* myth is completely left aside. So is the myth of Paravasu and Arvavasu.

Karnad's Arvasu moves in and out of his mask. The borderline of theatrical reality and the lived reality gets blurred. The person and the persona merge in him. *Vritra* attacks *Indra* with a ferocity that takes the Actor-Manager playing the role by surprise. They fight. *Vritra's* violence shakes *Indra*. He runs, *Vritra* chasing him. The theatrical sequence takes a bloody turn as Paravasu pounces on a guard, grabs his torch and rushes toward the real sacrificial enclosure crying out, "I'll burn down the sacrifice" (P.57). There is commotion all round. "It's the mask—it's the mask come alive. Restrain him – or there'll be chaos," shouts the Actor-Manager. "Stop him," orders the king. The pavilion catches fire.

The Fire Takes Its Toll

The fire spreads all round in every sense of the term. Suddenly the "weak and hungry" villagers watching the drama rush into the burning pavilion, start eating and drinking the food kept for the gods out-daring the codes of the sacred rite. There is a stampede. The two contrasting images, the hungry dash of the villagers and the royal luxury of offering food to the gods, exhibit a fiery social situation behind the status quo. It is, however, debatable if the stray hint at the socioeconomic imbalance, totally uncalled for in the context, enhances or disturbs the momentum of the play.

The fire takes it's own toll. Paravasu, who had-been closely watching the chaos, commits suicide. "He gets up and without a word calmly walks into the blazing enclosure" (P.57). Nittilai rushes into the burning structure, brings Arvasu out, as the dry bamboo and wood burst into flames. She tears off Arvasu's mask in a desperate attempt to bring him back to reality, and back to his sense. Nittilai's brother and husband spot her. The husband pulls out a knife slashes her throat in one swift motion. The two tribal men leave. Nittilai bleeding profusely lies in Arvasu's arms, her eyes open, "dying like a sacrificial animal"(P.58). The onrush of the violent events, and the deaths make a chaotic blend of rite, reality, and theatre. The lurid melodrama reaches its climax. The climax is also the collapse.

Arvasu is shaken to his bones. Nonetheless, he speaks the typical language of a sentimental play, more theatrical than soul searching, "No one'll weep for you, Nittilai. Not even me. I'll sing no lullaby of hate for you. But I'll come with you. Where nothing matters, not your goodness, nor my stupidity, nor this world's evil. Where the fire will have reduced everything to ashes" (P.58). The fire of uncontrolled passions have indeed burnt to ashes the lives of two generations in the play, only if the individuals concerned have been aware of it.

The Miracles

The last phase of the Epilogue is given to miracles. In a spectacular theatrical move, Arvasu carries the body of Nittilai to the sacrificial pavilion still ablaze. As he stands inside the burning structure "the fire slowly dies out". It is a miraculous turn out. Interpreted symbolically, the fire of destruction is extinguished in the presence of love, no matter if the two noble lovers are a simpleton and a savage. The theatricality of the spectacle in itself is a comment on the situation.

While Arvasu mourns all alone with Nittilai's body in his arms, another miraculous transformation is evident all round. A melodious music is heard. The sunlight becomes soft and gentle. The entire atmosphere gets an ethereal hue (ref. Stage direction P.59). Indra appears in person to Arvasu. Totally unprepared to meet a deity, or to listen to heavenly words, the baffled youth virtually challenges the intervention of the deus ex machina, "Indra? But what do I have to do with Indra? I didn't seek Indra or any other god. …. I seek only death. Why are you here?"(P. 59). Karnad's drama sharply differs from the myth at this point.

However questioning Arvasu is, he knows or rather his creator does, that in the Indian context the presence of gods in the human affairs hardly needs any evocation. India, the land of superstitions, sees more reality in the miracles than in the actual matters. The god offers Arvasu a boon of his choice. To the mythical Arvavsu, who did hard penance to attain the heavenly boon, the choice had been a well thought of decision. Karnad's Arvasu instinctively wishes Nittilai is made alive, "I killed her, I want her back" (P.59). Indra refuses to roll back the Wheel of Time. The crowd press Arvasu to ask for the rains. The Brahama Rakshasa, sage Raibhya's creation, appeals to Arvasu to intercede with Indra for his release from the time bound existence the sage has imprisoned him in. Nittilai will not be happy, he says, if she knows that "Because of her a soul writhes in pain" (P.61). The sentimental pressure tactics works. Arvasu seeks the demon's release, a wise decision of a simpleton, who never went the way of attaining wisdom. Indra grants him the boon. The release of the demon rolls forward the wheel of time.

The stage direction reads, "The Brahma Rakshasa cries out in triumph…. The crowd of souls gives a long, mournful sigh of disappointment and begins to withdraw. Nittilai's soul too goes away with them" (P.61). The realistic drama is shifted to the supra-realistic plain with disappointment and agony over-clouding the scene. Karnad's play drifts far away from the myth, where Arvasu prays to the god for the revival of a healthy normal life for all the characters involved in the tragic events, including Paravasu.

The Rains

Indra disappears. Arvasu sits down holding Nittilai's corpse. "The Brahama Rakshsa looks around baffled, scared. The world seems to stand still" (P.62). Then the last miracle happens. The wind blows. Lightening. Thunder. People shout 'Rain! It's raining!' It pours. Does Arvasu's choice of the boon bring down the long awaited rains, or Nittilai's self-sacrifice, or does Indra, the Lord of rains, shower his grace without being asked for? At any rate, the fiery ending of the incomplete sacrificial rite is totally unrelated to the unexpected shower at the end of the play. If the rains stand for re-vitalization, new life, peace, prosperity, wholeness, happiness, the events in the play and the experiences the characters have gone through, have hardly prepared them to have the rains in their life.

The Reality

The drama does not end in celebrations. It rather presents a paradoxical site. People dance with joy. They roll in mud. Arvasu sits alone clutching Nittilai's body, forgotten by the others. His last pathetic words ring in the air, "It's raining, Nittilai! It's raining!" The rains pour, but one is not sure if the shower will wash off the fiery passions in the human mind, jealousy, lust, anger, hatred, malice and, revenge that burnt down the individual lives, played havoc with the familial and social equilibrium, peace and wholeness in the drought perched land.

Suggested Readings

1. *The Fire and the Rain.* Girish Karnad. Oxford University Press. 1998.

2. *Girish Karnad's Plays: Performance and Critical Perspectives*. Ed. Tutun Mukherjee. Pencraft International. 2006.
3. *Three Plays of Girish Karnad: A Study in Poetics and Culture*. Vanashree Tripathi. Prestige Books. 2004.
4. *The Plays of Girish Karnad: Critical Perspectives*. J. Dodiya. Prestige Books.
5. *Perspectives and Challenges in Indian English Drama.* Ed. Neeru Tandon. New Delhi: Atlantic. 2006.
6. *Critical Essays on Indian English Literature.* O. P. Budholia. Jaypur: Book Enclave. 2003.

Assignments

1. *The Fire and the Rain* presents a chaotic combination of rite, reality, and theatre. Discuss.
2. Examine Karnad's use of the Indian myths in *The Fire and the Rain*. / *The Fire and the Rain* is more contemporary than mythical. Elucidate.
3. Karnad demythologizes the myths to make a lurid drama of sensations. Analyze the play in view of the observation.
4. Consider *The Fire and the Rain* as a revenge tragedy.
5. Make a comparative study of the roles played by Vishakha and Nittilai in *The Fire and the Rain*. Of the two women who attracts you more, and why?
6. Would you accept that Karnad's play is too fiery to bring down the rains? Justify your standpoint. / Consider whether *The Fire and the Rain* is a justified title of the play.

Questions for short answers:

1. Comment on Karnad's nontraditional use of Fire Sacrifice (Yajna) as a rite.
2. Which boon does Yavakri seek from Indra? What impression of the character do you have from his choice?
3. Who pours out the water from Yavakri's sacred jug, and why?
4. Why does Arvasu accept the responsibility of performing the rites of penitence for his father?
5. Why does Arvasu join the theatre group? How does Nittilai react to this move?
6. Write a note on the last image in the play, Arvasu sitting alone with Nittilai's body, and the crowd rejoicing over the pouring rains.

Block V: *Final Solutions* by Mahesh Dattani

Unit 14(a): Introduction to Mahesh Dattani's Dramatic Practice
Unit 14(b): Summary of the Plot
Unit 15(a): Title of the Play
Unit 15(b): Patriarchy
Unit 15(c): Music
Unit 15(d): Religion
Unit 16(a): Analysis of Major Characters
Unit 16(b): The Stage Set

Objective:

The objective of this module is to introduce you to one of the most important and prolific playwrights in India today writing in English. Mahesh Dattani has only been writing plays since the late 1980's but has already won the Sahitya Akademi Award for one of his plays (the play we will be discussing in this module) and has established himself as a playwright whose plays are not only the most frequently performed on the Indian English stage but also taught as texts in universities and drama departments across the world. In this module we shall try to see what makes Mahesh Dattani a unique playwright and discuss the salient features of his work with special reference to how these features are visible in the play being studied here.

Unit 14(a): Introduction to Mahesh Dattani's Dramatic Practice

Mahesh Dattani's plays are set in contemporary post-colonial India; a society caught in a double bind of striving towards economic progress and unwilling to relinquish socio-cultural mores that are remnants of the colonial era. Dattani's plays show how patriarchal structures built to concentrate power in certain sections of society and keep the rest disempowered, continue the colonial project of socio-cultural and even economic domination inaugurated by India's colonial masters. If all his plays are taken into consideration as a whole, then the one unifying theme that may emerge is that communalism, misogyny and homophobia are all cut from the same heavy patriarchal cloth which is thrown over individuals to stifle their contra-patriarchal wishes, desires and other manifestations of identity. In Dattani's plays any kind of non-conformity is valorized but also often shown to be defeated by the onslaught of the many patriarchal strategies of containment. In the forthcoming sections we shall see how Dattani repeatedly exposes the deleterious project of patriarchy and highlights its attempts at suppressing any possibility of a contra-patriarchal challenge. Very often these struggles against patriarchal strategies of containment are played within the confines of the Indian middle-class household, thereby exposing the deeply tenacious vestiges of colonialism in contemporary India even today. In trying to see how Dattani accomplishes his task we shall concentrate on his play *Final Solutions* and see it in context of the plays he wrote before it and the plays that he went on to write after it.

Introduction to the Playwright

Mahesh Dattani was born in Bangalore on 7 August 1958. His parents moved to Bangalore from Mumbai, although they are originally from Gujarat. He went to the local English-medium school. Later on he did his graduation in History, Economics and Political Science and postgraduation in Marketing and Advertising Management. Before becoming a full-time playwright he worked in an advertising agency, the experience of which informs his play *Bravely Fought the Queen*.

While growing up Dattani took lessons in Bharatnatyam. His learning dance would help him in the future when as a dramatist and an actor he would be able to better manage the space on stage during a play. His interest in theatre can be traced back to the time when, soon after finishing school, he watched performances of Gujarati and Kannada plays. It was then that he identified his calling: theatre. Although he helped out in his father's business for sometime, much like Molière did in 17th century France, Dattani soon set up his own theatre group and workshop called Playpen. Playpen was formed in 1984 and its repertoire consisted mostly of Greek tragedies and some modern classics. These productions were directed by Dattani and he frequently acted in them too.

As I have said before, Dattani's plays may be seen as a sustained assault on Indian patriarchy. The first shot was fired in his debut play *Where There's a Will*. This play from 1988 centers around a family which has to deal with the distasteful situation of the dead patriarch's mistress acting as the executor of his will. By empowering a mistress and giving her sole agency in the play Dattani can be seen to have started his project of centering the marginalized. The mistress is shown to wield power not only over the dead businessman's wife but also over his children. In a line that inverts the patriarchal and therefore gendered power structure in Indian society, the mistress says at one point in the play, "He saw in me a woman who would father him." Not only is a mistress therefore therefore being assigned relational, familial seniority but she is also being assigned the empowered gender of masculinity.

In Dattani's next play *Dance Like a Man* (1989) Jayraj is shown to be facing formidable opposition from his politician father when the former decides to take up classical dancing as a career. Dancing, constructed as effeminate, is considered entirely unsuitable as a career for any man and therefore incurs the wrath of Jayraj's father. In this play, for the first time, minority sexuality makes a discreet appearance in the play. Jayraj's father hints at the male Bharatnatyam dance instructor's homosexuality when he comments disparagingly on the latter's length of hair and style of walking. Effeminacy is the performance of the feminine which is socio-culturally constructed as the inferior gender. That the female is marked by socio-cultural inferiority feeds Dattani's next play, *Tara* (1990) where a pair of conjoined twins is separated in such a way, with the active support of the parents, that the male is assigned greater abilities to survive and live healthily. The female half of the twins gradually withers away and dies.

His play *Final Solutions* was produced in 1993. We shall study this play in detail later in this module. The communal tensions that constantly simmer in India just beneath the surface supply the theme not only of this play but also of the play *The Swami and Winston* (2000). Communalism also informs *Clearing the Rubble* (2002) which is set in the aftermath of the earthquake in Bhuj.

That the male can also feel disempowered in a patriarchal system is shown in Dattani's next play, *Bravely Fought the Queen* (1991). As in all of his plays, this one is also set in an Indian middle class family where two brothers are trying to run an advertising agency. Given that Dattani himself worked as a copywriter at an advertising agency for a while must have decided the brothers' business. The two brothers Nitin and Jatin seem happily married on the surface, but nothing is as it seems. Jatin's wife is seemingly involved in a sexual relationship with the servant of the house whereas Nitin indulges his homosexuality either in the office when Jatin is not present or at home in the absence of his wife Alka. This is the first time, in a Dattani play that a character speaks aloud about his homosexuality. We first hear it when Nitin narrates an accident in which Jatin was once involved. Jatin had once knocked over an autorickshaw driver because the former was drunk and had lost control of his car. Remembering the incident Nitin enjoys his description of the autorickshaw driver. The man is described as "violent-looking" and with a "strong black arm". The play ends with Nitin ruing his decision to marry Alka. He says he had done so only because he was assured by Alka's brother Praful that she was aware of the homosexual relationship that Nitin and Praful were then involved in with each other. Praful had assured Nitin that Alka would not mind even if the relationship continued after she married Nitin. As we gather, this was not the case. Alka was not aware of Nitin's homosexuality at all.

In Dattani's plays heterosexual marriage very often is shown to be a necessary mask that Indian homosexual men have to put on to be accepted in society. We see this mask being adopted by yet another homosexual man in Dattani's next play, *Do the Needful* (1997). In this play a marriage is being arranged between Alpesh and Lata. As the play unfolds we realize that neither of them is particularly keen on the marriage because Lata is secretly in a relationship with a Muslim man and Alpesh is in a relationship with a man named Trilok. Alpesh and his parents come to visit Lata and hers. Once alone together, Lata tells Alpesh about Salim, her lover, but Alpesh does not tell her about his. She discovers Alpesh's sexuality, however, when she happens to pass the family cowshed as she is about to run away to Salim. Hearing noises she goes into the cowshed to find Alpesh having sexual intercourse with the young man who is their family gardener! Although at first horrified Lata decides that, all things considered, it is perhaps best to marry Alpesh. This will ensure that she can keep seeing Salim, Alpesh can keep seeing Trilok and yet to the society they can appear as a happily married couple.

On a Muggy Night in Mumbai (1998) may be seen as Dattani's most overtly homophiliac play (subsequently made into the film *Mango Soufflé* in 2002). Of the eight characters in the play five are homosexual men and one is a lesbian. At the centre of the play is the attempt of Kamlesh to hide from his sister the fact that she is about

to marry someone with whom he was once in a long-term homosexual relationship in. The cast of characters also includes a celebrity called Bunny who takes great care to keep his homosexuality a secret. Written along similar line is Dattani's play *Night Queen* (1999) where Raghu and Ash are two young men who pick each other up in a park and come to Raghu's home with the intention of having sex. Ash is unaware of the fact that Raghu has already recognized him as the man to whom Raghu's sister Gayatri is to be affianced the very next day. Continuing his focus on minority sexuality and its disempowered position in contemporary Indian society, in Dattani's next play *Seven Steps Around the Fire* (1999) he deals with the *hijra* (transsexual or eunuch) community. The play also sees the first appearance of the female amateur detective who subsequently appears in other plays as well. In *Seven Steps* she tries to understand the mysterious death of a *hijra*. We realize towards the end of the play that the *hijra* had to be killed because the person was having a relationship with a government minister's son.

Dattani deals with incest and child abuse in *Thirty Days in September* (2001), maternal love occupies a central position in *The Tale of a Mother Feeding Her Child* (2000) and AIDS is focused on in *Ek Alag Mausam* (2005). He has also been involved with a few films such as the film versions of *A Muggy Night in Mumbai* and *Dance Like a Man*, but also *Morning Raga* (2004) in which he contrasts traditional and contemporary, Eastern and Western music.

One of the most distinctive features of Dattani's plays is his use of the split-stage technique. He often divides the stage into two sections, either vertically or horizontally. So the stage is divided either into two halves or into two levels. His dialogue is written in such a way that two actions or situations are taking place simultaneously in two parts of the stage and yet the dialogue is written in such a way that there is constant intercutting between the two actions. This makes for a tighter narrative, with the option of representing two events at the same time, which may or may not be happening in real time simultaneously. One event or action can very well be a visual representation of an incident being remembered by one of the characters in the other part of the stage. This technique also makes for a richer visual effect and may be seeing as a prime example of Dattani's narrative time and space management involving methods such as flashback and telescoping. This technique can also be read as Dattani's way of dramatizing and visually representing the fact that in India, as indeed in any society the world over, there always co-exist multiple realities, side by side and at any given time only one reality is visible because the spotlight falls on it, just as the spotlight falls on any one section of the stage at any given time, but that the other reality although not visible is still very much present in the dark ready to jump into the spotlight and thereby challenge the usually visible patriarchal half of the story.

Unit 14(b): Summary of the Plot

In this play Dattani presents one particular character as two different persons on the stage, although they are the same person. This character is Daksha. Daksha is presented as a young woman when she appears as Daksha, but as an old woman when she appears as Hardika. Similarly, the Mob/ Chorus, which consists of five persons on the stage, are alternately a Hindu mob and a Muslim mob. The Mob changes its religious identity simply by holding a Hindu mask or a Muslim mask in front of their face. It is important to keep these two things in mind in order to understand the play.

Act I : The play opens with Daksha writing in her diary on 31 March 1948. Daksha starts to write about her personal pain of being forbidden to sing film songs in the house because her inlaws do not like it, but she changes her mind and records instead the national trauma of communal riots which broke out with Indian Independence when she was still unmarried and living with her parents. But she ties this national loss of inter-communal amity with the loss of her Shamshad Begum, Noor Jahan and Suraiya records when a stone from an angry mob outside her parental home lands on the gramophone table, breaking it and thus breaking all her favourite records. Daksha rises up, walks away and stands with her back to Hardika – an old woman – who now comes to the front. We realize that Daksha is simply the younger version of Hardika. Her name was changed to Hardika to match that of her husband Hari. The drumbeats and shouts of mobs that we hear in the background during Daksha's soliloquy (which we understand to be the mob of 1947) continue but now transformed (through wearing Hindu masks) into an angry mob of 1997. We realize that the mob is shouting in protest against the knifing of a Hindu priest – supposedly by a Muslim – during Rath Yatra.

We are now introduced to Hardika's son Ramnik and grand-daughter Smita. Smita is worried because her friend Tasneem is in the Muslim girls' hostel which has been bombed and wants her parents to go and fetch her. We now see the same mob but wearing Muslim masks protesting against Hindu accusations that the Muslims broke the chariot. Hardika's daughter-in-law Aruna makes her appearance, before the scene returns to Daksha writing in her diary. She speaks with mischievous irreverence about the family she has married into before concentrating on her new friend Zarine. She mentions hearing Noor Jahan records being played at Zarine's house.

There is a brief section of the Hindu chorus shouting which leads us to the appearance of two young men – Bobby and Javed – on the stage. They are not from the locality and are recognized as such. The Hindu mob catches hold of them and are about to beat them, possibly to death, when the two men bang on the door of the Gandhi house, pleading for shelter. Bobby (or Babban) and Javed are let in. Ramnik refuses to give in to the pressure from the mob outside to turn the two men out. Although Aruna is appalled by Ramnik's sympathetic attitude to the young men she grudgingly behaves like a hostess and even brings them glasses of water.

Act II: Smita reveals to her parents and her grandmother that she knows that two young men from college because Javed is Tasneem's brother and Bobby is affianced to Tasneem. In the course of the conversation that follows between the two young men and Ramnik we learn the details of what happened during the ill-fated Rath Yatra, we learn that Ramnik has a saree shop in the city. Javed is also offered a job by Ramnik at his shop. The Act ends with Smita revealing the truth about Javed. She had learnt from Tasneem that Javed is a hired rioter. He is among many such young men who are hired by politicians to start a riot. Bobby reveals that he was trying to reform Javed.

Act III: Although ACT III begins with the Muslim chorus it has a short dialogue between Bobby and Javed before we are returned to Daksha's diary. She now writes about her growing friendship with Zarine. Not only does she express her happiness at being able to hear her favourite artiste Noor Jahan's songs again but she also wants her father-in-law to employ Zarine's father because the latter's shop of dry fruits and sweets has recently been burnt down by a mysterious fire. The scene shifts back to the present with Ramnik still in shock from the knowledge that Javed is a hired trouble-maker. Bobby reveals that Javed takes part in riots without taking any money. He volunteers. Bobby explains this by narrating an incident that happened when he and Javed were young boys. Javed had felt insulted by the way a Hindu neighbour had treated a letter that the former had been asked to deliver by a postman who was in a hurry. Javed had avenged the insult by placing pieces of meat and bones in the Hindu neighbour's backyard. We are given another glimpse into Daksha's diary before we are returned to the present. Javed gives Ramnik a detailed account of what exactly happened during the Rath Yatra riot. He says that the knife that wounded the priest was in his hands, but that he had dropped it at the last moment and that someone else in the crowd had picked it up and stabbed the priest with it.

There is some contention between Aruna and her daughter Smita over the collecting of drinking water. Aruna forbids Javed and Bobby from fetching the water because it would 'contaminate' the water which is used for, among other things, bathing the idol of Krishna, their household deity. However, in the course of the interaction that results a surprising affinity is identified by Javed between himself and Aruna: they are both proud of their religious inheritance whereas they think that Bobby and Smita are not. Another surprising relationship – albeit one in the past – comes to light when Bobby reveals that they did not land up at the Gandhi household accidentally. They wanted to ask Smita if she still had feelings for Bobby. We learn, therefore, that Smita and Bobby were briefly lovers. But while Smita says she has no feelings for Bobby anymore, Bobby admits that he still harbours some love for her. With the adults absent from the stage the three young characters reveal their playfulness but also a natural disregard for religious and communal rules. Bobby fills a bucket with water.

Hardika assigns historical guilt to Bobby and Javed because her father, we now learn, was beaten to death in the streets (just as Bobby and Javed would have been). Past and present become indistinguishable for Hardika when she thinks that Javed's sister's is called Zarine. In a flashback we are shown how Daksha was punished by her in-laws because their maid-servant had informed them that the Gandhi daughter-in-law had partaken of food served in a Muslim house. Daksha is locked into a room.

As Javed and Bobby are about to leave the Gandhi house Aruna rings the bell in the worship room to begin her morning worship. Instead of continuing towards the main door, the two men stop. Bobby, much to Aruna's

horror, enters the shrine room. He gently picks up the Krishna idol. He tells Aruna, "You cannot remove my smell with sandal paste… because it belongs to a human being who believes, and tolerates, and respects what other human beings believe. That is the strongest fragrance in the world." In a significant dramaturgical gesture, Dattani has the two men exit up the ramp and stay with the Chorus/Mob till the end of the play.

The final revelation of the play comes at the end when Ramnik reveals to a shocked and repentant Hardika that Zarine's father's shop was burnt by her husband and father-in-law, under the guise of communal hatred. They burnt the shop because they wanted the shop and they also wanted to nip some competition in the bud because they had heard that Zarine's father was planning to start a mill like that of the Gandhis. The play ends with Hardika wondering if the two young men will ever come back again and Ramnik saying, "If you call them they will come. But then again – if it's too late – they may not." The light goes off last on the two young men standing with the Mob/ Chorus.

Unit 15(a): Title of the Play

Mahesh Dattani's naming of the play is significant. In naming this play Dattani is obviously echoing an historical event which took place a few years before the time in which the play is set. The play opens in 1948. Dattani wants to remind us of January 1942 when Adolf Hitler, the Nazi dictator of Germany decided upon the large-scale extermination of Jews, homosexual men and gypsies. He called his plan *Die Endlösung* (pronounced "Dee End-lo-zoong") which in English means "Final Solution." Hitler thought that by killing as many Jews, homosexual men and gypsies as possible he would be finally solving the problem of ensuring racial purity for the Aryans. In Dattani's play there is also an obsession with cultural, religious purity. Dattani gives us Hitler's phrase in a plural form to show that just as Hitler's final solution was doomed to failure because it was informed by hatred and an obsession with racial superiority, in a similar way attempts at ensuring communal purity in a multi-cultural nation like India is impossible, just as it is undesirable, however many "final solutions" there may be. The title is also ironic because there cannot be more than one finality. There can only be one final solution. By adding a pluralizing 's' to this phrase Dattani is essentially saying that there have been and continue to be *many* 'final solutions', each solution claiming to ensure racial/ communal/cultural purity once and for all, but all have failed as indeed they are bound to. Just as Hitler thought that hatred was more powerful than love, Dattani shows hatred being defeated in his play, with the realization of Hardika that she had misunderstood Zarine and her family all along.

Unit 15(b): Patriarchy

If we consider Mahesh Dattani's plays as a whole we can see it as a sustained attack on patriarchy. All of his plays to a greater or lesser extent, seem to be counter-patriarchal in one way or another. *Final Solutions* in no exception. Patriarchy manifests itself in the play as a prohibitive authority which proscribes gender, culture, and social life. Since patriarchy is a structure which is in place to perpetuate the power of the male and since the field of politics is overwhelmingly male, the politicizing of religion which the play dramatizes can also be seen as a patriarchal strategy to retain power. It is significant that the communal riot – taking place forty or fifty years after Independence – which constitutes the dramatic center of the play is marked by an exclusively male presence. The murdered priest is male, the two young Muslims who are in the riotous crowd are male.

What should also be kept in mind is the women can also be, and very often are, interpellated into patriarchy so that they contribute to the perpetuation of those strategies which ensure the permanence of patriarchy. In the play two such women characters are Aruna and Hardika. It should be kept in mind that Daksha (the younger version of Hardika) is not implicated in the communal politics of patriarchy. She performs her anti-patriarchal resistance by not only listening to singers not of her own community – she is Hindu whereas the singers she listens to are all Muslim – but also by befriending a Muslim girl named Zarine. This anti-patriarchal Daksha dies in Hardika but lives on in Hardika's grand daughter Smita whose friendships with Tasneem and Babban render communal divides irrelevant.

Unit 15(c): Music

Music occupies a very important place in the play in the sense that it becomes a site of identity formation and protest. The choice of Noor Jahan is significant because the songs sung by Noor Jahan operate as a *tabula rasa*

where Daksha can perform her own femininity, a femininity that functions in contravention of the requirements that patriarchy demands of it, namely that it should be performed within the stipulated confines of community, class and economy. That Daksha strives to break through those confines and befriend a Muslim may be read as an act of subversion. It is significant that all the artistes named by Daksha as her favourite are Muslim. The names of Noor Jahan, Suraiya and Shamshad Begum work as indicators of Daksha's defiance, conscious or not. But while Suraiya and Shamshad Begum are mentioned only once in the play, Noor Jahan is an almost continous presence. This is significant for many reasons. Noor Jahan (1926 – 2000) started her career not in films, but in the theatre. In 1930's Calcutta Noor Jahan started her professional life by going on stage. But she did not attain nationwide fame till 1942 when she was cast opposite Pran in *Khandaan*. Then followed *Duhaai* (1943), *Naadaan* (1943), *Dost* (1944), *Lal Haveli* (1944), *Zeenat* (1944), *Dil* (1946), *Anmol Ghadi* (1946), *Jugnu* (1947) and *Mirza Sahiban* (1947), to name the most successful of her films. The signficance of Noor Jahan and Suraiya (1929 – 2004) in this play lies in the fact that they were both actresses and singers. They constituted the imaginary of an Indian womanhood and femininity which is eagerly adopted by Daksha as a template on which to shape her own gender. Because they were performance artistes, Noor Jahan and Suraiya best exemplify Judith Butler's concept of gender being performative. A further significance in the choice of Noor Jahan lies in the fact that not only was she herself a Muslim but she often played roles of Muslim women on screen, so her communal identity was inseperable from her gender identity. Since she was so obviously a Muslim woman her importance in the life of Daksha points to the latter's contempt for an identity construction which is based on carefully made communally-inflected cultural choices. It is interesting that other Hindu singer-actresses like Kanan Devi and Shanta Apte were as well-known as Noor Jahan and Suraiya in the 1940's but Daksha chooses to mould her identity on the imaginary supplied by women visibly not of her own community. Although Shamshad Begum was only a playback singer and never appeared on screen her voice was described, interestingly by O. P. Nayyar, as one which possessed the clarity of a "temple bell." That a Muslim's voice should elicit favourable comparisons with a sound associated with the Hindu place of worship speaks of art as a site where such religious and communal identities become irrelevant. It is this message of humanity being the only identificatory category that has any place in the arts and therefore, by extrapolation and hope, in the society at large, that Dattani seems to be conveying. Had Dattani specified the Noor Jahan songs that are to be used during productions of this play it would have been even more rewarding to analyse the significance of Noor Jahan and to a lesser extent Suraiya and Shamshad Begum and the absence of any mention of Kanan Devi, Shanta Apte or even M. S. Subbulakshmi (whose 1945 film *Meera* turned the singer-actress from Madurai into a national phenomenon). What is also important in this context is that Noor Jahan's music provides the counterdiscourse to the discourse of communal hatred and violence which permeates the play. It is interesting that Noor Jahan records are smashed by stones thrown by the communally hateful. At one point in the play Dattani gives the following stage directions with reference to the shouts of the angry Mob : "The refrains could be explored for harmony and discord, but only for dramatic effect and *not for musicality*." I have put the last three words in italics to show that Dattani clearly equates musicality as a force which counters unmusicality which is associated in the play with hatred. He is anxious that the refrains of hatred coming from the angry crowd should *not* sound musical. The fact that Hardika's life as an old woman full of hatred is also a life devoid of music needs to be kept in mind to understand the role music in general and Noor Jahan, in particular, plays in *Final Solutions*. There are other plays and screenplays by Dattani where music plays a significant role, such as *Bravely Fought the Queen* (where he uses 'thumri') and the film *Morning Raga* (2004).

Unit 15(d): Religion

Religion is shown as a site appropriated by communal forces in order to uphold communal divides. This appropriation is countered by Daksha. And yet Daksha is shown to be a devotee of Krishna. But Krishna functions as a tabula rasa on whom two different projections take place. When Daksha's records are broken she thinks that they are broken by Krishna, although they are broken by stones thrown by a communal crowd outside the house. Krishna is therefore constructed as a punitive god. This construction of Krishna as a communally intolerant punitive power is countered by another construction of Krishna as a humane figure happy with religious and communal difference. The latter construction is made by the Muslim character Babban who actually steps into the Worship Room of the Patel family, picks up the figurine of Krishna, cradles it with

love and affection before setting it down gently on its designated pedestal. Babban does this to prove that Krishna does not object to being touched and cradled by a non-Hindu. In fact, he rather likes it. Babban's "sacrilegious" act shows how easy it is to break through the artificial divides that politics seeks to create amongst religions. Babban shows that it is not sacrilegious to be a Muslim and yet cradle the figurine of a Hindu god if it is done with respect. At one point in the play, one of the constituents of the Chorus, donning a Muslim mask, says of themselves that they are neither idolmakers nor idol-breakers. Idolatry therefore functions are a major binarising, othering factor in the Hindu-Muslim divide. By cradling a Hindu idol Babban is erasing this dividing line between the two religions. His respectful holding of the Krishna figurine is a dramatization of his lack of fundamentalist aversion to idolatry. It was this aversion to idolatry that led to the destruction of the Bamiyan Buddha in Afghanistan in March 2001.

It is also significant that Ratha Yatra becomes the occasion for the communal unrest in which Babban and Javed and indeed other Muslims and Hindus participate because Rath Yatra, as held in Puri (where that particular religious ceremony originates), functions as a site where followers of all religions can get a glimpse of the three deities otherwise ensconed within the temple. So, Hindus, Muslims and believers in all other faiths can partake of the festivities that mark the journey of the three deities from the Jagannath Temple to the Gundicha Temple. It is ironic that a religious festival which traditionally valorizes the co-existence of many faiths should be used by politicians or those eager for worldly power to effect inter-communal schisms.

Unit 16(a): Analysis of Major Characters

Daksha/Hardika : Daksha and Hardika, although played by two different actresses on the stage, are one and the same person. Daksha is the character as a young housewife, Hardika is the same person but as an old woman. The transition from Daksha to Hardika is the successful completion of the patriarchal project to maintain and continually reproduce communalism in Indian society. It is only right that Daksha and Hardika should be played by two different actresses because they are essentially two different people, one rising out of the psychic corpse of the other. Daksha has to die before Hardika can be born. In the character of Daksha/Hardika Dattani shows how an identity can be shaped by one's cultural choices and how it can also be shaped by patriarchal pressures. The key to understanding Daksha/Hardika is her love for the music of Muslim singer-actresses such as Noor Jahan. Shamshad Begum and Suraiya. As I have discussed above, the fact she chooses to fashion her identity on a performative template provided by Noor Jahan and Suraiya is indicative of the fact that her cultural choices are not communal. It is her love of Noor Jahan's music which feeds her eagerness for her friendship with Zarine. The fact that her response to the Muslim community has a pronounced aesthetic aspect is signaled by Dattani in the words that he attributes to Daksha : "Out of all the girls, I like Zarine, the oldest, the best. I have never met anyone as pretty as her! What a complexion!" Whether or not this is a case of what Adrienne Rich calls 'the lesbian continuum' – that friendship between two women may consist of several degrees of intimacy or intensity, intimacies and intensities that may also be sexually or erotically charged – it is definitely a case of one human being's attraction, even if Platonic, for another human being because of the latter's physical beauty. Daksha is attracted to Zarine's physical beauty just as she is attracted by Noor Jahan's vocal and perhaps even physical beauty since the singer was also an actress whose images were in wide circulation in the 1940's.

Daksha's friendship with Zarine and her fondness for Muslim singers may also be read as an attempt to construct what Leela Gandhi calls an "affective community." By this term Leela Gandhi means that there are always those in one community who disobey the rules of their own community to attempt bonds of friendship with another, "othered" community. In her book *Affective Communities* (2006) she concentrates on those late 19th century figures who were British but who made common

cause with Indians and therefore forged bonds that were anti-colonial, because they worked not against but *with* Indians. We can extrapolate from that to show Daksha as someone who reaches out beyond her own community to effect a bond of friendship with another community. Her friendship with Zarine therefore can be read as the frustration of not only the British attempt to divide and rule the two communities but also post-Independence right-wing attempts at preventing friendship between Hindus and Muslims.

Although Hardika is shown to be full of communal hatred, she is redeemed at the end when she finally realizes that the shop owned by Zarine's father was actually burnt down by her husband and her father-in-law. Wracked

by guilt, she cries, “Why didn’t you tell me? All these years.” In an attempt to atone for the way she has just behaved with Javed and Babban she asks her son if the two boys would ever come back.

Smita : The granddaughter of Hardika and the daughter of Ramnik and Aruna, Smita functions as the link between Hardika’s previous mental incarnation of Daksha in the 1940’s and the liberal (which at times seems to be pseudo-liberal) atmosphere in the Gandhi household maintained consciously by Ramnik, but unself-consciously by Smita herself. The friendship between Smita and Tasneem is meant to remind us of the friendship between Daksha and Zarine. In both cases the friendships are beset by unfriendly obstacles of communalism. The only difference between the two inter-communal friendships is that the one of the 1940’s perishes and the one of the 1990’s survives. The relaxed tone in which Smita converses with Javed and Babban speaks of the large majority of Indians for whom the religion of their friends does not matter at all. What is also interesting is that there also appears to have been a brief romantic relationship between Smita and Babban. In fact, while Smita seems to have put this relationship behind her, Babban seems to be still seems romantically attached to her. But she assures Babban that their relationship ended not because it was inter-communal but because of personal reasons. By making this clear Smita is constructing their relationship as one not so much between two individuals belonging to two religions but as one between *just* two individuals, irrespective their religious persuasions.

Although otherwise an obedient daughter, she quietly disobeys her mother’s wishes by asking Javed to fill a bucket of water to be used by Aruna for the religious rituals in the morning. The relaxed, playful way in which Smita behaves with Javed and Babban is presented to us as the way she is when out of the disciplinary gaze of her mother. That she feels restricted by the rules in the Gandhi household is expressed in her lines, “Maybe we should all run away from home like Javed.

For five minutes every day. So we can quickly gulp in some fresh air and go back in.” Freedom is of great importance to her. Freedom also means the ability to construct an identity that will not be shaped by the forces that want identities to be culturally pure, exclusivist and stable. Her free spirit expresses itself most clearly in the course of her dialogue with her grandmother. She tells Hardika, at one point, “I think one can create one’s freedom wherever one may be.” By this freedom she obviously does not mean only the physical freedom to go wherever one wants, but the mental and emotional freedom to think whatever one wants and love whoever one wants. The conversation between Hardika and Smita is of great importance to the play because it shows us how much they have in common and yet how different their circumstances are.

Ramnik Gandhi : Smita’s father and the son of Hardika initially comes across as a liberal, one who bravely takes the two scared Muslim boys in and refuses to hand the two boys over to the crowd outside baying for the two boys’ blood. He clearly positions himself as the ideological opposite of his wife Aruna who is always concerned about the sanctity of the Hindu household and the purity of Hindu customs. In his liberal attitudes he has an ally in his daughter Smita. He is concerned that his mother may demonize Muslims when speaking about them to his daughter, underestimating Smita’s strong anti-bigotry personality. Ramnik is also intelligent enough to point out to Babban when the latter is defensive when offered water by Ramnik through Aruna.

But he has a guilty conscience. He has inherited guilt. He is aware that his father and grandfather had set fire to a Muslim shop, under the cover of the 1947 riots because the two men felt economically threatened by the owner of that shop. Ramnik’s offering a job to Javed at the former’s saree shop in Kapda Bazaar is way of assuaging his sense of guilt and atoning for the crime committed by his father and grandfather. It is this sense of shame that he feels on behalf of his father and grandfather that fuels his efforts at reconciliation with the Muslim community through offering a job to Javed. It is this shame which also serves as a connecting bond when he hears about the childhood of Javed and Babban from Babban. When Babban talks about the shame he felt for belonging to the Muslim community and for having a name that could be caricatured into “Baboon”, Ramnik remarks, “We are not very different, are we?” and continues, “We both feel shame.” Commonalities are therefore established, commonalities on which friendships are founded. Affective communities therefore can be traced in this play not only between Daksha and Zarine and between Smita and her Muslim friends but also between Ramnik and Babban and, as we shall soon see, between Aruna and Javed.

Aruna : She can be defined by the words she speaks to her daughter in the beginning of the play: “Remember. Always be pure. Pure in your mind, in your deeds.” What Aruna does not realize is that purity can also mean cultural purity and cultural purity can mean the exclusion of cultures not one’s own and this exclusion can harbour hatred against other cultures. So, purity can also be shaped not so much by love but by hatred. She does

not have the ability to see the dangers of this emphasis on purity. Interestingly, Aruna is similar to Javed, as he points out in the play, because like her Javed too concerned with religious and cultural purity. Dattani seems to be condemning any attempt at cultural purity be it Hindu or Muslim because cultural purity depends on exclusion and their chauvinism and hatred of other cultures.

Babban/Bobby : Just as it is important for us to understand why Daksha and Hardika are two names of the same character (not merely because Daksha was given the name of Hardika to match with that of her husband Hari!) it is also important to understand why Babban is consistently referred to as Bobby in the play. While Hardika was the name given to Daksha by her in-laws, Bobby was the name Babban gave himself because in college he hated being called "Baboon" by his classmates in a cruel caricature of "Babban." In Babban we see someone who has been interpellated so completely by the Hindu majority that he is ashamed of his religion and culture when he is not supposed to be. The extent of his shame is so profound that he has even changed his name, the most important marker of his identity. Since "Bobby" as a name does not have any Muslim tinge he decides the name as being an acceptable alternative to "Babban." Babban is, in many ways a study in contrast to his friend Javed. He is calm and does not have a short temper. When surrounded by the angry crowd he takes off his handkerchief, with knots on four ends to use it as a prayer cap, when it is mockingly put on his head. Javed wears his prayer cap with pride. Babban is also better educated. He has just finished college. Javed has long since dropped out of school. Bobby should also be read a voice of moderation, of calm, even of non-violence. Babban also does not share the Islamic fundamentalist aversion to idolatry. This absence of anti-idolatry aversion is dramatized by the way he gently and lovingly cradles the figurine of Krishna in the Gandhi household. His saying, "Your God! My flesh is holding Him! Look, Javed! And He does not mind!" is an expression of the love and respect he feels one should have not only for one's own religion but also for the religion of others. His most powerful lines are spoken before his exit from the Gandhi household. He turns to Hardika to say, "And if you are willing to forget, I am willing to tolerate." In those words Babban expresses the need to free oneself from historical animosities and to look forward to a time of mutual respect and inter-communal tolerance.

Javed : Through the character of Javed Dattani affords us a glimpse into the mind of someone who is attracted to fundamentalism and its ultimately self-destructive violence. In order understand the character of Javed one should notice the pride he takes in his religion and culture. This pride is not, like the pride of Aruna, the result of an assumed sense of superiority, but a protest against the way his religion has been constructed as inferior. Javed's dropping of meat and bones in the backyard of his Hindu neighbour should be seen as his first act of protest against the way in which society has imposed a sense of inferiority on people of his faith. However, his defiance of this construction of Islam renders him an easy pawn in the hands of those who exploit religion for political ends. He becomes a professional rioter. Only in his case he never accepts payment. For him rioting is a way of protesting against the way his community has been demonized by the majority. But however many differences there may be between Javed and Babban, the two young men are both in favour of freedom from historical animosities. As Javed says to Hardika, "You blame us for what happened fifty years ago. Today, if something happens to my sister, can I blame you?" The message clearly seems to be that apportioning of blame is not the way to achieve communal harmony. For inter-communal harmony to take root in any society, people should not allow themselves to be held hostage to histories of hatred but create present-day realities of understanding and tolerance.

The Chorus : One of the interesting decisions that Dattani has taken in this play is to have a chorus consisting of five men who alternately represent a Hindu and a Muslim mob. By using masks to alternately show the Chorus/Mob as Hindu or Muslim Dattani seems to be saying that forces of intolerance and hatred are equally present on both sides of the communal divide. It is also significant that *all* the members of the Chorus/Mob are men. This is an effective way of dramatizing the fact that the Mob or the Chorus is always the voice of patriarchy. The absence of women in the Mob is something that should be paid attention to. It is significant that at the end of the performance the lights are supposed to fade off last on Javed and Babban standing *amidst* the Mob/ Chorus and their Hindu and Muslim masks. This may be one way of saying that The Mob does not consist of demons who materialize out of nowhere but always consists of people like us. Those who move around us one moment as civilized human beings can at the very next moment crystallize into a blood-thirsty mob. Dattani, therefore, draws our attention to the way in which these mobs are politically constitued and mobilized.

Unit 16(b): The Stage Set

As with most of Dattani's plays the stage is divided into various sections, either vertically or horizontally or as upstage and downstage. In the case of *Final Solutions*, the stage is divided horizontally and as upstage/downstage. The house of the Gandhis is presented on the stage not only as "two wooden blocks for furniture", but also, consisting of the kitchen and the "pooja room" (the family shrine room) on an elevation, upstage. Also, on another level, horizontally dividing the stage space, is a room where Hardika writes her diary. The most interesting aspect of the stage set in the case of this play is the horseshoe-shaped ramp which rises in the front, the part closest to the audience, and gradually slopes down on either side to the stage level. So, the ramp is elevated in the front and slopes down to meet the stage at its two extremities. What should also be kept in mind, as you visualize the play while reading it, is that the house of the Gandhis is contained within the boundary that *is* the ramp. So, the ramp works as a boundary for the residence of the Gandhis. If the Gandhi household can be seen as the microcosm of society, then it can be averred that violence and intolerance is a persistent presence surrounding society and this presence can make itself felt at any moment. The fact that this ramp is always occupied by five men who alternately become the Mob or the Chorus, a Hindu Mob or a Muslim Mob, should alert us to the extent to which our lives are hemmed in by mobs (representing patriarchy) and the chorus of society.

The room with a roll-top desk and an oil lamp, suggesting a room from the 1940's can be seen as the visual representation of the past. The fact that this room is supposed to belong to Daksha and also is the room where Daksha's older self, Hardika, inhabits should also alert us to the fact that Hardika is being held captive to the past by her uninformed hatred towards Zarine.

Suggested Readings

Primary Material :

Mahesh Dattani, *Collected Plays* (New Delhi : Penguin, 2000)

Secondary Material :

1) Niladri R. Chatterjee, "Mahesh Dattani." *www.glbtq.com*. < http://www.glbtq.com/arts/ dattani_m_arts.html>.
2) Asha Kuthari Chaudhuri, *Mahesh Dattani : An Introduction* (New Delhi : Foundation Books, 2005)
3) Erin B. Mee, "Mahesh Dattani : Invisible Issues." *Performing Arts Journal*. 19.1 (1997) pp. 19-26.
4) Anjelie Multani ed., *Mahesh Dattani's Plays : Critical Perspectives* (New Delhi: Pencraft International, 2007).
5) Anita Nair, "Mahesh Dattani : The Invisible Observer". <http://www.anitanair.net/profiles/ profile-mahesh-dattani.htm>.
6) T. Vijay Kumar, "Mahesh Dattani's Collected Plays." *MUSE INDIA*. <http:// www.museindia.com/showfeature3.asp?id=673>.

Assignments

1) Discuss the idea of impurity in *Final Solutions*.
2) Analyse the significance of the title with reference to the way the characters deal with the idea of difference.
3) What role does music play in *Final Solutions* and how?
4) Discuss the role of religion in the play.
5) How does Dattani deal with the idea of communal and national identity formation in the play?
6) Discuss the function of the Chorus/Mob.

Short questions:

1) Why is the character of Daksha/Hardika shown are two different individuals by Dattani ?
2) How are Daksha and her daughter-in-law Smita similar?
3) Why do you suppose Daksha wants to sing like Noor Jahan?
4) Do you think it ironic that a communal riot should break out during the Rath Yatra? Give reasons for your answer.
5) Why were Javed and Babban in the locality of the Gandhi family?
6) Was their entering the Gandhi house an accident? Give reasons for your answer.

7) Why had Javed placed pieces of meat and bones in his Hindu neighbour's backyard?
8) Why is Ramnik so eager to offer Javed a job in the former's shop?
9) How does Dattani represent the politicization of religion in the play?
10) How are Ramnik and Babban similar?
11) How are Aruna and Javed similar?
12) Why does Babban cradle the idol of Krishna?

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POST GRADUATE DEGREE PROGRAMME (CBCS)

In ENGLISH

SEMESTER II

OPTIONAL COURSE 2 (B)

AMERICAN LITERATURE

SELF LEARNING MATERIAL

DIRECTORATE OF OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING

UNIVERSITY OF KALYANI

KALYANI- 741235, WEST BENGAL

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Development of printed SLMs for students admitted to the DODL within a limited time to cater to the academic requirements of the Course as per standards set by Distance Education Bureau of the University Grants Commission, New Delhi, India under Open and Distance Mode UGC Regulations, 2017 had been our endeavour. We are happy to have achieved our goal.

Utmost care and precision have been ensured in the development of the SLMs, making them useful to the learners, besides avoiding errors as far as practicable. Further suggestions from the stakeholders in this would be welcome.

During the production-process of the SLMs, the team continuously received positive stimulations and feedback from Professor (Dr.) Sankar Kumar Ghosh, Hon'ble Vice- Chancellor, University of Kalyani, who kindly accorded directions, encouragements and suggestions, offered constructive criticism to develop it within proper requirements. We gracefully, acknowledge his inspiration and guidance.

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Their persistent and co-ordinated efforts have resulted in the compilation of comprehensive, learner-friendly, flexible texts that meet the curriculum requirements of the Post Graduate Programme through Distance Mode.

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Director
Directorate of Open and Distance Learning
University of Kalyani

OPTIONAL COURSE 2 (B):

AMERICAN LITERATURE

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OPTIONAL COURSE: 2(B)

AMERICAN LITERATURE

BLOCK I

AMERICAN POETRY

Block I: American Poetry

Unit 1 (a)

Brief History of the Rise and Development of American Poetry

Early American literature was oral literature. The existence of poetry in written format first emerges with reference to Anne Bradstreet. She is the major poet in seventeenth century American literature. Her anthology *The Tenth Muse, Lately Sprung up in America* is a remarkable volume of poetry. Michael Wigglesworth, is also a remarkable poet of this century. In 1773 Phillis Wheatley comes into prominence by his anthology titled *Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral.* The beginning of the nineteenth century witnessed the unprecedented development of the American poetry. 1830-65 is considered the Romantic Age in American literature. During these phase the development of transcendentalism directly influenced the trends in Romantic poetry in America. The transcendentalists focus on serene, beautiful aspects of nature. All these are major features of Romantic movement. Emerson, Longfellow, Whitman and Emily Dickinson are major poets of the era. Emerson is also a major transcendentalist of the time. His *Poems* appeared in 1847. Longfellow's *Hiawatha* published in 1855. Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* and Dickinson's *Poems* (3 volumes) are important works of the age. After the era of Romantic Movement, American literatures witnessed the development of modernist writings in the hands of the poets like Robert Frost, ee Cummings, Wallace Stevens. All of them experimented with the form and style. The rhythm, the theme and poetic diction undergo a radical alteration. 1956-59 this time period is considered as the end of modernism and the beginning of beat generation of writers. Allen Ginsberg, Gary Snyder are remarkable poets of beat generation writers. 1959-69 this timeframe is considered as the era of postmodernist writing in American literature. Some major feminist poets appear as pathfinders of this new literary movement in American literature. Sylvia Plath, Adrienne Rich, Anne Sexton, John Ashberry are remarkable contributors in the postmodernist movement in American literature. 1940-1970 is also an era of the development of black American aesthetic. Writers like Gwendolyn Brook with his anthologies: *Annie Allen* (1949) and *A Street in Bronzeville(1945*) claim an important position in the development of Black writing in American literature. It is interesting to note that the black American writings are also a major component of modernist movement in American literature. In later times poets like Agha Shahid Ali and Meena Alexander become major poets of American diasporic literature.

Introduction to the Poetry of Walt Whitman

Walt Whitman is one of the remarkable poets of American Poetry in the nineteenth century. He was born in 1819, in Long island, close to New York. His ancestry is an amalgamation of Quaker, Dutch and Calvinist. Since Infancy, the patriotic fervour has increased within the tender mind of Walt Whitman. As an outcome to that, his poetry is coloured by this patriotic vision. His infantile experiences are coloured by the event of expansion of America. The nation has stretched its boundaries from East to the rather Under developed west. Whiman's remarkable contributions are Democratic Vistas (1871), and Specimen Days (1882). These are earlier writings by the great poet. His recognition comes as a poet. His first anthology *Leaves of Grass* was published in 1855. He goes on editing this anthology several times. First in 1860, there he introduced new poems in the volume. He again incorporates new poems in 1867edition. He spent his entire life as a bohemia and never married. His lifelong companion was his mother. His poetry is particularly featured by the sense of patriotism and love for nature. The concept of 'en masse' is something in the poetry of Whitman which is an indicator of patriotic zeal in his writing. He was considered almost like a national poet. He died in 1892.

Unit 1 (b)

O Captain! My Captain

O Captain! my Captain! our fearful trip is done,
The ship has weather'd every rack, the prize we sought is won,
The port is near, the bells I hear, the people all exulting,
While follow eyes the steady keel, the vessel grim and daring;
But O heart! heart! heart!
O the bleeding drops of red,
Where on the deck my Captain lies,
Fallen cold and dead.

O Captain! my Captain! rise up and hear the bells;
Rise up—for you the flag is flung—for you the bugle trills,
For you bouquets and ribbon'd wreaths—for you the shores a-crowding,
For you they call, the swaying mass, their eager faces turning;
Here Captain! dear father!
This arm beneath your head!
It is some dream that on the deck,
You've fallen cold and dead.

My Captain does not answer, his lips are pale and still,
My father does not feel my arm, he has no pulse nor will,
The ship is anchor'd safe and sound, its voyage closed and done,
From fearful trip the victor ship comes in with object won;
Exult O shores, and ring O bells!
But I with mournful tread,
Walk the deck my Captain lies,
Fallen cold and dead.

Analysis of the Poem: The poem clearly charged with ethos of patriotism. Here Whitman bemoans the death of the American leader Abraham Lincoln. The assassination of Abraham Lincoln affected Whitman and during that period he composed few poems as his tribute to the one of the eminent leaders of America. It is one of those poems based on the sad event of the death of Abraham Lincoln. It is composed in the middle of 1865. The poem tonally and thematically can be called an elegy. Abraham Lincoln was born in Kentucky. His education was never very formal. He fights for slavery issues in America and it gives him immediate recognition and fame. He was elected and re-elected as the sixteenth president of America. His conduct of the war against the confederacy and his efforts to preserve the union was a great achievement for America. His famous speech, including the Gettysburg Address, is considered to be a historic speech for the world. At the beginning of the poem the addressee is referred to as "captain". The word "captain" implies here the deceased leader Abraham Lincoln. The speaker in the poem is talking about a "fear trip" which is finished now. This is an allusion to American Civil war which was fought in the year 1865-66. The speaker is describing the auspicious moment when after the horrible days of "the fearful trip" the ship is very near to the port. In the dock many enthusiastic crowds are waiting for the captain who made this victory possible. But, in this propitious moment the captain died. In the deck of the ship the corpse of the reverend leader is laying down. The second stanza of the poem describes the arrival of the ship in the port carrying the lifeless body of the captain. The poem ends with the sad words that reflect how much sad the speaker is for the assassination of the leader. The entire poem is based on very powerful metaphors. The symbolic meanings of the metaphors strengthen the poetic appeal of the narrative. The ship, for example turns out to be the nation America. The assassination of Abraham Lincoln in April, 1865 is the event on which the entire poem is based on. He was shot dead by Wilkes Booth. The tumultuous days of the civil war were over. The nation turns out victorious under the able guidance of the captain Abraham Lincoln. In this poem in an effusive tone, the speaker addresses the deceased captain as "father". This reference implies the intimacy and fondness that the followers of Lincoln cherished for him. The second stanza of the poem deals with the shock that the speaker is experiencing following the event of the captain's death. Beneath the head of the deceased captain the speaker placed his arms. He is imagining that may be it is a dream that makes the captain fall asleep on the deck. He does not get any response from the lifeless body of the deceased captain. The captain cannot response to the affection and respect that his disciple is bestowing on him.

. Unit 1 (b)

Text of the Poem:

One's-Self I Sing

One's-Self I sing, a simple separate person,
Yet utter the word Democratic, the word En-Masse.

Of physiology from top to toe I sing,
Not physiognomy alone nor brain alone is worthy for the Muse, I say the Form complete is worthier far,
The Female equally with the Male I sing.

Of Life immense in passion, pulse, and power,
Cheerful, for freest action form'd under the laws divine,
The Modern Man I sing.

Analysis of the Poem: The very short poem titled "One's Self I Sing" is a paean. Here the poet appreciates the human body and its complete form as a kind of supreme creation by God. The

poet is praising the human body and its complete form as an ultimate creation of God. From the head to the toe of a human body is praiseworthy of the poet. "Not physiognomy alone nor brain is worthy for the Muse" the, line implies the fact that not only the cerebral quality or intellect of the humans can be praised but the physical shape of perfect human body should also be praised. Therefore, in this phrase the poet is deliberately eliminates the long standing binary between head and rest part of the body. The head is symbolic of intellectual superiority and the rest part of the body is symbolic of sensuousness. This mind-body binary is something which Whitman does away with. In the next phrase "The Female equally with the Male I sing" in this phrase he has eliminated the gender segregation and tries to appreciate the complete human body as a supreme creation of God. The concept of "En- Masse" is important in this context. It derives from French lexicon. It means mass. The term implies democratic spirit.

Unit 2 (a)

Introduction to the Poetry of Emily Dickinson:

Emily Dickinson is one of the remarkable poets in Nineteenth Century America. She was born in 1830 in Amherst which is located at Massachusetts. In Massachusetts both Calvinism and Puritanism exist as alternative philosophy of life. Dickinson's father Edward Dickinson was an Attorney who later became a member of congress. The quiet household influenced the psychological development of Dickinson as a person of gentle temperament and she has adopted the habit of living a contemplative life. She has given the nickname "nun of Amherst" because of her habit of staying at home most of the time. She lived a secluded life at Amherst which deeply influenced her poetic vision. Many critics come to the inference that the death consciousness in her poetry is an offshoot of her life as a recluse. She was close to her brother Austin and sister Lavinia. She penned innumerable letters to her friends, all these letters bear close insight to her intellect and contemplative mind. She remains an anonymous figure during her life time. She composed 1,775 poems throughout her life. Her poetry published after her death. Dickinson in her life was greatly influenced by her father Edward Dickinson. Her friendship with Reverend Charles Wadsworth becomes a lifelong tryst. According to Dickinson's acquaintances, the relationship with Reverend Charles Wadsworth turns out to be an unfulfilled love affair which ended up making her a recluse. She never received formal education. But she has deep knowledge about Shakespeare, Bible and mythology. This knowledge is getting reflected in her poetry which abounds in mythological and Biblical allusions. Her poetry is remarkable for expressing the obdurate and indifferent ways of accepting death. Death consciousness is one of the important aspects in her poetry. Her use of Punctuation and upper case is equally a typical style of her own poetic theory.

Unit 2 (b) Analysis of the Texts

Text of the Poem**:**

I Could Not Wait for Death

Because I could not stop for Death –
He kindly stopped for me –
The Carriage held but just Ourselves –
And Immortality.

We slowly drove – He knew no haste
And I had put away
My labor and my leisure too,
For His Civility –

We passed the School, where Children strove
At Recess – in the Ring –
We passed the Fields of Gazing Grain –
We passed the Setting Sun –

Or rather – He passed Us –
The Dews drew quivering and Chill –
For only Gossamer, my Gown –
My Tippet – only Tulle –

We paused before a House that seemed
A Swelling of the Ground –
The Roof was scarcely visible –
The Cornice – in the Ground –

Since then – 'tis Centuries – and yet
Feels shorter than the Day
I first surmised the Horses' Heads
Were toward Eternity –

Analysis of the Poem: The poem was composed in 1862. It was first published under the title 'The Chariot'. The poem was composed in 1862. Few critics have pointed out the fact that the immediate context of the poem is death of Olivia Coleman who was a distant cousin of Emily Dickinson. She died of consumption in the year 1847. The poem is divided into six stanzas. The poet personified Death as a gentleman who is courting the gentle, noble lady. The event of death is being viewed in the poem as a nuptial bonding. Before discussing in detail the important aspects of the poem I must summarize the entire poem for the convenience of the learners. The speaker of the poem is a decent lady. In the first stanza, she is saying that she is not waiting for death. Death, like a courteous gentleman patiently waits for her. Beside the carriage Death was patiently waiting for her. Just the way a gentleman in a courtship patiently waits for his ladylove. They drive slowly. The carriage passed the schools where children were playing during the recess. They passed the fields and passed the horizon which is tinged by the mellow light of the

setting sun. The third stanza beautifully represents aspects of fragility and beauty. 'Gossamer' is a fine substance consisting of cobwebs spun by small spiders. The gossamer becomes the down of the lady. The word tippet means a woman's long scarf or shawl. Tulle is a soft, fine silky material. It is used for making veil of a bride. Thus, after describing the garment of the lady the poem shift its focus on the destination where the carriage ultimately has reached. The carriage reached to a house which looks like a "swelling of ground". The last stanza is a bit ambiguous where the poet perceives the horses' heads of the carriage "were toward Eternity". The horses' heads towards eternity implies the lady with his fiancée Death has travelled to the domain of eternity from a mundane terrain. In Emily Dickinson's poetic endeavor the aspects of death, and eternity are important aspects. To her consciousness, Death appears as a passport to the domain of eternity. Death becomes a liberator which liberates the poetic persona from the mundane existence. In this poem Dickinson perceives death as a kind of marriage which unites the lady with the gentleman Death. This perception of death where it is being treated as a nuptial bond is not only American phenomenon, but also this concept is latent in Sufism and Baul philosophy. Death is truly a marriage between the event and the eventless. It is a marriage between the fragile and the eternal. It is a marriage between life's strife and sense of peace beyond life. The punctuation technique in the poem is quite interesting. A close reading would reveal that in the poem there is no full stop as such. Sudden use of uppercases and absence of full stop imply the tonal quality of the poem. The tone is effusive and spontaneous. The verse form which is used in the poem is four line stanza with different sense of rhymes.

After Great Pain, a Formal Feeling Comes

Text of the Poem:

After great pain, a formal feeling comes –
The Nerves sit ceremonious, like Tombs –
The stiff Heart questions 'was it He, that bore,'
And 'Yesterday, or Centuries before'?

The Feet, mechanical, go round –
A Wooden way
Of Ground, or Air, or Ought –
Regardless grown,
A Quartz contentment, like a stone –

This is the Hour of Lead –
Remembered, if outlived,
As Freezing persons, recollect the Snow –
First – Chill – then Stupor – then the letting go –

Analysis of the Poem: Emily Dickinson's poetry revolves around the theme of temporal flux, life's fragility and contemplation on death. This poem deals with the experience of human mind after overcoming emotional turbulence and pain. The poem is written in the typical style of Dickinson where she concentrates on the aspects of vagueness and ambiguity. The aspect of ambiguity is one of the important features in Dickinson's writing. The poem is composed in 1862. Quite interestingly, from the very beginning the poem focuses on pain and in an oblique

way the sensation of pain leads to the awareness of death. The first line "After Great pain, a formal feeling comes" is being asserted by the poet as a kind of inference of her experiences of pain and suffering. The line brilliantly juxtaposes the two contradictory words "Formal" and "feeling". The immediate questions arises in the readers' minds can a feeling be formal? If it does then can we call it a feeling? The answer is no. Therefore, the formality of feeling makes it a pretentious gesture. In an explicit way the poem in its three stanzas focus on the post suffering experiences of a human subject. After painful experience the nerves calm down. Their calmness is being compared to the brooding silence in the tomb. The heart questions itself that is it the same suffering heart? The feet even lack its natural vitality. It becomes mechanical in its expression and gait. The overall recollection of the pain by the suffering human is even difficult to comprehend. The concluding sentence of the poem in a climactic manner captures the reaction of the person who suffers such enormous amount of pain. At first the person has a sensation of chilling terror. Then it has been stupefied and finally it becomes nonchalant about the suffering. The concluding line is focusing on the transformative quality of a human heart or a suffering human subject. The initial blow of difficulties and pain make him unnerved. Gradually it gets accustomed to accept the hurdle. As a consequence to this the heart becomes stoic which accepts the agonies and feelings of pain with an indifferent attitude. The poem focuses on symbols and imagery which are connotative of death. The aspect of death is a major concern in the poetry of Emily Dickinson. Therefore, a reader can easily connect the poem "After Great Pain, A Formal Feeling Comes" with others Dickinsonian poems which contemplate on death. "Tombs", stiffness of the heart, "the hour of lead" all these point to the aspect of death in the poem. The concept of death in the poem is interesting because, it is not the death of a human body, rather it is the death of an emotional self of a human being. It is the death of a suffering human self who like a phonix has been burnt to ashes by the flames of pain and suffering. The suffering like a fire ravaged his entire self. The final outcome of the burning is the metamorphosis of the suffering human subject into a new self who becomes more strong and sturdy human being after overcoming his experiences of suffering and agony. The phrase "formal feeling" in this aspect is important. It is suggestive of the death of the emotive self of the suffering human being who cannot retain his impulses intact after experiencing a "great pain". There is a radical alteration of his emotions. The transformation makes his feeling formal.

Unit 3 (a): Introduction to the Poetry of Robert Frost

Robert Frost is considered by critics as a pre-modernist. Frost was born in 1874 in the city of San Francisco, but his juvenile days were spent at a farm. His experiences of living close to nature and natural ambience left a far- reaching impact in his poetry. Frost's father died in the year 1884, when the poet was only ten years old. The sudden death of his father compelled young Frost to encounter the hurdles of life in an obdurate way. Frost was admitted at Dartmouth college for a brief period of time, but due to financial crisis he was forced to leave the college. He started to earn by doing various jobs. Frost has a happy family life with his beloved Elinor Miriam. His most important poetical works are: *A Boy's Will* (1913), *North of Boston* (1914), *West Running Brook* (1928), *A Witness Tree* (1942). He had been awarded Pulitzar Prize for four times. The Irish Poet Paul Muldoon, talks about Frost to be "the greatest American Poet of the twentieth Century". Frost died in 1963.Frost's poem deals with simple diction. At a cursory glance, Frost's poem appears very simple, but this simplicity is deception. Beneath the veneer of

simple diction, a philosophical thought is nascent. It is the realization on part of the readers that makes Frost's poem all the more difficult to comprehend. Frost's poem needs a cerebral engagement from readers to unpack all those latent meanings in the narrative. Frost was a keen observer of nature; natural beauty, plants and even nature with all its uncanny and fearsome aspects take shape of poem in Frost's poetic endeavor. To Frost, the natural world serves as a backdrop for some contemplation. Loneliness is one of the important aspects in Frost's poem. Human beings are represented in his poetry as a recluse. Their isolation has been exhibited as a major existential ailment with which all of Frost's human characters are grappling with. The myth of benevolent protector is demystified by Frost. He placed his characters in an abysmal world where lonely humans are struggling to overcome the hindrances. Frost employs quite simple imagery in his poetic endeavor. Frost in his poetry articulates a more theoretical formulation of the connection between sound and meaning. In his most famous critical formulation, Frost advocated what he called the "sound of sense". Through the term he means, poetry must communicate through its sound even before we grasp its semantic meaning. To his friend John Barlett in 1913 Frost wrote that the best way to hear the sound of sense is to listen to "voices behind a door that cut off the words". If a poet can succeed in capturing this abstract vitality of speech", this specific denotation of the words is less important than the way the language moves to the "mind's ear". Frost employs the "sound of Sense" to the use of poetic meter. For Frost, poetry in a line comes not from fitting words into the preexisting metrical structure, but from "skillfully breaking the sound of sense with all their irregularity of accent across the regular beat of the meter." For this method, a poem can be made to sound natural and simultaneously it achieves the heightened musical quality of lyric. Frost's theory of poetry allowed him to introduce a rural New England dialect that had never been used in poetry before. It equally permits to use flexible rhythms within a regular metrical structure. Frost was never an ardent supporter of Modernist Movement in poetry, rather he was supportive of more traditional forms of poetry. He ridiculed the route of modernist experimentation followed by Ezra Pound, T.S. Eliot and e.e. Cummings. During his stay in England Frost rejected the basic principles of Imagism. Frost's theory of poetry does not adhere to Modernist Movements in several aspects. First of all, Frost's close adherence to traditional forms of poetry does not support modernist claims of a radical innovation in the form of poetry. Secondly, simplicity is one of the chief characteristics of Frost's poetry. He chooses ordinary life and simplicity of rustic people as suitable subject matter of his poetry. He uses plain and idiomatic language marked by a lack of polysyllabic words. Indeed, Frost's poetry captures the very essence of rustic life of New England. Thirdly, in Frost poetry, the transformative quality of the poetic imagination is strikingly absent. It is one of the defining features of modernist poetry.

Unit 3 (b)

Mending Wall

Text of the Poem:

Something there is that doesn't love a wall,

That sends the frozen-ground-swell under it,

And spills the upper boulders in the sun;

And makes gaps even two can pass abreast.
The work of hunters is another thing:
I have come after them and made repair
Where they have left not one stone on a stone,
But they would have the rabbit out of hiding,
To please the yelping dogs. The gaps I mean,
No one has seen them made or heard them made,
But at spring mending-time we find them there.
I let my neighbour know beyond the hill;
And on a day we meet to walk the line
And set the wall between us once again.
We keep the wall between us as we go.
To each the boulders that have fallen to each.
And some are loaves and some so nearly balls
We have to use a spell to make them balance:
"Stay where you are until our backs are turned!"
We wear our fingers rough with handling them.
Oh, just another kind of out-door game,
One on a side. It comes to little more:
There where it is we do not need the wall:
He is all pine and I am apple orchard.
My apple trees will never get across
And eat the cones under his pines, I tell him.
He only says, "Good fences make good neighbours."
Spring is the mischief in me, and I wonder
If I could put a notion in his head:
"Why do they make good neighbours? Isn't it

Where there are cows? But here there are no cows.

Before I built a wall I'd ask to know

What I was walling in or walling out,

And to whom I was like to give offence.

Something there is that doesn't love a wall,

That wants it down." I could say "Elves" to him,

But it's not elves exactly, and I'd rather

He said it for himself. I see him there

Bringing a stone grasped firmly by the top

In each hand, like an old-stone savage armed.

He moves in darkness as it seems to me,

Not of woods only and the shade of trees.

He will not go behind his father's saying,

And he likes having thought of it so well

He says again, "Good fences make good neighbours."

Analysis of the poem: The poem 'Mending Wall' was published in the second anthology of Frost titled *North of Boston* in 1914. The speaker in the poem joins his neighbour in every year to mend a wall that exists between their houses. Apparently it looks like a civil activity but the speaker does not like the wall. The wall here is symbolic of separation and detachment. The poem is written in blank verse which is symbolic of the tumultuous time when life desperately lacks rhythm. First five lines of the poem talk about the elements which disturb the wall. It can be frost or dislodging of rocks. The gap in the wall can let a hunter pass. The next five lines talk about the mending process of the wall. Now, the wall is protected. The gaps in the wall are created by nature, so it becomes an occasion where both the speaker and his neighbour can have an opportunity to talk to each other. The speaker describes how difficult is the process of mending a wall. The speaker in line no 30-45 asks valid questions on the necessity of the wall. These lines are giving the sense of debate on the matter whether to keep the wall or not. The doubt about necessity of the wall is resolved by the firm answer of the neighbour. He replies, "Good fences make good neighbour". The poet and his neighbour both are engaged to the task of mending the wall. To the poet's neighbour the act of mending the wall is a ritual which needs to be performed solemnly at the beginning of the year. To the speaker, the act of mending the wall gives him a chance to let loose his imagination. The narrator mends the wall but he is sympathetic to the reasons that disturb the wall. The neighbour of the speaker can be called a dull, primitive person as he wants to mend the wall mechanically and thoughtlessly. He adheres to the old proverb "Good fences make good neighbours". The poem is an allegory which talks about the poetic process. As a poet Frost needs to encounter all the experiences of life. The wall

in the poem is metaphor. It signifies a barrier or a hindrance which ruptures the communication between two humans. It is symbolic of the hindrances that disrupts human bonding and unity.Simplicity is one of the dominant features in Frost's poetry. A close reading of the poem like "Mending Wall", one of Frost's famous lyrics, will bear testimony to the fact of Frostean use of simple diction in poetry. It is a very colloquial form of diction which he uses in the poem. The poem is replete with concrete descriptive words that provide a simple and easily comprehendible picture of the scene being presented. Nouns like wall, trees, cows, woods, shade, hunters, none of the nouns presents any difficulty for readers to comprehend the meaning of the poem. On the level of word length there is a remarkable preponderance of monosyllabic words and a total absence of words more than two syllables. Frost's use of syntax also gives the idea of simplicity. In the beginning line of the poem the use of contraction "doesn't" gives a sense of colloquialism. In "Mending Wall" Frost skilfully juxtaposes the relationship between form and content. Frost employs imagery and symbols which are largely drawn from pastoral world. For example, in the poem "Mending Wall" the reference to wall or fence is such an example.

After Apple Picking

Text of the Poem:

My long two-pointed ladder's sticking through a tree
Toward heaven still,
And there's a barrel that I didn't fill
Beside it, and there may be two or three
Apples I didn't pick upon some bough.
But I am done with apple-picking now.
Essence of winter sleep is on the night,
The scent of apples: I am drowsing off.
I cannot rub the strangeness from my sight
I got from looking through a pane of glass
I skimmed this morning from the drinking trough
And held against the world of hoary grass.
It melted, and I let it fall and break.
But I was well
Upon my way to sleep before it fell,
And I could tell
What form my dreaming was about to take.
Magnified apples appear and disappear,
Stem end and blossom end,
And every fleck of russet showing clear.
My instep arch not only keeps the ache,
It keeps the pressure of a ladder-round.
I feel the ladder sway as the boughs bend.
And I keep hearing from the cellar bin
The rumbling sound

Of load on load of apples coming in.
For I have had too much
Of apple-picking: I am overtired
Of the great harvest I myself desired.
There were ten thousand fruit to touch,
Cherish in hand, lift down, and not let fall.
For all
That struck the earth,
No matter if not bruised or spiked with stubble,
Went surely to the cider-apple heap
As of no worth.
One can see what will trouble
This sleep of mine, whatever sleep it is.
Were he not gone,
The woodchuck could say whether it's like his
Long sleep, as I describe its coming on,
Or just some human sleep.

Analysis of the Poem: "After Apple Picking" first published in Frost's second anthology titled *North of Boston* in 1914. The poem was written in England and subtitled "After the Fall". The poem is metaphorical in essence. Apparently the I- narrator in the poem is a harvester. He placed the ladder through a tree to pick apples. This year his harvest is not good, therefore he is unable to fill in his barrels with apples. After apple picking the speaker is fatigued. In such a weary state he enjoys his winter sleep. In a sleep he envisions happy dreams. The sleep gives him a vision a memory as well as sensation, to appreciate life. The poem is replete with biblical imagery. Apple is the fruit of the tree of knowledge according to Biblical allusion. Therefore, the phraseology "After Apple Picking" which has been used as a title of the poem itself is densely symbolic. The phraseology "after apple picking" refers to the event of man's Fall from divine grace. The reference to the ladder at the beginning of the poem is an allusion to Jacob's ladder. The act of apple picking is done in the poem. The act of finishing apple picking is a metaphoric way of expressing closure of an event. The fragrance of apples, which is the 'essence of winter-sleep', causes drowsiness to him, and he begins to drowse off. While falling asleep he recollects the sense of strangeness that was experienced by him at the right he saw in the morning by looking through a sheet of ice which he had picked up from his drinking vessel (trough). He looked at 'the world of hoary grass' or (grass covered with snow) through this sheet. It seems as if the speaker were in a confused state of mind because of the onslaught of sleep on him that sent him into a trance in which everything seemed to have been blurred or made indistinct to view. The poem is replete with symbols. The apples, act of apple picking, ladder and winter sleep are all potent symbols in the poem.

4 (a)

(i) Introduction to the Poetry of Wallace Stevens

Wallace Stevens was born on 2 October, 1879. He is one of the important poets of American Modernist Movement in poetry. He was born in Pennsylvania. In 1923, his first anthology was published. It is titled *Harmonium*. It went for second edition and appeared in 1930. His remarkable anthologies are *The Man with the Blue Guitar, Parts of the World.His well known poems are*

"Anecdote of the Jar", " Disillusionment of Ten O'Clock", "Sunday Morning", "The Snow Man", "The Emperor of Ice Cream". He died in 1955.

Sunday Morning

I

Complacencies of the peignoir, and late

Coffee and oranges in a sunny chair,

And the green freedom of a cockatoo

Upon a rug mingle to dissipate

The holy hush of ancient sacrifice.

She dreams a little, and she feels the dark

Encroachment of that old catastrophe,

As a calm darkens among water-lights.

The pungent oranges and bright, green wings

Seem things in some procession of the dead,

Winding across wide water, without sound.

The day is like wide water, without sound,

Stilled for the passing of her dreaming feet

Over the seas, to silent Palestine,

Dominion of the blood and sepulchre.

II

Why should she give her bounty to the dead?

What is divinity if it can come

Only in silent shadows and in dreams?

Shall she not find in comforts of the sun,

In pungent fruit and bright, green wings, or else

In any balm or beauty of the earth,

Things to be cherished like the thought of heaven?

Divinity must live within herself:

Passions of rain, or moods in falling snow;

Grievings in loneliness, or unsubdued

Elations when the forest blooms; gusty

Emotions on wet roads on autumn nights;

All pleasures and all pains, remembering

The bough of summer and the winter branch.

These are the measures destined for her soul.

III

Jove in the clouds had his inhuman birth.

No mother suckled him, no sweet land gave

Large-mannered motions to his mythy mind

He moved among us, as a muttering king,

Magnificent, would move among his hinds,

Until our blood, commingling, virginal,

With heaven, brought such requital to desire

The very hinds discerned it, in a star.

Shall our blood fail? Or shall it come to be

The blood of paradise? And shall the earth

Seem all of paradise that we shall know?

The sky will be much friendlier then than now,

A part of labor and a part of pain,

And next in glory to enduring love,

Not this dividing and indifferent blue.

IV

She says, "I am content when wakened birds,

Before they fly, test the reality

Of misty fields, by their sweet questionings;

But when the birds are gone, and their warm fields

Return no more, where, then, is paradise?"

There is not any haunt of prophecy,

Nor any old chimera of the grave,

Neither the golden underground, nor isle

Melodious, where spirits gat them home,

Nor visionary south, nor cloudy palm

Remote on heaven's hill, that has endured

As April's green endures; or will endure

Like her remembrance of awakened birds,

Or her desire for June and evening, tipped

By the consummation of the swallow's wings.

V

She says, "But in contentment I still feel

The need of some imperishable bliss."

Death is the mother of beauty; hence from her,

Alone, shall come fulfilment to our dreams

And our desires. Although she strews the leaves

Of sure obliteration on our paths,

The path sick sorrow took, the many paths

Where triumph rang its brassy phrase, or love

Whispered a little out of tenderness,

She makes the willow shiver in the sun

For maidens who were wont to sit and gaze

Upon the grass, relinquished to their feet.

She causes boys to pile new plums and pears

On disregarded plate. The maidens taste

And stray impassioned in the littering leaves.

VI

Is there no change of death in paradise?

Does ripe fruit never fall? Or do the boughs

Hang always heavy in that perfect sky,

Unchanging, yet so like our perishing earth,

With rivers like our own that seek for seas

They never find, the same receding shores

That never touch with inarticulate pang?

Why set the pear upon those river-banks

Or spice the shores with odors of the plum?

Alas, that they should wear our colors there,

The silken weavings of our afternoons,

And pick the strings of our insipid lutes!

Death is the mother of beauty, mystical,

Within whose burning bosom we devise

Our earthly mothers waiting, sleeplessly.

VII

Supple and turbulent, a ring of men

Shall chant in orgy on a summer morn

Their boisterous devotion to the sun,

Not as a god, but as a god might be,

Naked among them, like a savage source.

Their chant shall be a chant of paradise,

Out of their blood, returning to the sky;

And in their chant shall enter, voice by voice,

The windy lake wherein their lord delights,

The trees, like serafin, and echoing hills,

That choir among themselves long afterward.

They shall know well the heavenly fellowship

Of men that perish and of summer morn.

And whence they came and whither they shall go

The dew upon their feet shall manifest.

VIII

She hears, upon that water without sound,

A voice that cries, "The tomb in Palestine

Is not the porch of spirits lingering.

It is the grave of Jesus, where he lay."

We live in an old chaos of the sun,

Or old dependency of day and night,

Or island solitude, unsponsored, free,

Of that wide water, inescapable.

Deer walk upon our mountains, and the quail

Whistle about us their spontaneous cries;

Sweet berries ripen in the wilderness;

And, in the isolation of the sky,

At evening, casual flocks of pigeons make

Ambiguous undulations as they sink,

Downward to darkness, on extended wings.

(ii) Analysis of the Poem:

The poem “Sunday Morning” is an ambiguous poem too some extent. The entire poem is divided into eight stanzas. The first stanza of the poem describes the leisure of a woman

belonging to the sophisticated class in a Sunday morning. Under the sunny sky she is having her breakfast. In the calm weather the cockatoo is singing. The bird's song, the pleasant weather and carefree hours of the Sunday morning create a drowsy effect on the woman. She dozes off. In her sleep she has a dream about death. Significantly, in the dream she mentions about water. " The day is like wide water, without sound,/ Stilled for the passing of her dreaming feet/ over the seas, to silent Palestine,/ Dominion of the blood and sepulchre."

The references to water and sea are densely symbolic in the poem. Indeed, water is an ambiguous symbol. It implies both life and death. The woman is having a dream which is about death. The solemn contemplation on death makes her feel liberated; as it is through the event of death she has been able to touch the sacred land Palestine. In a feminist thought, water is symbolic of rebirth and liberation. In the mother's womb, the foetus is surrounded by water. This is called amniotic fluid which protects the foetus from perils of outer world. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, the two eminent feminist critics, in their epoch-making book *Madwoman in The Attic* focuses on the tropes of water and claustrophobic objects as a predominant objects occur recurrently in a Feminist thought. According to Gilbert and Gubar, the claustrophobic objects are symbolic of the hindrances.These obstacles are imposed on women by the patriarchal societal structure. The reference to water is an ardent desire on part of the imprisoned feminine self to be liberated from this rigid social customs. In "Sunday Morning" the dream of the woman about water in an oblique way implies her thought on death. To her, death appears to be a liberator which transcends her from an indolent hour of a Sunday to the sacred land of Palestine. The second stanza of the poem deals with a sudden change in thought pattern. The speaker becomes sceptical about the essence of divinity. The woman contemplates on the variegated beauty of the world. The sunny sky, the beautiful birds, the fragrance and colour of the natural objects make her attracted to the earthly life. Like an ardent admirer of nature, she savours the beauty. The thought of sacrificing these beautiful aspects of nature in order to perceive divinity is something that repels her. In the third stanza, the woman contemplates on Jove or God. Her tone is sympathetic towards Jove. She believes, jove has an inhuman birth and he has never been part of all these earthly beauties and pleasure. He does not have mother who suckled him. Thus, he is bereft of any fond ties. In the fourth stanza the poet talks about the variegated beauty of nature and the power of death. In five stanza onwards the poet goes on contemplating on the aspect of beauty and death. The sixth stanza, deals with the nature of heaven: "Is there no change of death in paradise? Does ripe fruit never fall?" If rivers flow but never reach the ocean, if fruits become ripe but never fall, if things are born but never die, if there is only 'bliss' and no contrary to give it any meaning, then such a heaven is not a desirable place. It must be impossible, and even if it actually existed, it would not be desirable, interesting or worthwhile to seek for it. Religions have construed a vision of a paradise similar to the earthly paradise but unchanging and eternal. Such a concept of the paradise is tedious.

The seventh stanza describes the religion of the future, a new paganism in which men will worship the physical universe. They will believe in the brotherhood of man and they will be aware that the lives of all men are temporary. The final stanza states that Jesus (God) is dead and that man must live alone, on a transitory but lovely planet. The woman's recognition that Jesus is a historical figure and that she is alone, only as a part of "unsponsored" nature, frees her from the prison in which her traditional beliefs had locked her. The conclusion, which is a merging of the woman's perception with that of the other voice, is a picture of the sweet earth and a statement of the Everyman's need to recognize it and come to terms with the inevitable reality of death, that

gives real meaning of life. The poem revolves around a duality. The death consciousness and the immediate necessity to savour the beauty of natural world both constitute the narrative drive in the poem. The phrase "Sunday Morning" which is used as a title of the poem is densely symbolic and ironical. Sunday morning, according to the belief of devout Christians, is a sacred hour when all the pious Christians go to the church for the Sunday prayer. It is holy hour where all the Christians must follow the sacred ritual of prayer in order to achieve divine blessing. Ironically, it is the same sacred hour of the day when the anonymous woman in the play is having a dream on death. Indeed, it is the dream which makes her doubtful about the true essence of divinity. In the very hour of offering prayer to God, the woman nurtures the doubtful attitude to the existence of the Divine. The act of offering prayer to God is a submissive gesture; but when the devotee becomes doubtful about the existence of the Deity it becomes a crucial moment. It is the moment of rupture where the unflinching loyalty of the devotee and the firm belief on the omnipotence of the Deity get questioned by the skeptic mind. The poem takes its genesis from that moment of dilemma and confusion.

4 (b)

Introduction to the Poetry of E.E. Cummings

Edward Estlin Cummings was born in Cambridge, Massachusetts on 14 October, 1894. He was admitted at the Cambridge Latin High School. He studied Latin and Greek there. He obtained both his B.A. and M.A. degree from Harvard University. His earlier poems get published in the anthology titled *Eight Harvard Poets* in 1917. He is considered as one of the most innovative poets of his time. He experimented with both the linguistic medium and form of the poetry. His typical style is to place few nonsensical phrases or words in the poem. Some of these words are hisown coinage. He introduced new forms in grammatical norms. For example, words like "if", "am", "because" he uses as nouns. His non-traditional forms and linguistic innovation attracted most of his readers. He died on 3 September, 1962.

Text of the Poem: As Freedom is a Breakfastfood

As freedom is a breakfastfood
Or truth can live with right and wrong
Or molehills are from mountains made
------long enough and just so long
Will being pay the rent of seem
And genius please the talentgang
And water most encourage flame

As hatracks into peachtrees grow
Or hopes dance best on bald men's hair
And every finger is a toe
And any courage is a fear
-----long enough and just so long
Will the impure think all things pure
And hornets wail by children stung

Or as the seeing are the blind
And robins never welcome spring
Nor flatfolk prove their world is round
Nor dingsters die at break of dong
And common's rare and millstones float
---long enough and just so long
Tomorrow will not be too late

Worms are the words but joy's the voice
Down shall go which and up come who
Breasts will be breasts thighs will be thighs
Deeds cannot dream what dreams can do
__time is a tree (this life one leaf)
But love is the sky and i am for you
Just so long and long enough

Analysis of the poem:

The poem is divided into four stanzas. The great depression in the United States is the historical backdrop against which the poem is being composed. The first stanza deals with the happenings of certain things which appear unbelievable in a normal situation. For example, the genius would please the "talentgang", the water would encourage the flame ------these two are impossible propositions in a normal situation, but it seems a possible and normal thing in the tumultuous socio-political time of the great depression. The poem deals with the binary of possible and impossible, normal and abnormal from its outset. As a modernist poem it goes on establishing the fact that, these binaries are relative and arbitrary. The same pattern of binary formation and its subversion goes on in the second stanza also. The dancing of hope in a bald man's hair, the arbitrary nature of fear and courage, and the imagination of all fingers' transformation in a toe all these point out the absurdity of the time. The time is a juncture where normal things get reversed, yet this reversal turns out to have a valid meaning within it equally. The third stanza features a significant shift in tonal quality of the poet. The hope and pessimism both go hand in hand in this stanza. Finally the optimism dawns on the poet. Therefore, he comes to the final assertion that "tomorrow will not be too late". The time is a difficult one but for a new beginning of life the next morning is there. The fourth stanza deals with completely the poet's firm belief on a new beginning of life. The line "Time is a tree" is a typical modernist preoccupation with time.As a modernist poet Cummings emphasizes on this aspect of time. Life, metaphorically is being compared to a leaf of this big tree. The colossal presence of time and the brief life span both these aspects are nascent in this line. The ultimately assertion of the poet that love is a sky and "i am for you" is very connotative. The intensity of the poet's emotion is indicated when his love is being compared to the sky. The bold and passionate affirmation that "i am for you" indicates the possibility and promise of transcendence of life from this crisis hour.

5 (b)

(i)Introduction to the Poetry of Langston Hughes

Langston Hughes was born in 1902 in Joplin, Missouri. The separation of his parents ultimately makes his childhood days difficult. Hughes was deeply influenced by his mother. She was the major source of his intellectual development as a poet. His childhood days are spent at his maternal grandfather's place at Kansas. From the formative years of his life he gets attached to the theatre. He

is one of the remarkable writers of Harlem Renaissance. Harlem Renaissance is a Movement in America, where the Afro-Americans living in the Manhattan or Harlem want to adhere to their black origin. The movement is characterized by the demands from Black people to reinvigorate the Black art and culture. It is a literary movement demanding recognition of the Black identity. After his graduation he becomes acquainted with Alain Locke. This association helped him to publish one of his major literary works entitled *The Weary Blues* in 1926.His poetry aims to question social injustices and oppression. He writes for the cause of the downtrodden. *The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain* is another of his important work. It is another important book of Harlem Renaissance. In the work Hughes mentions the predicament of the Black in the-then America. It is the racist attitude that hindrances the principles of equality, freedom and justice. He is at ease with different genres: poetry, essay, novel and music. His strongest poetical work is *Montage of A Dream Deferred.* He is the recipient of Harmon foundation Medal for his novel *Not Without Laughter* (1930). His sympathy for the Black people makes him one of the important social reformers in America.

(ii) The Negro Speaks of River

Text of the Poem:

I've known rivers:
I've known rivers ancient as the world and older than the flow
Of human blood in human veins.
My soul has grown deep like the rivers.
I bathed in the Euphrates when dawns were young.
I built my hut near the Congo and it lulled me to sleep.
I looked upon the Nile and raised the pyramids above it.
I heard the singing of the Mississipi when Abe Lincoln went
Down to New Orleans, and I've seen its muddy bosom turn
All golden in the sunset.
I've known rivers:
Ancient, dusky rivers.
My soul has grown deep like the rivers.

Analysis of the poem: The poem was published in *The Weary Blues* in 1926.In this thirteen line long poem Hughes has packed some ideas which are crucial to the fundamental existential demands of the Afro-Americans. In a simple reading, the poet speaks in the first person narratorial voice. He talks about his acquaintance with the rivers. He knows the rivers which are as ancient as the world. Their origin can be traced by the wonderful metaphor "older than the flow of human blood in human veins". You never know the date or time since when in human veins blood started to flow. The phrase is thus symbolizing ancient time or time immemorial. In fifth line, the speaker said, he bathed in Euphrates. He mentions the river Congo. The references to the Nile, and the Mississipi equally point out the ancient time. The existence of the rivers and the poet's acquaintance with them imply the ancient race of humanity. And the poet is one person who belongs to this ancient clan of humanity. The poet identifies himself with the elemental forces of nature. The rivers are these elemental forces. The four rives that he mention in the poem all carry racial connotation. The Nile is in Egypt. The

Congo is an African river. The Euphrates is in Greece. The Mississipi is in America. The poet uses verbs like "bathed", "built", "looked", " heard" . These verbs are symbolic of contemplative activities. Prof. Gray comments in this context: "knowing the rise and fall of cultures, black people have known the tale of time. Participating in the flow of waters'ancient as the world', however, they also know something of the story of eternity." The poet in the poem by referring to these four rivers tries to establish the fact he belongs to the human race. This human race is as ancient as the rivers which sustain and nourish the civilizations across the world. He laments the fact that in spite of belonging to this ancient race of civilization humanity is still inflicted by the disease of racism. In the poem the speaker speaks for the oppressed class of Afro-American community. In this context, it is important to understand the gender theory for a better comprehension of the poem. Postcolonial critics always insist on the point that postcolonial studies aim to champion the cause of the oppressed or colonized. The poem "The Negro Speaks of River" is a postcolonial poem in its true essence where the speaker talks about the predicament of oppressed Afro-American clan who from time immemorial belong to this ancient race of humans; just like the White Americans. Yet they have never been given the status which is due to them. They are the subjugated, deprived clan. Postcolonialism and Feminism both these theoretical perspectives are associated with each other. Both the theories talk about the binary between oppressor and oppressed; victor and victimized. It is the victimized or oppressed self which is being viewed as a feminine self from the lens of gender theory. In this interpretation it is the Afro-American people who can be viewed as the feminine selves. The masculine self is the white Americans who have snatched away the fundamental rights of living life with honour from them. In a feminist text the female self often expresses her agonies of living in a patriarchal society whose rigidity of mores and codes imprison her life. The feminist texts capture such moment of pure confession from its subject. In order to withstand this claustrophobic situation the feminine self wants to have rebirth. To her the event of rebirth becomes only possible through the means of death. Therefore, in feminist texts, the reference of water and water resources abound in. It is a potent metaphor for a feminist writer who implies dual meanings through this water symbol. The water becomes her means of death and equally it turns out to be the medium of achieving rebirth. The acquaintance of the poetic persona with rivers in the poem and his assertion of the sense of empathy with rivers reinforce two things. He wants to reborn as a free man who can live his life with the honour. In order to fulfil this desire he needs to die. Death would be his liberator from the agonized life of a black Afro-American.

Unit 5 (b)

(i) Introduction to the Poetry of Adrienne Rich

Adrienne Cecil Rich is a figure of enduring importance in the American Feminist Movement of the 1960s. She is born on 16 May, 1929. She died on 27 March, 2012. Her political ideology of constructing a better world for the women who are the "second sex"[i] in patriarchal society imbues her poetic vision. In her poetry, Rich endeavors to give voice to those peripheral citizens of American society whose voice remains muffled in the literature of the mainstream American canon. Rich's unflinching loyalty to feminist causes is not only her political ideology but also an extension of her poetic sensibility. The isolation of being a woman, a poet, a survivor in the phallogocentric sphere is an enduring leitmotif in Rich's poetry. Significantly, the alienation of a feminine self, the note of frustration that percolates into Rich's poetry are not absolutely depressing in nature. Critic Erica Jong perceives this sense of loneliness in Rich's poetry as essentially redemptive in nature. This note of ennui ignites female creativity. The concepts of

"woman" and "woman poet" are integrated and become an organic entity in her poetry. Rich inscribes this newly gained subjectivity and identity into the texts. Therefore, in Rich's poetry the intersection of personal and political elements is symptomatic of the inscription of feminine subjectivity, forming the contour of gynographical writing which imbues Rich's poetry. In *A Literature of Their Own,* eminent feminist critic, Elaine Showalter theorizes the development of a feminist writing into three phases: the feminine, feminist and female. Rich's poetry can be read in terms of Showalter's categories. In the feminine phase, women wrote in an effort to equal the intellectual achievements of the male poets and internalised its assumptions about female nature. In Rich's early career, this feminine phase is evident. In 1947 Rich left Baltimore to attend Radcliffe College. During this period her reading of women poets helps her to empathize with their perceptions. But she tries to be equal with male poets. Therefore, her earlier poetic endeavor is an attempt on her part to be acknowledged as a woman poet in the phallogocentric domain. 'Aunt Jennifer's Tigers' and 'Living in Sin' foreground this phase of emulation of male authors. Later Rich wrote "... I wanted women poets to be the equals of men, and to be equal was still confused with sounding the same". This study not only tries to locate Rich in her historico-political context but also tries to see her evolution in terms of two differing responses within the larger backdrop of critical theory that equates writing and the female body. Rich's use of language is a major thrust in this phase.

(ii) "Aunt Jennifer's Tigers"

Text of the Poem: Aunt Jennifer's Tigers

Aunt Jennifer's tigers prance across a screen,
Bright topaz denizens of a world of green.
They do not fear the men beneath the tree;
They pace in sleek chivalric certainty.

Aunt Jennifer's finger fluttering through her wool
Find even the ivory needle hard to pull.
The massive weight of Uncle's wedding band
Sits heavily upon Aunt Jennifer's hand.

When Aunt is dead, her terrified hands will lie
Still ringed with ordeals she was mastered by.
The tigers in the panel that she made
Will go on prancing, proud and unafraid.

Analysis of the poem: "Aunt Jennifer's Tigers" first appeared in her anthology, *A Change of World* (1951). The poem describes the character Aunt Jennifer. She is a married woman. She goes on weaving with her needle the tigers. The wedding ring ringed her hand heavily. The poem ends with the suggestion of death of Aunt Jennifer. Even after her death her created artefact will exist. In Radcliffe College, Rich became acquainted with intellectuals, artists and for the first time she found herself among other Jewish women. Her quest for a Jewish identity and the futility of this endeavor characterize this phase. Therefore, Aunt Jennifer, like Rich, encounters a difficulty in recognizing her true self. Like Rich, Aunt Jennifer is ringed by an unequal marital relation. Her existence is overshadowed by the domineering presence of her husband: "Uncle's

wedding band/Sits heavily upon Aunt Jennifer's hand". Uncle's wedding band becomes metaphor of feminine subjugation in the patriarchal institution of marriage. Literally, its massive weight upon her hand is a hindrance to her act of weaving. Metaphorically, it is the wedding band by which she is ringed. Her life of confinement is thus a consequence of this wedding band. Rich's criticism of the custom of marriage is of paramount importance in this poem. Rich was unmarried during the composition period of the poem therefore, Aunt Jennifer is not an extension of her own self. She is, perhaps, a poetic representation of Rich's mother and maternal grandmother. Like Aunt Jennifer, both of them sacrificed their creative selves at the altar of marriage. The submissive married woman obdurately bearing the burden of her unequal married life is the crux of the poem. She is robbed of her language. Gloria Anzaldua said, "Ethnic identity is twin skin to linguistic identity". Therefore, robbing of one's language is metonymic of snatching away one's identity. The feminist quest of seeking one's own identity characterizes the figure of Aunt Jennifer. She is weaving tigers in the panel; it becomes a means through which she claims her identity that is negated by patriarchy. The virulent tigers which she weaves are in contrast with her own existence which is subdued. She achieves her identity remaining immortalized in her creation. In the last stanza, Rich anticipates the death of Jennifer and the imperishable existence of her artefact: "when Aunt is dead,.../The tigers in the panel that she made/Will go on prancing, proud and unafraid" . Her identity is eternalized through the medium of her artefact. The existence of the artefact itself is a vibrant representation of its author's entity. Adreienne Rich's critic Carmen Birkle points out that, "Aunt Jennifer's artefact is a form of articulation, transforming her silence not into action but into language". It articulates her suppressed anger, and her obdurate way of bearing the burden of the massive weight of uncle's wedding band. Aunt Jennifer can be compared to that of the mythic character Philomela, daughter of Athenian king Pandion. Her sister's husband, Tereus, violated her and cut her tongue. Philomela weaves a tapestry narrating the heinous act of Tereus. Her tapestry, therefore, ceases to be mere art; rather, it becomes a linguistic medium narrating the injustice that is perpetrated upon her. Jennifer's artefact expresses her repressed desire of living her life fearlessly like the virulent tigers which she weaves in her panel. Articulating her repressed desire the panel transforms into a linguistic medium. It creates a discourse. Gloria Anzaldua said that language is essentially viewed as a "male discourse", because it disseminates power. Creating herown language Jennifer replaces the tradition of silence that is attributed by patriarchy to the women. Earlier feminist critics assume that patriarchy is ever active in subjugating women while later feminist critics propose the notion that women should write in order to assert their rights. Thereby, their writing will confront the male representations, the "his-story" which is the patriarchal assumptions on women. Thereby, gives birth to "her-story" which is symptomatic of feminine power and identity.

According to the notion of second -wave feminism, Aunt Jennifer in her panel creates "her-story" which disrupts the phallogocentric strategy of silencing woman. In this attempt to replace "his-story" by writing "her-story", Jennifer can be compared to Hawthorne's heroine Hester Prynne, in *The Scarlet Letter* who had resisted the shameful connotation of the letter A which she is forced to wear on her breast. Hester's feminine power is thus asserted when she turns the letter A from a "badge of shame" into a thing of beauty and, ironically, instead of defaming her, decorates her enhancing her beauty. Though Aunt Jennifer is viewed as a docile woman by the critics, this opinion may be refuted by emphasizing the fact that her silence is metaphoric. The panel she weaves is suggestive of her own discourse of resistance. Mary Slowik, the eminent Critic, has pointed out that in Rich's earlier poetry the element of anger does

not exist. This argument is refutable by the observation of Alicia Ostriker who emphasizes the fact that Rich's anger is transmuted into liberating energy, Thus, the feminine anger of Jennifer has been channelized by the medium of her art which is emancipatory phenomenon as it has attributed a feminine identity of her own. Therefore, Jennifer's feminine anger is transformed into creativity.

Assignments

1. Comment on the aspect of patriotism in the poetry of walt Whitman with reference to the poems in your syllabus.

2. Comment on the concept of death in the poetry of Emily Dickinson.

3. Evaluate Robert Frost as a modernist poet with reference to "After Apple Picking".

4. Critically analyze the poem "Sunday Morning" by Wallace Stevens.

5. "Aunt Jennifer's Tigers" is a feminist poem. Illustrate.

6. How does the poem "The Nigro Speaks of River" represent the Black American consciousness?

7. Comment on the style of ee Cummings with reference to the poem "As Freedom is a Breakfastfood".

Suggested Reading

1. Boris Ford ed. *The New Pelican Guide to English Literature*. Vol. 9, *American Literature.* London and New York: Penguine, 1988; 1991.

2. Emory Elliott et al, eds. *The Columbia History of the American Novel*. New York: Columbia UP, 1991.

3.Malcolm Bradbury and R. Ruland. *From Puritanism to Postmodernism: A History of American Literature*. New York and London: Penguine, 1991

4. Walter Kalaidjian. *The Cambridge Companion to American Modernism*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2005.

5. American literature sites. Web. http:// public.wsu.edu/~campbelld/amlit/sites.htm

6. F.J. Hoffman. The Modern Novel in America, 1900-1950. New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1951.

7. Richard Chase. *The American Novel and its Tradition*. Staten Island, New York: The Gordian Press, 1957.

8. Joy Porter and Kenneth M. Roemer, eds. *The Cambridge Companion to Native American Literature*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2005.

9. Ashok Sengupta and Krishna Sen. *A Short History of American Literature.* Hyderabad: Orient Blackswan, 2017.

10. Malcolm Bradbury. *The Modern American Novel.* London and New York: Penguine, 1983.

BLOCK II

The Glass Menagerie

By

Tennessee Williams

TENNESSEE WILLIAMS-*THE GLASS MENAGERIE*

Content Structure

UNIT 6(a): American Drama: A Historical Overview
UNIT 6(b): Introduction to the Dramatic Practice of Tennessee Williams
UNIT 6(c): Background to the Production of *The Glass Menagerie*
UNIT 7(a): Plot Overview of *The Glass Menagerie*

UNIT 7(b): *The Glass Menagerie* as a Memory Play
UNIT 7(c): Williams' handling of time in *The Glass Menagerie*
UNIT 8(a): Alienation of the Wingfields
UNIT 8(b): Escapism in *The Glass Menagerie*

Unit 6(a): American Drama: A Historical Overview

Early 20th century American theatre was dominated by the Barrymores—Ethel Barrymore, John Barrymore, and Lionel Barrymore. Other greats included Laurette Taylor, Jeanne Eagels, and Eva Le Gallienne. The massive social change that went on during the Great Depression also had an effect on theatre in the United States. Plays took on social roles, identifying with immigrants and the unemployed. The Federal Theatre Project, a New Deal program set up by Franklin D. Roosevelt, helped to promote theatre and provide jobs for actors. The program staged many elaborate and controversial plays such as *It Can't Happen Here* by Sinclair Lewis and *The Cradle Will Rock* by Marc Blitzstein. By contrast, the legendary producer Brock Pemberton (founder of the Tony Awards) was among those who felt that it was more than ever a time for comic entertainment, in order to provide an escape from the prevailing harsh social conditions: typical of his productions was Lawrence Riley's comedy *Personal Appearance* (1934), whose success on Broadway (501 performances) vindicated Pemberton.

The minstrel shows of the early 19th century are believed by some to be the roots of black theatre, but they initially were written by whites, acted by whites in blackface, and performed for white audiences. After the American Civil War, blacks began to perform in minstrel shows (then called "Ethiopian minstrelsy"), and by the turn of the 20th century they were producing black musicals, many of which were written, produced, and acted entirely by blacks. The first known play by an American black was James Brown's *King Shotaway (1823). William Wells Brown's The Escape; or, A Leap for Freedom (1858), was the first black play published, but the first real success of a black dramatist was Angelina W. Grimké's Rachel (1916).*

Black theatre flourished during the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s and '30s. Experimental groups and black theatre companies emerged in Chicago, New York City, and Washington, D.C. Among these was the Ethiopian Art Theatre, which established Paul Robeson as America's foremost black actor. Garland Anderson's play *Appearances* (1925) was the first play of black authorship to be produced on Broadway, but black theatre did not create a Broadway hit until Langston Hughes's *Mulatto* (1935) won wide acclaim. In that same year the Federal Theatre Project was founded, providing a training ground for blacks. In the late 1930s, black community theatres began to appear, revealing talents such as those of Ossie Davis and Ruby Dee. By 1940 black theatre was firmly grounded in the American Negro Theatre and the Negro Playwrights' Company.
After World War II black theatre grew more progressive, more radical, and more militant, reflecting the ideals of black revolution and seeking to establish a mythology and symbolism apart from white culture. Councils were organized to abolish the use of racial stereotypes in theatre and to integrate black playwrights into the mainstream of American dramaturgy.

Plays of Eugene O' Neil
Bread and Butter (1914), *The Personal Equation* (1915), *Beyond the Horizon*, 1918 - Pulitzer Prize (1920), *Anna Christie* (1920) - Pulitzer Prize (1922), *The Emperor Jones* (1920), *The Hairy Ape* (1922), *The Fountain,* (1923), *All God's Chillun Got Wings,* (1926), *Strange Interlude*, (1928) - Pulitzer Prize, *Mourning Becomes Electra*, (1931), *Days Without End*, (1933), *The Iceman Cometh*, written 1939, published 1940, first performed 1946, *Long Day's Journey into Night*, written 1941, first performed 1956; Pulitzer Prize 1957, *A Moon for the Misbegotten*, written 1941–1943, first performed 1947, *A Touch of the Poet*, completed in 1942, first performed 1958, these are his most famous plays.. He also wrote plenty

of one-act plays. *Bound East for Cardiff* (1914), *In The Zone* (1917), *The Long Voyage Home* (1917), *Moon of the Caribbees* (1918) are some notable one-act plays of Neil. O'Neill was the first American dramatist to regard the stage as a literary medium and the only American playwright ever to receive the Nobel Prize for Literature. O'Neill saw the theatre as a valid forum for the presentation of serious ideas. For more than 20 years, both with such masterpieces as *Desire Under the Elms, Mourning Becomes Electra*, and *The Iceman Cometh* and by his inspiration to other serious dramatists, O'Neill set the pace for the blossoming of the Broadway theatre.

Plays of Tennessee Williams

Tennessee Williams was a Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright whose works include *The Glass Menagerie* (1944), *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1947), *Summer and Smoke* (1948), *The Rose Tattoo* (1951). His others plays are *Candles to the Sun* (1936), *Fugitive Kind* (1937), *Spring Storm* (1937), *Me Vaysha* (1937), *Not About Nightingales* (1938), *Battle of Angels* (1940), *I Rise in Flame, Cried the Phoenix* (1941), *You Touched Me* (1945), *Stairs to the Roof* (1947).

Plays of Arthur Miller

The Man Who Had All the Luck (1944), revolves around a person who believes he has no control over his life, but is instead the victim of chance. *All My Sons* (1947), explores the effect of past decisions on the present and future of the individual. *Death of a Salesman* (1949), addresses the loss of identity, as well as a man's inability to accept change within himself and society.. Arthur Miller is considered one of the greatest American playwrights of the 20th century. He got the Pulitzer Prize for *Death of a Salesman.*

Plays of William Saroyan

Saroyan famous plays are *My Heart's in the Highlands* (1939), *The Time of Your Life* (1939), *A Theme in the Life of the Great American Goof* (1940), *Love's Old Sweet Song* (1940), *The Beautiful People* (1941), *Across the Board on Tomorrow Morning and Talking to You* (1942), *Hello Out There* (1942), *Get Away Old Man* (1943).

Plays and Monologues of Clifford Odets

He began with *Awake and Sing*, which is a play about three generations living under the same roof. His other play *Waiting for Lefty* (1935) is a play about the events that surround a cab strike in New York in 1934 happened because of Great Depression. Also in 1935, the Group Theatre produced Odets' *Till the Day I Die*, which is about conflict between communists and Nazis. Next, Odets wrote *Paradise Lost*, which addresses the issues of a middle-class family as their values and morals shift due to the change in social structure. He also wrote *Golden Boy* (1937) and *Rocket to the Moon (1939)*. He was a multitalented person. He was a playwright, screenplay writer, an actor, and director.

Plays of Randolph Edmonds

In 1945 he wrote five plays-*The Land of Cotton*, *Gangsters over Harlem*, *Yellow Death*, *Silas Brown*, and *The High Court of Historia*. He portrays the worthwhile themes of Negro life which, earlier was depicted as a derogatory subject matter, keeping the balance between literary and artistic values.

Plays of Langston Hughes

Mule Bone, with Zora Neale Hurston (1931), *Mulatto* (1935), *Troubled Island*, with William Grant Still (1936), *Little Ham*, (1936), *Emperor of Haiti*, (1936) *Don't You Want to be Free?* (1938) *Street Scene*, contributed lyrics, 1947. The American dream, dignity, racism, wisdom self-actualization, aspiration, sexuality and theme of mulatto are some notable themes he dealt with in his plays. He was the recipient of several awards.

Plays of Susan Glaspell

Her notable plays include *Bernice* (1919), *Inheritors* (1921), *The Verge* (1921), *Chains of Dew* (1922), published for the first time in (2010), *The Comic Artist* (1927), co-written with Norman Matson, *Alison's House* (1930), winner of 1931 Pulitzer Prize for Drama, and *Springs Eternal* (1943), published for the first time in 2010. Some of her one-act plays are *Suppressed Desires* (1915), co-written with George Cram Cook, *Trifles* (1916), adapted into

the short story *A Jury of Her Peers* (1917), *Close the Book* (1917), *The Outside* (1917). Her daring views on justice and morality is considered as a very daring feminist writer in America.

Unit 6(a): Introduction to the Dramatic Practice of Tennessee Williams

Thomas Lanier Williams III was born on March 26, 1911, in Columbus, Mississippi, to Edwina Dakin Williams and Cornelius Coffin Williams. He was one of three children including an older sister, Rose Isabel, and a younger brother, Walter Dakin. Due to Cornelius Williams's inability to adjust to a settled, domestic life, and in part because of his occupations, first as a traveling salesman and later as a manager, he was almost always absent. Edwina and the children relocated frequently, living in Mississippi, Missouri, and Tennessee. At the age of five, while living in Mississippi, Tom became ill with diphtheria, an experience that he would barely survive. He was temporarily paralyzed and did not regain full use of his legs for two years. As a result, Tom was significantly transformed.

He kept more to himself and took to more stationary pursuits. This traumatic event proved fortunate for Tom, as these pursuits consisted primarily of reading and writing later in life. At the age of sixteen, Williams published his first work. His essay "Can a Good Wife Be a Good Sport?" appeared in *Smart Set* magazine in May of 1927 and in 1928, his story "The Vengeance of Nitocris" was published in *Weird Tales*. A year later, Tom began studying journalism at the University of Missouri at Columbia. As a freshman, he wrote his first play, entitled *Beauty Is the Word*, which received an honorable mention from the University Dramatic Arts Club. Motivated by the positive response to his work, or perhaps driven to receive more than an honorable mention, Tom began focusing more on his writing and less on other subjects. With his grades declining, Cornelius withdrew his son from the university and found him a job as a typist for Continental Shoemakers, where he would work for the next few years.

During this time, the mental health of Tom's sister, Rose, was rapidly failing and by 1937 a prefrontal lobotomy was performed, leaving Rose incapacitated and requiring institutionalization. Tom heard this news only after the procedure was complete. His inability to save his sister, coupled with the backdrop of his complex domestic situation, provided him with material that would appear again and again in his works. Despite the distractions of a difficult home life and after failed stints at the University of Missouri and Washington University, Tom re-enrolled in college and graduated from the University of Iowa in 1938.

The name "Tennessee Williams" is believed to have first appeared on an application for a drama contest in 1937 and later made a more formal debut on "The Field of Blue Children*"* published by *Story*. Reborn as "Tennessee," Williams worked even more furiously on his writing, now venturing to construct full-length plays. Between 1941 and 1943, after taking time to study advanced playwriting with John Gassner at the New School of Social Research, Williams moved often, finding work in Provincetown, St. Louis, New York, Macon, and Jacksonville, and finally accepting a position as a screenwriter for MGM in Hollywood, California. It was during this time that he began work on *The Gentleman Caller*, which would later be renamed and given new life. *The Gentleman Caller* became *The Glass Menagerie*, the play responsible for making Williams famous—an affliction that he would refer to as "the catastrophe of success." *The Glass Menagerie* opened in Chicago in 1944 and later ran in New York, where it won the New York Critics Circle Award.

Though not always immediately well-received, Williams went on to write some of the most important and dynamic plays in the history of American theater, including *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, *The Night of the Iguana*, and *Orpheus Descending*. Additionally, he published several volumes of poetry, as well as compilations of original short stories.

Despite his success, Williams suffered emotionally throughout his life. This distress was exacerbated by the deaths of several loved ones over the years: his father in 1956, his grandfather in 1957, his lover, Frank Merlo in1963, and finally his mother in 1980. Williams fought long battles with depression and alcohol and drug abuse. He sought help through psychoanalysis and through his conversion to Roman Catholicism, whereby he renamed himself for a second time—

this time as Francis Xavier, a saint believed to be an actual ancestor of Williams. Unable to overcome the problems that plagued him, he nevertheless continued producing work throughout the remainder of his life.

Contrary to his confessed wish to someday pass away peacefully while sleeping in the brass bed at his New Orleans apartment, Tennessee Williams died tragically on February 25, 1983, at the Hotel Elysée in New York.

Although his work did not consistently receive the positive critical acclaim that Williams hoped for during his life, his plays have survived the test of time and are widely produced throughout the world today. His most well-known works continue to evolve in new adaptations, and previously unreleased or lesser-known works are now being studied and produced posthumously. Williams has been honored for his achievements with several New York Critics Circle Awards, Pulitzer Prizes, a National Arts Club gold medal for literature, several honorary degrees, and countless other awards.

Unit 6(c): Background To The Production Of *The Glass Menagerie*

The Glass Menagerie opened on December 26, 1944 at The Civic Theatre in Chicago. According to Tennessee Williams, there were few reasons to think that this production would have better success than any of his other plays. In 1940, his play *Battle of Angels* opened in Boston; it would be Williams's first major production. The play had little success and closed where it began. Floating around the country, Williams worked at jobs that provided little satisfaction and negligible pay. It seemed to be a lucky break when his agent secured him a fulltime job as a writer at MGM Studios in Hollywood, but Williams quickly grew frustrated with the job. His language was deemed too difficult for the actors of the day, and his screenplay, *The Gentleman Caller*, was rejected for being another *Gone with the Wind*. Williams quit his job.

By 1944, Williams had already written at least six full-length plays, in addition to poetry, short stories, and other writings. He reworked the screenplay that had been declined by MGM and prepared it as the script for a stage production. Audrey Wood passed the work on to Eddie Dowling, an independent actor, director, and producer, who decided to co-direct a production of the play with Margo Jones. Unable to quell his nerves about the ability of the play to succeed in New York, Williams made the decision to open it in Chicago first. As opening day approached, there were no indications that the play would succeed.

When the curtain opened, there was a near-miraculous transformation. Ms. Taylor gave an outstanding performance, as did the rest of the cast. The reviews of the play were overwhelmingly positive. However, with ticket sales failing to meet the standards of the day, the play was threatened with cancellation. A critic for *The Chicago Tribune*, Claudia Cassidy, rallied for the play's rescue and continued production. The support would turn out to be invaluable as the play made it to Broadway, opening at The Playhouse Theatre of New York City on March 31, 1945. Only a few weeks later it was awarded the New York Critics Circle Award.

There were many reasons behind the success of the play. Audiences, who were mostly familiar with realism in drama, were willing to receive a new kind of theatrical experience. Williams's concepts of

sculptural drama and plastic theater (which would be toned down in a subsequent acting version of the play) made for a dynamic and new experience. Audiences who were forced to deal with the realities of war and economic hardship were happy to lose themselves, at least temporarily, in a more fantastic and expressionistic dramatic experience.

Unit 7(a): Plot Overview Of *The Glass Menagerie*

Scene 1

Williams opens with extensive stage directions that set the scene of the play. He describes the Wingfield apartment, a small unit in a crowded urban area of St. Louis. Visible outside are a fire escape and narrow alleys flanking the building; through the transparent fourth wall, the audience can see the Wingfields' living room and dining room. A large photograph of the family's absent father is on the wall. Also visible is a large collection of transparent glass animals, Laura's "glass menagerie," after which the play has been named. There is a phonograph, along with some old records, and a stenography chart with a typewriter. During the opening, the transparent fourth wall ascends out of sight.

Tom emerges, dressed as a merchant sailor. In his first speech, he contrasts himself to a magician, giving "truth in the pleasant disguise of illusion," and establishes himself as a poet and the narrator of the play. He tells the audience that the play takes place in the thirties, when there was war in Spain and a different kind of turmoil in America. He warns that the play is a work of memory, and therefore is not realistic. There will be music, unrealistic lighting, certain events amplified and emphasized. He describes the characters: Amanda, his mother; Laura, his sister; a gentleman caller who will appear later in the play; and Tom's and Laura's absent father, who never appears, but is nonetheless an important figure in the play. Their father occasionally sends the family postcards from all over the world; the last one contained a two-word message of "Hello! Goodbye!" He abandoned the family many years ago.

As the action begins with Amanda calling Tom to the dinner table, the tension in the family immediately becomes apparent. Amanda is a sympathetic character, but she is also demanding of her children and often quite silly - instructing Tom, although he is a grown man whose wages support their family, how to chew his food. Laura tries to clear the table, but Amanda tells her to sit and be the lady while she does the work. As Tom goes out to smoke a cigarette, Amanda tells a story she has often told before, about one day in her youth when she received seventeen gentleman callers in a single afternoon. She names them, tells what they went on to do with their lives, and reminds her children miserably that she, who had her pick, chose their father. She then asks Laura when Laura's own gentleman callers are going to start arriving, and Laura responds nervously that she has none. The question clearly makes Tom uncomfortable. Amanda responds with incredulity to Laura's insistence that she is not as popular as her mother was back in the small town of Blue Mountain. The scene closes with Laura remarking wistfully to Tom that their mother is afraid that Laura will be an old maid.

Scene 2

Laura is polishing her collection of glass animals, and Amanda returns home visibly disturbed. She has made an unsettling discovery. On the way to her D.A.R. meeting (Daughters of the American Revolution), Amanda stopped at Rubicam's Business College, where Laura has supposedly been taking lessons, to tell the teachers that Laura has a cold and to ask about Laura's progress. Amanda discovered that Laura has not been going to class everyday, but instead dropped out of the school after only a few days of attendance. The teacher remembered Laura only as the shy girl who trembled so much that she couldn't hit the keys.

Amanda, bemoaning the waste of fifty dollars for the tuition, asks Laura where she has been everyday. Laura, clearly shaken and guilt-stricken, admits that she has spent all of these days walking in the park or going to museums, keeping up the deception because she could not bear Amanda's disappointment.

Amanda talks about her fears - economically, Laura has no way of supporting herself, and women without husbands and jobs end up dependent on resentful relatives. She asks if Laura has ever liked a boy, and Laura responds shyly that in high school she had a crush on a boy named Jim. He used to call her "Blue Roses," having misheard her when she told him that she had been ill with an attack of pleurosis. However, the yearbook says that Jim and his high school girlfriend were engaged, and so Laura assumes that the two of them must be married.

Amanda tells Laura that she must try to find a husband. Laura reacts doubtfully and with great sadness, responding that she is crippled and therefore cannot find a husband. Amanda reminds Laura that she has told her daughter never to use the word "cripple," and says that Laura should overcome her "little defect" by cultivating charm.

Scene 3

Tom addresses the audience from the fire escape, telling us about Amanda's determined preparation for a gentleman caller. Mention of the gentleman caller pops into every conversation in the Wingfield apartment, and the stage is haunted by the gentleman caller's projected image. Because it will take money to make their home presentable, Amanda takes a job searching for subscribers to The Homemaker's Companion, a magazine for women. We see Amanda speaking on the telephone to a woman whose subscription is about to run out. Amanda tells the woman that she needs to renew her subscription, trying to convince her with the prospect of a new serial novel that has just begun. Amanda alludes to Gone With the Wind, comparing the new serial to the famous story of Scarlett O'Hara. Eventually, the potential subscriber hangs up on Amanda.

We then cut to a very different scene, of Tom and Amanda locked in a vicious argument, which is already in progress. A horrified Laura watches as Tom and Amanda scream at each other. Tom expresses outrage that Amanda confiscated his books. Amanda is not cowed, saying that she will not allow any books by "Mr. Lawrence" in her home. Tom responds that he is the one who pays the rent, and that he is the one who has given up his dreams to support their family. Stage directions indicate that the upright typewriter is surrounded by manuscripts in a state of disarray, and that the battle between Tom and Amanda was probably instigated by Amanda's interruption of Tom's writing. Amanda is also outraged because she does not know where Tom goes at night. She does not believe his claim that he spends his nights out at the movies, and she is angered by the drunken state in which he often returns home. She fears that his nights out jeopardize his day job, and that if he loses his job their security will be threatened.

Tom fires back with anger and frustration that he goes to work every morning even though he hates it. And to Amanda's doubt about where he goes every night, Tom answers with a sarcastic speech that is one of the play's most famous and memorable moments. With bitter sarcasm, he warns her that by night he is a czar of the underworld (known and feared as "Killer Wingfield" and "El Diablo") and that his enemies plan to dynamite the Wingfield apartment. He calls his mother a witch. As he is trying to leave the apartment, he accidentally knocks over the glass menagerie. Amanda storms off, enraged, and Tom remorsefully helps Laura pick up pieces of her collection.

Scene 4

As the church bell strikes five am, a drunken Tom stumbles home. The script does not make clear exactly how much time has passed between Scene Four and the argument that ended Scene Three, but it has been no more than a few days. Laura, who sleeps on the couch, hears him and opens the door for him. Tom

insists that he has been at the movies all night. When Laura expresses doubt that her brother could really have been at the movies all this time, Tom tells her about the length of the program and the magician that he went to see. He gives her a rainbow colored scarf as a souvenir from the magic show. The magician's most impressive trick was to escape from a coffin without removing a single nail. Tom is awestruck by the trick, and shares his wonder with Laura: "You know it don't take much intelligence to get yourself into a nailed-up coffin, Laura. But who in hell ever got himself out of one without removing one nail?"

Cut to one hour later. After the church bell strikes six times, we hear Amanda calling out "Rise and Shine!" After just an hour of sleep, an exhausted Tom stumbles out of bed for another day of work at the warehouse. Laura, who has been sent to wake him, begs Tom to apologize to Amanda. Meanwhile, Amanda is calling out from the kitchenette for Laura to go get butter from the grocery store. Laura, exiting on the fire escape, slips and cries out. The noise gives Tom and Amanda a scare, but Laura seems to be fine.

Awkwardly, Tom tries to apologize to Amanda as he takes his morning coffee. Amanda feels that she suffers and struggles for the sake of her children, and that her efforts go unappreciated by Tom. Tom tries to tell her that he doesn't hate her and that he understands her feelings. Amanda also tells Tom he cannot fail; without him, she cannot keep the family together. She believes that if Tom applies himself he will succeed; the idea of her children's success is an exhilarating one for her, and she becomes breathless just speaking about it. Amanda also asks Tom to promise that he will never be a drunkard. She exhorts him to eat, but he refuses everything except for black coffee, implying that he is hungover.

Amanda is concerned. She tells Tom that Laura thinks he is unhappy. She asks why - and if - he goes to the movies every night. Tom responds that he likes lots of adventure, and that his job at the warehouse does not provide any. Amanda is worried that Tom will abandon them. Fearful for Laura's future, Amanda tells Tom that he can leave if he can find a replacement - a gentleman caller for Laura, who will eventually marry her and provide for her. Amanda exhorts Tom to overcome selfishness. An increasingly frustrated Tom tries to break off the conversation and go to work, but not before he begrudgingly agrees to look for a gentleman caller for his sister.

Scene 5

After dinner, Tom reads a paper (the headline reads, "Franco triumphs") as Amanda and Laura clear the table and do the dishes. Amanda nags her son to comb his hair. Tom heads out to the fire escape to smoke, and Amanda complains that he spends too much money on cigarettes; if he saved the money, he would be able to go to night school. Tom replies that he would rather smoke.

Tom delivers a speech to the audience about Paradise Dance Hall, across the alley from the Wingfield apartment. Tom describes the music that emanates from the hall, and the rainbow colored lights that are visible from the fire escape. Tom speaks of the carefree world of the dancers, who drank and danced to swing music while the atrocity of Guernica unfolded in Europe. Those dancers, says Tom, could not have known that change would be coming for them, too.

Amanda joins Tom on the fire escape. Tom reveals to her that he has found a gentleman caller for Laura. Amanda is thrilled, but Tom also tells her that the gentleman caller is arriving tomorrow evening. Amanda is startled, afraid that she will not have enough time to make the home presentable. For Amanda, this is a major event: she'll send for a new floor lamp, polish her wedding silver, put chintz covers on, wear nice clothes, etc. She begins to grill Tom on the gentleman caller's character; she is particularly concerned that he might be a drunkard.

His name is Jim O'Connor. As far as Tom knows, he is not a heavy drinker. He works as a shipping clerk at the warehouse for eighty-five dollars a month (twenty dollars more than Tom's monthly salary). He is

not too good-looking, nor is he ugly. He goes to night school, believes in self-improvement, and has great ambitions.

Tom is anxious, however, because he has not mentioned Laura to Jim, and although Amanda has faith in Laura's ability to enchant Jim, Tom has his doubts. Tom asks Amanda not to expect too much of Laura, saying that Tom and Amanda see Laura's beauty because they know her and love her. He mentions that Laura is crippled, and Amanda insists that the word "crippled" is not allowed in the Wingfield home. Tom mentions Laura's peculiar habits - her care of the glass menagerie and her love of their old phonograph records. Tom then departs for the movies. Amanda seems somewhat shaken by Tom's misgivings, but she regains her optimism and calls Laura to come out to the fire escape. Amanda asks Laura to make a wish on the "little silver slipper of a moon," her eyes filling with tears as she tells her daughter to wish for happiness and good fortune.

Scene 6

Tom addresses the audience and talks about Jim. The two men went to the same high school, where Jim was the class hero. In high school he was the basketball star, class president, and male lead in the annual light operas, and now, six years later, his job is not much better than Tom's. He and Tom are on friendly terms, partly because Tom remembers his former glory. Jim's affection for Tom has helped Tom along socially with the other workers, who initially disliked Tom because of his aloofness and oddness. Jim also knows that Tom steals away at work to write poetry, and so he has given Tom the nickname "Shakespeare."

Stage directions indicate that the Wingfield apartment looks beautiful. Amanda has worked hard to make the apartment ready for the gentleman caller. There is a brief comical interaction where Amanda encourages Laura to stuff her bra. Amanda dresses in a girlish outfit from her youth. It is the dress in which she led the cotillion, and she speaks feverishly of the days when she spent all her time going to parties and dancing. She also speaks of her youthful obsession with jonquil flowers. The story ends mournfully with Amanda meeting Tom's and Laura's father.

Laura, for the first time, hears the name of the gentleman caller, and she realizes that it might be the same Jim on whom she had a crush back in high school. She tells Amanda that if it is the same Jim, she will not come to the table. The idea of facing Jim horrifies her. When the doorbell rings, a terrified Laura argues with an increasingly irate Amanda about who will answer the door. Laura finally lets the two men in but flees after being introduced to Jim.

Jim is boisterous and constantly talks about the self-improvement courses in which he is involved. As they wait for the women, he tries to convince Tom to enroll in a public speaking course with him. Tom is uninterested. Jim warns Tom that the boss is not pleased with Tom and he may soon be out of a job. Tom responds that he is preparing for a change. He gives a speech about being tired of the movies: movies tranquilize people, making them content to watch other people's adventures without having any of their own. He tells Jim of his plans to join the Merchant Seamen. This month he has paid his dues to the Merchant Seamen instead of the light bill, and he plans to leave St. Louis. Amanda does not know of his plans, and Jim is incredulous, but before the two men can really talk about it, Amanda enters, dressed as if she were a young Southern belle, and immediately begins to talk Jim's ear off.

Tom goes to fetch Laura for supper, but Laura refuses to come to the table. Scene Six ends with Amanda, Jim, and Tom sitting down for dinner. The audience can see Laura in the living room, where she is stretched out on the sofa, trying not to cry.

Scene 7

Half an hour later, as dinner is finishing up, the lights go out. Tom feigns ignorance of the cause. Amanda, unfazed, continues to be as charming as she can. She lights candles and asks Jim to check the fuse box. After Jim tells her that the fuse box looks fine, Amanda suggests that he go spend time with Laura in the living room.

As Amanda and Tom do dishes in the kitchen, Laura warms up to Jim, who is charming enough to put her ease. She reminds him that they knew each other in high school, and that he used to call her "Blue Roses." Jim feels ashamed that he did not recognize her at once. They reminisce about the class they had together, a singing class to which Laura, because of her leg, was always late. She always felt that the brace on her leg made a clumping sound "like thunder," but Jim insists that he never noticed it.

They have a friendly conversation by candlelight. Jim reveals that he was never engaged, and that his old girlfriend was the one who put the announcement in the yearbook. They no longer see each other. Laura speaks admirably of Jim's voice, and he autographs the program of the show he was in, The Pirates of Penzance. Indeed, she was too shy to bring the program to him back in high school, but she has kept it all these years. Jim tries to give Laura advice about raising her self-esteem, and talks about his plans to get involved with the nascent television industry. He speaks of the numerous courses he is taking, and his interest in programmatic methods for self-improvement. He calls money and power the cycle on which democracy is built.

Laura shows Jim her glass collection. They look closely at a little glass unicorn, remarking on how the unicorn must feel odd due to its uniqueness. They put the unicorn down on a different table, for "a change of scenery." Laura bashfully admires Jim, while Jim grows increasingly flirtatious. When he hears the music of the Paradise Dance Hall, he asks her to dance with him. He tries to help her shed her self-consciousness, and the two of them begin to grow close - but suddenly, they jostle the table and knock over the unicorn, breaking off its horn. Jim apologizes but Laura tells him not to worry. She can pretend the unicorn had an operation to make it feel less freakish.

Jim speaks admiringly of Laura's character, and then begins to praise her looks. He tells her that she is pretty, and Laura blushes with shy bliss over this unexpected praise. Then, suddenly, Jim kisses her. Immediately, he seems to regret the kiss. Awkwardly, he admits to Laura that he is engaged. Laura's face reveals terrible desolation. She gives him the broken unicorn as a souvenir. Then she goes to the Victrola and winds it up. Amanda rushes in, only to hear Jim's announcement that he has to leave. When Amanda tells Jim that he should come again, he tells her about his plans to marry his current girlfriend. He also mentions that no one at the warehouse knows about the engagement. He leaves.

Amanda is furious and calls Tom in. She accuses Tom of playing a practical joke on them, by intentionally bringing in another woman's fiancé to disgrace them. She is visibly shaken; the evening has been expensive for the Wingfields, and her dreams for her daughter have been shattered. Angered by her accusations and not willing to put up with her foolishness, Tom tells her that he is going to the movies. She accuses him of selfishness, and says that he never thinks of them, "a mother deserted, an unmarried sister who's crippled and has no job." Infuriated, Tom leaves.

Tom, as narrator, then addresses the audience from the fire escape, telling us that soon after that night he went down the fire escape one last time and left St. Louis forever. As he gives this final speech, Amanda and Laura are visible through a transparent fourth wall that drops down into place in front of them. This closing speech is one of the most famous moments in all of Williams' work, and indeed one of the most haunting and beautiful moments in all of American theatre. He talks about time being the "longest distance between two places," and his long search to find something that he himself seems unable to name. He tells the audience that for all of the years since he left, he has been pursued by the memory of Laura. Though he tried to leave his family behind, his memory of his mother and sister continues to haunt

him. He finishes by imploring his memory of Laura to blow out her candles, "for nowadays the world is lit by lightning." He says goodbye, although in the script it is unclear whether he is bidding goodbye to the audience or to his sister. Behind him, visible through the transparent wall, Amanda comforts Laura silently throughout Tom's speech. When Tom has finished speaking, Laura blows the candles out, ending the play.

Unit 7(b): Williams' Handling Of The Theme of Time in *The Glass Menagerie*

The effort to escape both the restrictions of time and its demands forms the thematic and motivational basis of Tennessee Williams' play *The Glass Menagerie*. In attempting to effect such an escape, Amanda, Tom, and Laura eventually find that they can never succeed in breaking the bonds of their world. Their personal visions never present a clear vision of the nature of time.

While the present binds past and future, it also gets modified and somewhat restricted by the past. Sam Bluefarb in 'Three Visions of Time' opines that *The Glass Menagerie* is actually a morality play in the garb of split personality. Amanda Wingfield, the mother, lives in a world that is emotionally bound by the past. Her life as a vivacious Southern belle can be of significance only if the memory of that life is nour- ished and kept alive in the fertile earth of her nostalgia. Periodically, she must recall every word, every gesture and every event that that ever took place within the context of her East Tennessee girl- hood. Amanda Wingfield can never quite extricate herself from the past in order to come to terms with the flow of life in the present, or what that present bodes for the future.

Amanda's obsession, translated into the practical everyday world, is to superimpose her own past on daughter Laura's future. Essentially, she desires for Laura the supposed benefits which she herself enjoyed in that earlier time of her vanished girlhood: the balls, the dresses, the attentions, but, above all, the numerous (if we can believe her) gentlemen callers. If such a gentleman caller can be summoned up in this latter day, he may well turn out to be a likely candidate for the hand of the hapless, crippled Laura. Yet beggars, as the adage has it, can't be choosers; they must take what they can get in this less than best of all possible worlds. So Amanda, even while she dreams of the past, must somehow come to terms with the very real and annoyingly encroaching present. To be sure, she still yearns to see Laura secured in a secure, if meaningless, marriage; still hopes that someday a gentle- man caller will come bounding across the threshold with the winsome bouquet. But now the gentleman caller need not be the scion of an aristocratic Southern family, nor need he be the handsomest blade in town. She will even accept one of Tom's co-workers at the factory.

Ironically Jim O'Connor is one other than Laura's idol from high school whom she had worshipped ever since her teen years. But due to her lameness she had remained reticent and reserved throughout her high school life. Jim on the other hand had been at the center of the students' activity and attraction. Though he is only a clerk at the warehouse how, he is ambitious. He plans to enroll in night school and become a radio engineer some day. Therefore in the eyes of Amanda Jim is the perfect suitor for Laura. Though Jim lightens up Laura's otherwise shabby world for a brief moment (and he even kisses her) he is embarrassed and tells her that he is engaged before leaving. Consequently Laura is left in the care of her glass animals once again.

This final touch of pathos accompanied by the fact that he is fired from his job drives Tom out of his St Louis tenement where he used to live with mother and sister. He takes up a world of vagabondage-the presumably free life of the seafarer. He can no longer satisfy himself with the synthetic escape he has, until now, found in the darkened movie houses. This time the romance and the escape must have greater substance. And at first glance it would seem that Tom's escape to sea is essentially a romantic es- cape, an

escape whose vistas point away from Amanda's past and his own present toward a brighter future. So it would appear. Yet, even after he makes the break, he is still tied, through guilt, to his own immediate past which, through the reawakened image of the lost Laura, he has abandoned. Tom Wingfield, then, has never really succeeded in running away from the past. And perhaps he never really meant to. Ostensibly, he was fired from the shoe warehouse for writing poetry on the lid of a shoe box. But this in itself doesn't make of Tom Wingfield a poet. Neither does his running off to sea. For his poetry writing and his seafaring are not so much the gestures of a young man searching for the 'ultima thule' of romance, as they are the expression of a man's desperation to escape the monotony of lived reality.

Amanda is even more genuinely a romantic. Her escape is drawn farther back into that world where life has never really ceased to be an eternal round of parties and gentlemen callers. Laura, unlike her brother and her mother, can face the present-but only to the extent that she recognizes the truth about herself in that present. This would appear to hold a paradox. Yet, in this paradox, as at the heart of all paradox, there lies a kernel of truth. Laura sees her lameness as a true debility, even if her mother prefers not to. auditorium. When Laura surrenders to the timeless world of her glass animals, it is not simply because she wishes to escape from the world of the present into a world of fantasy and delusion, but precisely because she can look the present fully in the face-if for a moment-and know it for what it is: an ugly misshapen lameness, which all of Amanda's euphemisms can never eradicate. Only Jim O'Connor is big enough to look beyond the lameness- possibly, an afterthought now occurs, because he is the one person who sees Laura without any emotional involvement. But it is too much to expect the world-that world of tinsel so effectively symbolized by the Paradise Ballroom across the alley-to do so. Even in Jim O'Connor's case, the readiness to see Laura as a personality rather than the owner of a misshapen foot proves to be a feint, a cruel hoax on Laura's reawakened hopes, and she must again flee to her father's old phonograph records and her little glass animals.

Unit 7(c): *The Glass Menagerie* As a Memory Play

Drama is a work of art where human follies and foibles are exaggerated to effect dramatic stature. This exaggeration helps in depicting what is universal in human nature. In *The Glass Menagerie* Williams portrays how illusions unwittingly nurtured by several characters clash with disenchanting reality. Williams in his essay 'The Catastrophe of Success' says:

> "It is only in his work that an artist can find reality and satisfaction, for the actual world is less intense than the world of his invention and consequently his life, without recourse to violent disorder, does not seem very substantial. The right condition for him is that in which his work is not only convenient but unavoidable."

In the case of *The Glass Menagerie* the narrator Tom is a character in the play by the dramatist Tennessee Williams. But being the teller in the frame narrative, Tom is like an additional dramatist himself. He says: "The play is memory. Being a memory play, it is dimly lighted, it is sentimental, it is not realistic." Tom's memory results in the engendering of this play. Memory and illusion coalesce with the artist.

Memory also fuses with the illusions of other characters. for instance, Amanda remembers the many gentleman callers she used to get in the past. It is this illusion which she clings to and tries to emulate in the person of her daughter. She attempts to bring her memories into reality again. But she fails because Laura is the incarnation of the illusive world. It is here that *The Glass Menagerie* with all the glass animals in it becomes symbolic in scope.

Moreover, Laura's physical disability makes her withdraw further from the world. The dramatization of Laura's dream world is a classic achievement of the modern stage. Laura has a memory of a time past also. It is the memory of Jim O'Connor, her first and only infatuation in high school. It is a memory of the

name he called her- Blue Roses. It is a memory of sitting through three performances of the opera he starred in so that she could obtain his autograph. It is a memory of his engagement to another girl. Jim O'Connor is an illusion which never became real for Laura. But with the advent of the Gentleman Caller, suddenly memory becomes reality. Jim becomes a possible suitor for Laura. In the superb candle- light scene between Laura and Jim, Laura receives that long-forgotten autograph on the opera sheet; she learns that Jim broke his engagement long ago. Before they dance Laura shows Jim her glass menagerie and the unicorn which is a horse unlike the other horses because of its horn. It is unique and does not belong with the others. This is Laura's position. But with the dance, Jim breaks through Laura's dream world. She comes out of her- self into the reality of Jim. This is symbolized by the breaking of the unicorn' s horn by Jim. As Jim kisses Laura, Laura's dream becomes reality at last. But this is ironic. For in realizing her fondest memories, Laura merely evokes another illusion which Jim proceeds to break after he kisses her. He tells her that he is engaged and must go to meet his fiancee. From this shattering of the illusion she thought had become real, Laura with- draws further into her dream world. The incarnation is complete.

At the end of the play, Tom escapes from the dream-worlds of Amanda and Laura. But in escaping, he never parts from the memory that is Laura, never eludes the world of illusions she stands for:

> I traveled around a great deal. The cities swept about me like dead leaves, leaves that were brightly colored but torn away from the branches. I would have stopped, but I was pursued by something. It always came upon me unawares, taking me al- together by surprise. Perhaps it was a familiar bit of music. Perhaps it was only a piece of transparent glass- Perhaps I am walking along a street at night, in some strange city, before I have found companions. I pass the lighted window of a shop where perfume is sold. The window is filled with pieces of colored glass, tiny transparent bottles in delicate colors, like bits of a shat- tered rainbow. Then all at once my sister touches my shoulder, I turn around and look into her eyes. . . Oh Laura, Laura, I tried to leave you behind me, but I am more faithful than I intended to be!

In Williams' play, memory technically is the play. Also, it functions to evoke the illusions of the characters. And in the case of Laura, memory becomes present reality which, in turn, becomes memory again to effect the incarnation she stands for. Here memory functions not only technically but as theme. With Tom's final words, memory as theme and technique become one.

The dramatist uses several stage devices to make the drama a memory play. For instance, the episodic structure is used to intensify the incoherent nature of memory. Each scene is complete in itself. These are very loosely held together with the thread of Tom's memories. Secondly the use of light is also very significant for the play. Throughout the play only dim light is used to suggest the hazy atmosphere of memory. Thirdly, the use of an onstage screen on which legends and images are projected also plays a very important role here. It acts like a dividing line between reality and unreality, between memory and real experience. But the most important theatrical device used here is music. Sometimes music is an internal part of the action, and sometimes it comes from the external world. When it is within the play, both the characters and the audience can hear it. But when it is from the outside, the audience only can here it. For example before Tom apologizes to Amanda the song "Ave Maria" is heard softly in the scene four. Therefore here this song gives hint of the probable incident of the play. All through 'the glass menagerie' music is like a recurrent theme of the play, it is related with Laura and her collection of glass animals. These songs are heard by the audience only. But the song which comes from the Paradise Dance Hall is heard by both Tom and the audience. The song "The World Is Waiting for the Sunshine!" suggests something about the approaching World War II and the contemporary social situation. In the present context it suggests the news of Jim's arrival in their apartment, which may shine the dull life of his sister. Nevertheless, in each cases music is related to a nostalgic emotion, and as a memory play, the first condition of *The Glass Menagerie* is also nostalgia. So music is central for this play.

Unit 8(a): Alienation of the Wingfields

Alienation refers to the individual subject's estrangement from his community, society or world; in a literary sense, it means the mental disorders, or interpersonal estrangement, from another perspective alienation of an individual from society at large may be visualized as the process of slackening of the bonds that bind him/her to the people around; in a philosophical sense, it signifies the subject developing into the opposite of his owing to his own contractions and being controlled and oppressed by his opposite. Rousseau pointed out that the human has constantly become twisted, distorted, and dehumanized by society and government. In Rousseau's opinion, civilization estranged man from his natural condition and at last caused alienation in human relationship. The founder of modern economics, Adam Smith expanded Rousseau's ideas of social alienation. After making a thorough analysis of the characteristics of the industrial society, he concluded that alienation was caused by economic factors.

After 1918, America underwent tremendous economic development. Unaccustomed to the rapid pace of life, many people at that time experienced some kind of psychological crisis. Therefore, more and more American writers focused on the inwards world of characters. Thus, alienation and isolation were common themes in post-war American drama. Influenced by the trend, Williams created many famous dramas including *The Glass Menagerie.* He depicted a lot of vivid alienated characters. Then in the early twentieth century, the modernist movement completely changed the way that art and literature were perceived in western culture. The themes expressed in modernism were diverse, complex and difficult to understand, among which existed alienation. The theme could be found in *The Dead* by James Joyce, *The Waste Land* by T.S. Eliot and *Hairy Ape* and *Long Day's Journey into Night* by Eugene O'Neil.

Abandoned by Mr. Wingfield 16 years ago**,** the Wingfilds live a hard life both in material and in spirit. During the Great Depression, they have been reduced to something approaching a subsistence existence. Tom, enthusiastic about adventures, feels trapped by his family and his plain job in a shoe factory. Amanda, a domineering and controlling mother, clings to her memories of her lost youth and a genteel past that is in harsh conflict with her reduced circumstances. Laura, who is crippled, hides in the dim family apartment creating a fantasy world with her glass menagerie. All of them are alienated in different aspects.

The alienation of Tom is embodied through his powerlessness of his life and lives in opposite to his nature. Mr. Wingfield, Tom's father abandoned the family 16 years ago and except for a postcard from Mexico, has never been heard from. Therefore, as soon as Tom came of age, Tom substituted for his father as the breadwinner by working in Continental Shoemakers. Lack of creativity and diversity, Tom's job there is oppressive to him. He says in the play, "whenever I pick up a shoe, I shudder a little thinking how short life is and what I am doing! Whatever that means, I know it does not mean shoes except as something to wear on a traveler's feet!"

In his heart of hearts he would rather die than work there. In the play he even shows his envy for the dead because they do not have to work there. But the responsibility towards the family leaves him no choice. In a furious quarrel with Amanda, Tom voices his true idea. The nature of himself calls him to seek adventures but the love and responsibility for the family forces him to go to work every day. He lives just in opposite to his nature. He calls himself "a slave of the work" (Williams 60) in the play for he gains nothing but 65 dollars from the job. The job he does requires no skills and creativity but simple-mind and diligence, owing to the invention of the machines and assembly line of production. In the factory Tom is assigned with a specific task at a stable location in the assembly line and is ordered to do one simple task repeatedly for months and even for years. The work provides him with no spiritual fulfillment and satisfaction, which gradually leads to his depression towards life. Just as Adam Smith says that "the passion and the happiness were repressed by the uniformity of the workers' life" (Smith 460). Tom tries to add diversity to his work by writing a poem in the lids of shoeboxes, for which he gets fired at last.

Amanda, the mother of the Wingfield family, is a typical Southern belle, as she is reared up in the Mississippi Delta. However, in her life in St. Louis, she still clings frantically to her youth and the South. She maintains the southern way of talking and behaving with an air of priority and delicacy; she constantly tells Tom and Laura her story of receiving 17 gentlemen; she manages to find a gentleman caller for Laura and she denies the usefulness of modern technology. All of these show her isolation from her life in St. Louis.

She tries to remain Southern tradition in the Wingfield's tenement. Her way of speech, dress and action are typically southern. In the play, she insists on Laura's keeping seat at dinner and proclaims, "No, sister, no sister, you be the lady this time and I will be the darky" (103). When the gentleman caller Jim visits, Amanda is dressed in the girlish frock of yellow voile with blue silk sash with a bunch of jonquils on her arm, which is a typical Southern way.

Throughout the whole play, she constantly reminds readers that she belongs to an earlier time on her family's plantation in Mississippi. The gentlemen callers are as she never gets tired of saying "some of the most prominent young planters of Mississippi Delta-planters or sons of planters" (Williams 17). Tom and Laura are so familiar with this story that once Amanda starts it, they know exactly what comes next. The reason Amanda clings to her youth is because she finds security in her past when she is surrounded by chivalric men who want to marry her. In reality, she lives a hard life. Haunted by the idea that Tom may abandon the family, she often quarrels with Tom. With a shy and disabled daughter, she manages to pave the way for her by sending her to a business school. But, to her disappointment, her efforts turn out in vain. Desperate about the reality, she constantly seeks comfort in her youth, which eventually leads to her isolation from her life in St. Louis. Sensing Laura's precarious future she forces Tom to invite Jim O'Connor.

Apart from her southern way of conduct and coping with problems, Amanda's alienation lies in her denial of modern technology. Once the electricity went out in the room, she says to Jim, "isn't electricity is a mysterious thing? Some people say that science clears up all mysteries for us. In my opinion, it just creates more" (Williams 97). From this we can see that she is totally out of her element in a modern environment.

Laura's alienation is detected from her isolation from the community. Laura is so fragile that she is afraid of contacting the real world.

A childhood illness has left her crippled. One of her leg is slightly shorter than the other, and is held in a brace. Stemming from this, Laura's separation increases she is like a piece of her own glass collection, too exquisitely fragile to move from the shelf.

When Amanda sends her out to get butter, Laura dreads going, for she always fears facing the outside world. In her nervousness, she trips on the fire-escape steps.

In high school, she was terribly shy and stuck by herself, thinking she had not much luck at making friends. What is worse, she is thrown into great pain whenever she had to clump all the way up the aisle of the singing classroom with everyone watching. In her eyes, everyone in the classroom notices her limp and laughs at her. Eventually during her last semester in high school, she becomes nervously ill, fails her exam and does not graduate. However, after six years when one of Laura's classmates, Jim pays a visit to her household, he tells Laura that he even does not notice Laura's clumping, which is unbelievable to Laura. She has magnified her limp until it affects her entire personality.

While at home, Laura enjoys playing with the collection of glass animals and looking at an old Victoria photograph. Laura resigns herself from the outside world into the shelter, her glass menagerie and the photograph for they serve well to relieve Laura's anxiety. She tells Tom that she loves the glass

menagerie because "I have not heard argument from them" (Williams 56). From this, we can see that the family tension attributes to Laura's isolation from the world. With no father to encourage her and love her, Laura loses her self-esteem and the quarrels between Tom and Amanda over Tom's job adds her fear towards the outside world.

Thus all the Wingfield family members bear alienation in different aspects, due to cultural, social and family reasons. Tom, burdened with the responsibility of supporting the family, gradually loses his control of his life and becomes opposite to his nature. Amanda, immersed in her youth and the old South, isolates from her real life in St. Louis. Laura, the timid and disable girl, afraid of contacting with the real world, lives in her own world of glass menagerie.

Unit 8 (b): Escapism in *The Glass Menagerie*

It is known that the result of World War I is the economic downturn in America. It caused the stock market crashed in 1929. The general populace suffered unforeseen poverty and hardships. This era, known as the period of the Great Depression was followed by the outbreak of the Second World War. Pressed by material hardship and moral decrepitude, Americans sought entertainment and nourishment in forms of mass entertainment such as magazines, radio, music, and movies. The average American succeeded in getting away from the real life problems of life through avoidance and distraction. This mode of escape has been depicted, criticized and facilitated through the literary works of several noted authors of the period, in various genres.

In Tennessee Williams' *The Glass Menagerie* the effect of The Great Depression on a typical Southern-American family becomes evident. The Wingfields basically led a subsistence mode of life during those years. The desertion by Amanda's husband-the father of Tom and Laura made situations worse. Tom, in order to run the family, is forced to take up a job he absolutely detests. He seeks solace and entertainment in several forms of escape such as movies, literature and alcohol. While on the one hand it shows the typical form of alienation that plagues most modern consumer societies, on the other it also reflects how modern society, by promoting alienation creates a thriving industry around escapist routes, so that the products can cater to the demands of the alienated individuals.

In case of Amanda, a southern-raised belle, now in her distraught middle age-we find escapism of another sort. She has definitely played a pivotal role throughout the years of hardship in rearing Tom and Laura. But she has grown to resent her life and situation in a way, too. The inextricable problem constantly hangs heavy on her mind and she compares her dreary present to the sunny South where she had spent a glorious youth amid gentleman-callers, entertainment, chivalry and relative economic stability. Now she feels trapped in this lower middle class tenement, burdened with a crippled daughter and a distraught son who (she thinks) lacks ambition. For her, the only moments of bliss lie in recounting her past-those days and nights which she spent in the South. While for Tom and Laura this continuous remembrance of a society they have not witnessed becomes annoying, for Amanda it remains her driving force.

Laura is identified as an extremely shy girl who unable to socialize with other people. Therefore, the way chosen by Laura in order to solve her problem is through negative coping mechanism, isolating self or withdrawal. Her mother Amanda had tried her best to secure Laura's future by making her self-dependent. For that purpose she had sent her to Business College. But Laura's limp weighs so heavy on her mind that she drops out of the course, skips classes and roams around the city. More importantly, Laura is unable to realize the gravity of the situation, given her uncertain future and financial instability. All she can do is take refuge in the imaginary world of glass animals in the glass menagerie. Or even if she does realize it, she cannot cope up with it. This fantasy world of play relieves her from the pressures of reality.

SUGGESTED READINGS

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Boxhill, Roger. *Modern Dramatists: Tennessee Williams*. Macmillan Education, 1987.

King, Thomas L. "Irony and Distance in 'The Glass Menagerie.'" *Educational Theatre Journal*, vol. 25, no. 2, 1973, p. 207., doi:10.2307/3205871.

Bluefarb, Sam. "The Glass Menagerie: Three Visions of Time." *College English*, vol. 24, no. 7, 1963, p. 513., doi:10.2307/372877

Assignments

1. Comment on the significance of the titled "The Glass Menagerie".
2. Critically comment on the theme of alienation in the play.
3. What is the role of memory in the play?
4. Write an essay on American dream.
5. Critically comment on Tennesse Williams' use of symbols in the play.

BLOCK III

UNIT 9

The Scarlet Letter

By

Nathaniel Hawthorne

Content Structure:

UNIT 9

(a): History of the American Novel

(b): Introduction to Life and Works of Nathaniel Hawthorne

Objectives:

The objective in this module is to give adequate information about the genius of Nathaniel Hawthorne as a novelist in the Nineteenth Century American literature. The other important works, apart from *The Scarlet Letter*, will be referred to. The other units in this module are concerned with the synopsis of the novel titled *The Scarlet Letter*, its characters, and few other important aspects in the novel will be discussed in detail for imparting the learners adequate knowledge about the major critical aspects of the novel *The Scarlet Letter*.

Unit 9 (a): History of the American Novel

The origin and development of novel as a literary genre in American literature has a chequered history. The movement of the Puritans from European settlements to the New England caused an event of mass immigration. The settlers need time to settle down and contemplate on the literary development. Thus, American novel cannot be written down immediately after the arrival of the Puritans in the New England in the year 1642 onwards. The late development of the American novel based on two reasons mainly: first of all, the colonial domination in American soil caused a serious obstacle for the indigenous writers to find their own way of expression. Secondly, the predominance of the Puritan laws viewed novel as a self indulgent art which would cause serious moral degradation among the congregation. Therefore, the Puritan fathers objected to the serious growth and nourishment of the novel as a literary genre in the Seventeenth century American context.

Before 1588 there is no evidence of written literature in America. The oral traditions of native Americans predominate the scene. 1550-1613 these years are marked by insistence on the narratives of exploration. Thomas Harriot's *A Briefe and True Report of the New Found Land Virginia* in 1590, is an example of this type of narrative. 1614-1669 this timeframe features the development of chronicles of colonial settlement in America. These chronicles are basically lengthy narratives on historical data. They cannot be considered by any chance the novel proper. These are lengthy prose works but somehow the germ of the novel form was nascent within them. Few examples of such historical chronicles are: *A Description of New England* (1616) by John Smith, *of Plymouth Plantation* by William Bradford (1630-50), *The Way of the Churches of Christ in New England* by John Cotton (1645). 1670-99 this timeframe is considered an era for the rise and development of the genre of historical narratives and captivity narratives. In this ear, precisely in 1789 the first American novel has been written by William Hill Brown titled *The Power of Sympathy*. The nineteenth century is termed as era of American literary Renaissance. From 1800-1899 there was tremendous and unprecedented rise and development of the novel as a literary genre. Charles Brockden Brown, James Fennimore Cooper, and Washington Irving predominate the literary scene with their remarkable novels. In 1801 Charles Brockden Brown's *Clara Howard* and *Jane Talbot* were written in the tradition of epistolary novel. 1830-1865 is considered as era of the Romantic Movement in American literature. At the beginning of 1830, the development of Transcendentalism in American literature clearly affected the development of American Romantic movement in literature. R.W. Emerson and H.D. Thoreau are called the pathfinders of Transcendentalism in American literature. American transcendentalists focus on the nature and the impact of nature on human psyche and imagination. This transcendentalist emphasis on nature becomes one of the key aspects of American Romantic movement in literature. Nathaniel Hawthorne, Edgar Allen Poe, Herman Melville are major literary figures during these period. Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* is considered one of the masterpieces of this romantic period. Melville's *Typee*, and *Moby-Dick* are major novels in this period. 1866-99 is considered the era of American realism. Mark Twain, Louisa May Alcott are major writers in realist mode in American literature. 1900-1956 this timeline is the era of modernism in American literature. Rise of capitalism, destruction of agrarian economic structure, World War I all these socio-political factors contribute to the development of modernist movement in American literature. F.Scott Fitzgerald, Henry James, Ernest Hemingway, William Faulkner are major literary figures during this period. *The Ambassadors* (1903), *The Golden Bowl* (1904) are remarkable works by Henry James. *This Side of Paradise* (1920), *The Great Gatsby* (1925), *Tender is the Night* (1934) are finest fruits of F.Scott Fitzgerald's genius. Faulkner's *The*

Sound and the Fury (1929), *As I Lay Dying* (1930) are remarkable writings of the American modernist Movement. 1956-till date of the American literary development can be called the era of postmodernism. 1956-69 is the timeline where we have witnessed in American literary history the development of Jewish American literature. Joseph Heller, Bernard Malamud, Saul Bellow are major literary figures in this field. Vladimir Nabokov, Thomas Pynchon, Kurt Vonnegut, John Barth are major exponents of postmodern American fiction. Within the umbrella term of postmodernism in American literature the science fiction, diasporic writing, Chicano writing or Mexican American literary trends are also contributing to the variegated and full fledged development of postmodernist trend in American fiction.

9(b): Introduction to Life and Works of Nathaniel Hawthorne

Nathaniel Hawthorne is one of the major writers in the Nineteenth Century American literature, Nathaniel Hawthorne was born July 4, 1804, the son of Elizabeth Manning and Nathaniel Hathorne Sr., who was descended from an interrogator at the Salem witch trials. Hawthorne added the "*w"* to his surname around 1830. In1809, after the death of his father, Hawthorne, his mother, and his two sisters lived at the home of his maternal grandparents. His early studies took place at Samuel Archer's School. In his childhood, Hawthorne read extensively classic literature, absorbing Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*, John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, William Shakespeare, Walter Scott, and endless gothic romances. The sentiments of these works saturate his writing, lending them a sense of self-knowledge, precision, and great insight into human character. This grounding in literature enriched Hawthorne in good ground during his college years at Bowdoin College in Maine, where he joined the Athenean Literary Society and began to write the first of many short stories. His classmates included poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and Franklin Pierce, the future resident of the United States, who became one of Hawthorne's closest friends. The years at Bowdoin had an enormous influence on Hawthorne's career. From Bowdoin, Hawthorne returned to Salem, to the "chamber under the eaves" at his mother's house where he was to spend many solitary years. From 1825 to 1837, Hawthorne perfected his craft, writing tales, sketches, and ideas for novels and poems. During this time he developed the moral universe that would undergird his later works, reading extensively in both classic and contemporary literature and jotting his responses in his voluminous notebooks. He self published his first novel, *Fanshawe*, based on his Bowdoin years but, embarrassed at his early effort, withdrew the book and destroyed every copy he could find. Two years after the publication of *Fanshawe*, in 1830, Hawthorne published his first short story, "The Hollow of the Three Hills," in the Salem Gazette. *The Scarlet Letter*, Hawthorne's tragic, brilliant tale of passion and retribution, possesses a strength and depth that he was never to achieve in any of his other works. The novel attained immediate public success, both financially and critically, upon its publication in 1850. The overwhelming acclaim invigorated Hawthorne and spurred an astonishing amount of work. In the next two years he wrote *The House of the Seven Gables* (1851), *The Blithedale Romance* (1852), a campaign biography of his friend Franklin Pierce, as well as a collection of tales and two children's books. Even this prodigious output was not enough to support the family, though, and in 1853 he accepted the position of U.S. consul to England from President Franklin Pierce. The years in England solved Hawthorne's financial problems and introduced him to the glorious art and culture of Europe, but dealt a fatal blow to his artistic powers. From 1853 until his death in 1864, he published only one novel, *The Marble faun* (1860), and a collection of articles and essays, *Our Old Home* (1863). After his post in England, the Hawthorne lived in Rome and Florence from 1857 to 1859 and returned to Concord in 1860, living at his mother's home, the Wayside, until the author's death. Despite the presence of his family, Hawthorne had begun to feel an acute sense of loneliness and loss, an inability to communicate deeply either personally or in his writing. He began work again and again on novels, only to break off in frustration. On May 18, 1864, while on a journey to Plymouth, New Hampshire, with Franklin Pierce, Hawthorne died in his sleep, leaving a legacy of imagination and perception in American literature.

UNIT 10

Content Structure:

UNIT 10 (a): Plot Summary

(b): Character Analysis

10 (a): Plot Summary

The novel *The Scarlet Letter* is set against the backdrop of the orthodox Seventeen Century Puritan society. Hawthorne in the novel represents the conflict between life and scripture, between the individual and the society. The novel is divided into twenty three chapters and a conclusion. At the beginning of the novel Hawthorne provides a pseudo-historical backdrop where he establishes the validity of the anecdote of Hester Prynne who has been punished for committing adultery and that document is found by the author in the custom house where he is working. The narrative of *The Scarlet Letter* is of complex type. The past and the present both are framed in a continuous way. Hawthorne's purpose is to revisit the past and claiming answer from the lost past for its rigidity. The development of the plot is basically happened when the attention is directed to the difficulty and oddities in the lives of four characters namely: Hester, Arthur Dimmesdale, Pearl, and Roger Chillingworth. Hester is a beautiful woman who was born in Puritan community in England. She was married to a studious and self centred person Master Prynne. Later in the novel he will be known as "Roger Chillingworth". He sends Hester to Boston. Incidentally, he was held captive by the native people and after one year he arrived at Boston. He found his wife on a scaffold where she had been punished by society for her adultery. Later on, he started working as a doctor and found his wife's lover Arthur Dimmesdale. He silently goes on punishing him by ransacking his troubled psyche. Finally, Hester plans to escape in Europe with Arthur Dimmesdale with her child in the quest for a happy home. That dream gets shattered and the novel closes with reference to Hester's elevated status in Puritan community as "Sister of mercy" and her daughter's marriage with a rich, noble man in America.

10 (b): Character Analysis:

Hester Prynne: Hester is the heroine of the novel. She is a beautiful woman possessing equal amount of mental strength and intelligence. Hawthorne places her in his novel at a time when Patriarchy and Puritanism try to choke free expression of individuals in the Seventeenth Century Puritan Society. She was born in a noble family and married to Master Prynne who will be known as Roger Chillingworth with the progression of the narrative. She is entrapped in a loveless marriage. After spending a brief time in Amsterdam Master Prynne decides to join the Puritans in Boston. As a corollary to the plan he sends Hester earlier and he promises to follow her later. After her arrival in the New England society Hester patiently waits for her husband, but she does not get any news of his arrival in Boston. People start to believe that he died in his en route to Boston. Later Hester falls in love with the local priest Arthur Dimmesdale. She has been impregnated and the news of her adultery and sin get divulged in the Puritan New England Community. After the birth of her daughter Pearl She has been punished. As a woman of noble birth she retains her dignity and enormous amount of self confidence when society accuses her of her low morality and forces her to wear the red letter "A" which is emblematic of the word "adulteress". She faces difficulty. She has been subjected to social ostracization. Her determination not to reveal the identity of her lover Reverend Arthur Dimmesdale points out her moral strength and confidence. Later she serves the same society with her compassion and has been transcended from a woman of low morality to the elevated position when people call her "sister of mercy". Sometimes in a fiction the narrator creates a character but with the progression of the narrative the character takes her own strength and vivacity. The statement is exactly applicable in case of Hester. She becomes a character full of strength, determination, and passion. Later, she wants to escape from the claustrophobia of New England Puritan community where life's fundamental conditions of freedom and liberty are getting oppressed. She plans

to escape in Europe with Arthur Dimmesdale. She wants to build her home with her lover but that dream of Hester's never gets materialized. In Hawthorne's fictional oeuvre Hester remains a powerful character.

Arthur Dimmesdale: He is the minister for the town of Boston. He receives his education in England. He is very learned and noble man. He possesses persuasive yet penetrating voice. When he comes to Boston he treats his congregation with sympathy and tenderness. He was attracted to Hester for her noble temperament and beautiful mind. He commits adultery with her as an outcome Pearl can be called the illegitimate child of Arthur Dimmesdale. For Hester , Dimmesdale has love and compassion. His social position as a minister of the community makes his act of confession difficult. Therefore, he does not confess his sin publicly but he starts to punish himself privately. His decision of punishing himself secretly makes him sick both mentally and physically. His character stands in stark contrast with that of Governor Bellingham who is unforgiving and strict in the name of Christ. Dimmesdale is conscious of his moral lapse as a rest he treats his congregation with certain amount of empathy. He interrupts the decision of the community to take away Pearl from Hester. Rather he goes on pleading on behalf of Hester and he has been able to establish the fact that snatching away the child from the mother is a sin. This act of Dimmesdale is very crucial for determining the future action of Hester in the narrative. If the child was separated from Hester she would not be able to serve the society with her inherent compassion and love. It would transform her from a compassionate subject to a vengeful one. Therefore, this act of Arthur Dimmesdale is very important for determining the morality and future action of Hester as a protagonist of Hawthorne's classic titled *The Scarlet Letter*.

Roger Chillingworth: He spends his young age in his quest for knowledge. As a result his companionless state in his middle life makes him desperate for a wife. He was married to young and beautiful Hester Prynne. He sends Hester earlier to Boston and in between he was supposed to follow her. Incidentally he was taken and held captive by the local people. After one year when he returns to Boston he discovers his wife as an adulteress who stands in the scaffold with her new born child. She has been condemned to public shame. This discovery infuriates him, and he promises to find out the father of the illegitimate child of his wife. He settles down as a doctor in Boston and threatens Hester not to reveal his identity as her husband. He takes the new name "Roger Chillingworth". From Master Prynne he becomes Roger Chillingworth. This new name is very connotative. It is symbolic of his transformation from an innocent person to a vengeful spirit who is desirous to take revenge on the lover of his wife. His entire life henceforth has been determined by this single intention. He discovers the lover of his wife. After his discovery he takes the role of tormentor to Arthur Dimmesdale. He uses medicine for negative purpose. Medicines are aiming to prolong life for hope and aspirations. He wants Arthur Dimmesdale to live long so that he can continue to torture his victim Arthur Dimmesdale. As the novel draws to a close he remains only the withered husk of the nobler man he had formerly been.

Pearl: She is the illegitimate child of Hester and Arthur Dimmesdale. She is represented in the novel as a fairy child in possession of resplendent physical beauty. She was born in prison. She becomes a graphic representation of her mother's act of adultery and simultaneously she becomes the fruit of unacknowledged love and respect which both Hester and Arthur Dimmesdale cherish for each other. She receives from her mother the confidence and noble temperament. Her growth and development into a full bloomed lady is connotative in the narrative. It implies Hester's own struggle and indomitable courage to go on beautifying the life which societal moral codes have tried to muddle in an unbelievable way. She nourishes fondness for Arthur Dimmesdale. In the concluding section of the novel when Arthur Dimmesdale acknowledged Pearl as his offspring in front of the citizens of Boston Pearl has been able to weep for her father and at this moment she is tinged with the sense of empathy for her parents. In the concluding section of the novel Pearl will be married to a noble, and rich man, and finally her marital happiness and a life of prosperity have been mentioned by Hawthorne.

Content Structure

UNIT 11 (a): Implications of the Custom House Essay

(b): Feminist Aspect in the novel

11 (a): Implications of the Custom House Essay

The genre of fictional literature was disapproved of by the Puritan authorities of New England society, and in the Nineteenth Century the genre of the so-called 'captivity narrative' became increasingly popular among the American novelists. The reason behind the wide acceptability and popularity of this type of narrative is that it provided the writers with ample scope of rendering the fictions credible and realistic by incorporating certain historical facts into the fictitious plots and also of investing the stories with moral perspectives in compliance with the puritan ethos. Nathaniel Hawthorne partly adopts the common characteristics and formats of the 'captivity narrative' in his classic *The Scarlet Letter*, but at the same time he problematizes the viability of this form as well as the validity of the conventions of orthodox Puritanism by manipulating several subversive tropes.

Two Important Evidences: The introductory anecdote titled 'The Custom House' is apparently in accordance with the fashionable means among the-then American novelists of attributing factual basis to a work of fiction. This essay seeks to historicize the story of the protagonist Hester Prynne by situating it in specific locale and period of time, and by supporting it with certain dubious "documents" that the author claims to have discovered in Salem Custom House – the place where Hester is reported to be imprisoned under the charge of adultery. Hawthorne refers to some "documents... of a private nature" pertaining to "one Jonathan Pue" identified as a previous surveyor of the Salem Custom House from 1740 to 1749 and from 1753 to 1756, that he found while "burrowing into the heaped up rubbish in the corner" of the same custom House after being appointed as the surveyor there. As per the author's claim, he came to know about the story of Hester exclusively from the personal memoir of his "ancient predecessor, Mr. Surveyar Pue". Mr. Pue's accounts of the affair were supported by what the author calls a "rag of scarlet cloth" with the letter "A" embroidered on it – which is presumably the handicraft made by Hester herself, and which Hawthorne says to have found along with the documents of Pue. It is on the basis of these two evidences that Hawthorne purports to establish the historical authenticity of the narrative.

Contradictory Documents: However, the documents presented by Hawthorne in "The Custom House"involves certain problematic areas and aporias that effectively undermine the presupposed historicity of the narrative. Hawthorne claims to have known the story of Hester only from Pue's memoirs after he was appointed as the surveyor of the Salem Custom House in 1846, but it is more likely that Hawthorne modelled the protagonist of his novel on basis of the real case of punishment of one Hester Crawford for the charge of adultery – which he came to know from the Salem Court records of the year 1688 and also from his own family history, since his ancestor William Hathorne was appointed by the court to supervise the punishment of Hester Crawford. This Hester Crawford was given a comparatively lighter punishment of public whipping about six weeks after the birth of her child, whereas the usual punishment for adultery was death – as was executed in the case of another adulteress Mary Latham. The punishment of wearing the letter "A" on her breast and standing on the scaffold –which Hester Prynne underwent- lessens the actual cruelty of the contemporary Puritanical laws effective in the New England that the real cases of Hester Prynne and Mary Latham bear testimony to. "The Custom House" essay, therefore, undermines Hawthorne's proclaimed factual basis of the narrative as it is contradictory to the real source of the tale, implying a strategic mystification and distortion of the actual reality on part of the author, and hence this essay may be read as a rupture that seeks to question Hawthorne's critique of Puritanism in the novel.

In the introductory essay Hawthorne describes the letter "A" on the piece of red cloth that he found along with the dubious document as "a riddle" that he "saw little hope of solving", and as "the mystic symbol" that he realized as "most worthy of interpretation" but that evaded the analysis of his mind. If the piece of red cloth with the letter "A" which seemed to the author "red-hot iron" is really emblematic of Hester's craftsmanship with which she endeavoured to assert her admirable individual authority, it alone can suffice to represent and authenticate Hester's story of her struggle against the social oppression, but Hawthorne somehow trivializes the value and significance of this "mystic symbol" by prioritizing the memoir of Pue as "a reasonably complete explanation of the whole affair". This authorial comment closes the scope of suggestion and significations implied by the handicraft of the protagonist, and thus the feminine perspective of a narrative dealing with the experiences of a woman has been supplanted and obliterated by a decisively male one. Hawthorne's acceptance and adaptation of the "complete explanation" provided by Pue further undermines his critique of the orthodox Puritanical laws operative in the Seventeenth Century New England society that victimized real people like Hester Crawford and Mary Latham.

In "The Custom House" essay Hawthorne emphasizes the narrative's being "authorized and authenticated by the document of Mr. Surveyar Pue". In fact, such an authentication itself is questionable, since as the Surveyar Mr. Pue could only have access to the outer reality of the facts that he witnessed, but not to the inner reality of Hester's struggle against the social oppression and her personal view of sexual morality that she had tried to express through her needlework and by performing an admirable role in the society in face of desolation and plight. Hester's version of the story is best narrated through the scarlet letter "A" that is primarily recognized and assumed by the author as pregnant with interpretative viabilities, but later looked over by him after finding an easy and decisive explanation by Mr. Pue – which compromises with the Puritan ethos and is conductive to the commonly accepted patriarchal codes of narration, suppressing the voice of the female protagonist. In this light, "The Custom House" easy serves as a significant, subversive trope in the feminist critique of the novel, since it exposes the ideological incompatibility and dichotomy between the patriarchal text and the suppressed feminine perspective of the subtext.

Hawthorne, however, tries to maintain the aesthetic dialectics of the narrative constructed by him by acknowledging and preconceiving his inability to re-create the persons recorded in the quasi-historical documents with their sentiments and passions in a work of fiction exploiting his faculty of imagination. In the introductory anecdote he compares his imagination to a "tarnished mirror" that could scarcely reflect the actual figures and their mentalities. In spite of the proclaimed historical basis of the plot, Hawthorne conceives the narrative primarily as a creation of his imagination, and that is what ruptures its historicity. Notwithstanding the authentication of the recorded occurrences by Surveyar Mr. Pue, Hawthorne requires an array of imaginary situations and characters, so as to vivify the narrative and to render it realistic. Therefore, "The Custom House" essay may well be read as the author's apologia for the inconsistencies in the process of historicizing a basically imaginary plot, which he was bound to do for the sake of appeasing the Puritan authorities of the contemporary society. "The Custom House" essay with its multifarious suggestions and significations, therefore, serves as a proper introduction to a narrative that embodies and deals with the problematic and dialectics of the issues regarding sexual morality, the relationship between the individual and the society, position and value of a woman in a specific culture, textual authority, and the scope and viability of historical authenticity.

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11 (b): Feminist aspect in *The Scarlet Letter*

In the sophisticated and stylized allegorical framework of *The Scarlet Letter (*1850), Hawthorne presents a humanistic critique of the Puritanical ethos, laws and social codes in the context of the Seventeenth Century New England society – against which the figure of the protagonist Hester Prynne has been represented. Hawthorne's characterization of the adulteress Hester as someone admirable and awe-inspiring subtly undermines the viability of the laws and conventions that led to Hester's punishment for

what the-then society presumed as violation of sexual morality. Hester's successful endeavour to overcome the shame imposed on her by the society and to assert her individual identity through her handicraft and humanitarian service is conductive to a feminist reading of this text, since the feminist approach in general seeks to trace and analyze such problematic areas in the representation of women in conventional literature in order to dismantle the discourse of patriarchy

The first-wave Feminist critics, like Virginia Woolf and Simone De Beauvoir upheld the scopes of relocating and redefining the position and representation of women in the conventional narratives promoting and dominated by a patriarchal ethos, while the critics pertaining to the second-wave Feminism, such as, Kate Millet and Elaine Showalter, purport the possibility and necessity of deconstructing the tropes used in the narratives of patriarchal canon so as to promote the voices of women – which these narratives always tend to suppress and trivialize. *The Scarlet Letter,* can be read as a pro-feminist critique of social morality and ethos of the particular spatial setting in which the story is situated, as well as a complex text having certain aporias ("Aporia" is literary term which is coined by Poststructuralist critic Jacques Derrida. By "aporia" Derrida implies a zone or space in a text or narrative. Here multiple meanings generate and it becomes difficult for the readers to comprehend one fixed, stable meaning related to the situation.) which problematize the apparent message conveyed in the novel. It ironically gives the novel another more improvised trope to reinstate the validity of the Patriarchal narrative and the Puritan ethos. Hawthorne's unconventional representation of the character of a socially castigated and legally prosecuted adulteress as one trying to redefine her identity and relocate herself in the society where she had been decentred from may quite justly be interpreted from the perspective of the feminist literary theory. Hawthorne adopts the only acceptable form of fiction in the Nineteenth Century, the "Captivity Narrative", so as to question and undermine the validity of such narratives, and also to critique the Puritans' orthodox notions of social and sexual morality and the social laws from the viewpoint of one who, despite being victimized by the prevalent social system (of the Puritanical New England society of the Nineteenth Century). She seeks to command esteem and recognition from the same society by dint of her humanitarian virtues and her artistic skill. However, the author is bound to comply with the set norms of the confessional narrative, and to present Hester as a repentant sinner. Hawthorne needs to represent Hester as a repentant, guilty soul who realizes the justifiability of the Puritanical laws and moral codes. Nevertheless, the novel abounds with numerous subtle suggestions with ironical undertones. It effectively ruptures and subverts the apparent form and contradiction with the Puritanical and Patriarchal narrative comprising "a tale of human frailty and sorrow". In the first chapter of the novel, while describing Hester's emergence from the prison, Hawthorne refers to a rosebush beside the prison door. He assumes that it has been kept alive in history" thanks to its relation to "the footsteps of the saint Ann Hutchinson". The implied parallelism between Ann Hutchinson and Hester presupposes the author's ironic intention to validate and promote the discourse of private morality as practised by both Ann Hutchinson and Hester Prynne in terms of religious and sexual independence respectively. Ann Hutchinson espoused the unorthodox ideology of private morality which she called "covenant of grace" and which was at odds with the conservative Puritanical ethos. She participated in the Antinomian controversy and criticized the practices and moral views of the contemporary Puritan clergy, inviting her trial, and subsequent banishment. Hester in Hawthorne's novel resembles Ann Hutchinson not only by her courageous choice of the freedom of her own body and emotion, but also by her silent endeavour to assert her individual entity. She retrieves her esteem by exploiting the same symbol, the scarlet letter "A" which society has attributed on her as a badge of shame on her. Like Ann Hutchinson, she too, deserves a kind of sainthood for the strength of her ideological and emotional commitment with which she withstood social oppression and succeeded in commanding respect from the society that had once banished her from its centre. Though Hester is castigated by the Puritan authorities of the society for being an adultress, she evidently seems not to share the outlook of the society about sexual morality, and her attitude of patient endurance of the punishment for her self-chosen path of sexual freedom bears testimony to her dauntless spirit. It justifies the novelist's comparison of Hester with Ann Hutchinson. Though Hester has to yield to the oppression of the society to secure her life and livelihood, she does not seem to consider herself a

sinner. That is why she gives her daughter the name Pearl. Her daughter is considered by the society as an evidence of Hester's moral degradation. The name Pearl is very symbolic. Pearl stands for the purity of her mother's passion. Her name itself is suggestive of Hester's endeavour to redefine herself and validate her individual attitude to sexual morality as an alternative to the orthodox Puritanical ethos. Another way in which Hester seeks to rupture the Puritanical worldview is the medium of her needlework. It is her artistry to beautify and decorate the same scarlet letter "A" which society has attributed on her as a mark of shame. It is her skill in needlework which has transformed the letter "A" from a badge of shame to a mark of her beauty and artistic skill. The letter Hawthorne describes "so fantastically embroidered and illuminated upon her bosom... had had the effect of a spell, taking her out of the ordinary relations with humanity, and enclosing her in a sphere by herself. Her skill in needlework has changed the meaning of the letter "A". Initially Society attributed the implication of adultery or adulteress by forcing her to wear the scarlet letter "A" on her bosom. It is her charity, needlework, and her dauntless spirit to struggle against the hindrance, against societal prejudice that transform the meaning of letter "A". Now it implies "able". From a negative connotation of the scarlet letter "A" she succeeded to attribute on the same letter of condemnation a positive meaning. In fact, it is Hester's art work on the scarlet cloth that comprises her narrative which she employs to critique and subvert the grand narrative of the Puritanical chauvinism. From the perspective of second –wave Feminist criticism, it may be interpreted as a woman's endeavour to write about herself. Thus she constructs her individual identity. She rejects and disrupts the identity which Patriarchy has imposed on her. Hawthorne's classic *The Scarlet Letter* becomes a complex narrative, where the strict Patriarchal codes and a feminist endeavour to replace the masculine grand narrative which is known as "His-story" both are mingled in order to enhance the narrative appeal of the text. Hawthorne's heroine Hester Prynne has transformed into a potent force in the narrative. She becomes almost a life like character and her powerful presence becomes the force that drives the entire narrative.

Sometimes in Fiction it happens when a novelist creates a character but the character over the course of the narrative development has gained its own strength. Such is the case about the character Hester Prynne in *The Scarlet Letter*. Hester never protests loudly against the societal injustices. She never shouts against the societal injustices which have been inflicted upon her. She remains silent. The silence is only the weapon with which Hester goes on protesting. Feminist critic Julia Kristeva and psychoanalyst Lacan coins two terms. What Kristeva calls as "Semiotic and Symbolic phases" Lacan calls it "Imaginary and Symbolic phases". Let me define what is Semiotic phase. According to Julia Kristeva, Semiotic phase is the period of a human child before his birth. It is the pre-natal existence when he/ she remains in the mother's womb. In this phase a child does not learn language. The silence and muted gestures signify his/her existence. The Semiotic phase is described as "Imaginary phase" by Lacan. Both Lacan and Kristeva define Symbolic phase as a phase of child after the birth. It is the phase of language acquisition when he enters the domain of structured language. The symbolic phase is being viewed as the child's initiation into the patriarchal custom. The semiotic or imaginary phase is being viewed by critics as a phase where the child does not learn structured language; thereby it is defined as a feminine phase where silence, and mute gestures become medium of expression. Hester's silent gestures become her mode of resistance against the voices of the crowd. Even the narrative structure of the novel gives birth to the feminist aspects. Hawthorne includes in the narrative the device of "polyphony". It means multiple voices. The dominating omniscient tone of the narrative gets fractured by the frequent intervention of the monologues and voices from other characters. According to the feminist critics, polyphony is inclusive rather than being restrictive. Therefore, polyphony in the narrative is indicative of the feminist aspect of the novel.

(a): The Portrayal of New England Puritan Society and its Relation with *The Scarlet Letter*

(b): Symbols in *The Scarlet Letter*

12 (a):The Portrayal of New England Puritan Society and Its Relation with *The Scarlet Letter*

In *The Scarlet Letter* Hawthorne determinedly reshaped the Puritan past in order to satisfy the tastes of his own contemporary readers in nineteenth century America. The relationship between *The Scarlet Letter* and Puritan history is analogous. In the early Seventeenth Century the backlash of the English civil war was felt severely in England. The Puritans were forced to immigrate and the historic "Mayflower" voyage allowed the Puritan pilgrim Fathers to land in Massachussets in 1620. More settlements were built as the Puritans struggled bitterly against the Red Indians. *The Scarlet Letter* is situated in this period of history – roughly from 1642-1649 during the tenure of Governor Winthorp. Hence it reflects the deep seated Puritanical attitudes of the period and the strong emphasis on sexual morality.

In the novel Hawthorne points out that the personal and sexual behaviour both are dictated by the orthodox Puritanical laws. Eminent critical observation on the novel focuses on the fact that literary and sexual aspects both are nascent in the historical context of the novel. By giving the tale of sexual crime in a specific historical location, Hawthorne was thus presenting a critique of seventeenth century Puritan society of New England. The narrative deals with the prejudices of the Puritanism which sucks the life of each and every individual. In the strict societal prejudices human values and basic demands of life are being overlooked. The Puritans believe that human life is created out of the sin. Human birth is result of our parents' act of disobedience to God's rules. Thus The Puritans believe that in life everyone needs to adhere to strict religious norms which would ensure salvation or redemption at the end of this mortal life. Therefore, Puritanism believes, human life is a means of achieving salvation through strict obedience to religious rules. Based on this view the Puritans legitimated the control and supervision of society over the private lives of the individuals. Indeed, in the Puritan society private life of an individual is to be made public.

The novel is an exploration of the legal, social, and moral implications of sexual crime. Hester is punished for committing adultery in Puritan New England society. The novel is ostensibly based on historical facts. In the novel Hester was made to serve a short prison sentence. After the birth of her child she was made to stand on the scaffold on the market place. She was forced to wear letter "A". The novel opens with Hester standing on the scaffold. This scene is marked with significant dramatic irony. She is asked to live in the outskirts of the town. Hester uses her needlework not only to decorate the scarlet letter but also for her livelihood. She also looks after the sick and dying people. For this she is called "the sister of mercy". For her contribution to society the meaning of the ignominious letter "A" undergoes a transformation. It means later on "able" or "admirable".

The Seventeenth Century Puritan New England society punished Hester for committing adultery in quite a repressive way. She is asked to name publicly her lover by her pastor reverend Mr. Arthur Dimmesdale who later turns out to be a partner in the crime. Hester did not expose the name of her lover. Seeing this, her husband Roger Chillingworth also forced her not to mention the name and identity of her husband. Thus both Hester and her child remain unacknowledged by her lover and husband. This fact questions the morality of the seventeenth century Puritan New England society. *The Scarlet Letter* elaborates the theme of the dichotomy of the relation between the social and the individual in respect of the validity of public exposure of the private and also the public control over the private. But by using the trope of irony and ambiguity, Hawthorne disrupts the standardized hierarchical structure of the synchronic regulation of the society over the diachronic life of an individual, determined by the overwhelming presence of the Puritan worldview.

The nature of Puritan morality is extremely ambivalent and hypocritical. This is strengthened in the first scaffold scene where Hester is forced to name publicly her lover by her pastor reverend Mr. Arthur Dimmesdale. The typological consciousness or allegorical worldview of the Puritans creates an emotional and psychological split in the character of Arthur Dimmesdale. He is also an embodiment of Puritan consciousness and is also valorized as the most iconic figure of Puritanism. The allegorical view of life implicated in Puritan philosophy is not a correct way. Therefore, Hawthorne in a roundabout way suggests that the Puritan system of keeping each individual's private life under their control is equally a faulty one. Though the novel has a historical setting there are several deviations which are not historically authentic. Michael J. Colacurcio points out some historical deviations in the narrative. First of all in, chapter six titled "Pearl" Hawthorne writes that Pearl had rapidly grown from babyhood within three years. The novel thus moved from 1642-1645. Secondly, in chapter Seven titled "The Governor's Hall" Hawthorne mentions that 'now' the Governor of the colony was Richard Bellingham, however, the history of the time tells us that Belingham had lost his Governorship in 1642. So, Hawthorne makes a deliberate and significant historical deviance in the novel. The reason behind it becomes clear when we consider the reasons of defects of Governor Bellingham. He was widowed in the age of fifty. He desired to remarry. Therefore, he provides shelter to a girl aged about twenty during his Governorship. The girl was already engaged to a man. This caused his humiliation and he was forced to leave his Governorship. Therefore, the critics say that, Bellingham's political story leading up to his defect in the grade and general Election in 1642 and his own recent behaviour formed the well-known substance of the political argument against him. Furthermore, the behaviour has been overtly sexual. Indeed, it seems essentially accurate to say that Bellingham has been voted out of his office in May 1642 for conduct not so different from Hester's own. And the reader of *The Scarlet Letter* is now in position to group the wicked logic of its major historical fabrication, Bellingham not Winthorp sentences Hester. for the first scaffold scene. Thus, Governor Bellingham is not the accuser but the accused in the central area of sex and constitutionality in the unfolding experiments of utopian Massachusetts society.

Hester can be compared to Ann Hutchinson because like Ann Hutchinson, Hester does not believe in public morality and like Ann Hutchinson, Hester believes that God can be there. Therefore, both Hester and Ann Hutchinson believe in individual morality. Hester would have been a second Ann Hutchinson, a major religious rebel against Seventeenth Century American Puritanism. Hester comes back to the society by her needlework. It further destabilizes the centre of the Puritan socio- ecclesiastical hierarchy by decentering revered Dimmesdale who represents the Puritan ethos. The allegorical view of life, as implicated by the Puritans, proves futile to hold the hierarchy of social and individual morality as Dimmesdale's fall signifies. Hester's embroidery is indeed an art. The scarlet letter she wears is definitely an aesthetic artefact. It represents art far more than it represents adultery though hardly in view of Puritan Boston. Therefore, the historical setting of the novel constitutes not only a critique of that society but it also anticipates the possibility of a revision of the repressive Puritan morality which is shown in the novel. Hawthorne is influenced by the writings of Margaret Fuller, but he finally succumbs to and compromises with the Puritanical view vis-a-vis the patriarchal view.

12 (b): Symbols in *The Scarlet Letter*

The most important symbols in the novel are the scarlet letter "A", meteor, the name of Hester's child Pearl, the scaffold, and the rosebush.

The Scarlet Letter: It becomes the major symbol in the novel and its symbolic implications determine the development of the plot in the novel. As a punishment for committing adultery Hester is being forced by the strict Puritan society to wear the scarlet letter "A" in her bosom. The letter stands for adultery. The entire novel focuses its attention on the alteration of meaning of the letter "A". Hester's compassion for the people in society her grace and her dignity all these contribute to generate new meaning out of the shameful letter "A". With the progression of the narrative the letter "A" stands for "able" and "angel".

Meteor: The shape of the meteor looks like letter A. Arthur Dimmesdale believes that it is divine wish to reveal his sin so that he can be liberated from his guilt haunted conscience. To the rest of the people the shape of the meteor like the letter A makes them feel that it is symbolic of angel.

Pearl: The name is indicative of purity. Pearl is born out of her parents' pure love and respect for each other. She is not a child who is born out of lust rather she is angelic child who has taken birth out of love.

The Scaffold: In the entire narrative it has been mentioned three times. At the beginning of the novel the scaffold scene acts as a revelation of Hester's sin and crime. In the middle of the book it has being referred to. And the concluding section of the book refers to the scaffold. It symbolically divides the narrative into three parts: beginning, middle, and end.

The Rosebush: It is believed that the rosebush next to the prison door is bloomed by the touch of holy feet of Ann Hutchinson. The rosebush behind the prison door stands as a vibrant expression of life and its natural aspects which are suppressed in the Puritan community of New England. It is located outside the prison door where human power dominates the space. The rosebush is symbolic of passion and spontaneous flow of life which rigid Puritan laws cannot dominate.

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Assignments

1. Write an essay analyzing the character of Hester.
2. *The Scarlet Letter* is a feminist text. Justify.
3. Write an essay explaining the significance of the "Custom House Essay" at the beginning of the novel.
4. Comment on the complex social custom of Puritanism as reflected in the novel *The Scarlet Letter*.
5. Comment on the implication of the name "Pearl".
6. Comment on the pseudo-historic background of *The Scarlet Letter*.
7. Comment on the character of Arthur Dimmesdale.
8. Comment on the symbols in the novel *The Scarlet Letter*.

Block IV
The Great Gatsby
By
Francis Key Scott Fitzgerald

Unit 13(a): The Life and Literary Career of F.Scott Fitzgerald
Unit 13(b): Synopsis of the novel
Unit 14(a): The 'Jazz Age'
Unit 14(b): Narrative Technique
Unit 15(a): The American Dream
Unit 15(b): Gender
Unit 16: (a): Memory

Unit 13(a): The Life and Literary Career of F. Scott Fitzgerald

Francis Key Scott Fitzgerald was born in St Paul on September 24, 1896 to Edward Fitzgerald and Mary Mary Macquillan Fitzgerald. His father's inability to keep any job for long resulted in Fitzgerald having an unsettled childhood. Having shifted from place to place in New York the family finally moved back to St Paul where financial help from Mrs. Fitzgerald's family helped keep the family afloat. Though never an outstanding student, F.Scott Fitzgerald was a talented storyteller. He attended Princeton from 1913 to

1917, but left without graduating to enlist in the US Army. But the World War I ended shortly and he never saw combat.
In 1918, while being stationed at Montgomery, Alabama, he met Zelda Sayre-young, beautiful, wealthy, and coveted by others. Fitzgerald was one of her many suitors. The relationship became serious and he proposed to her many times. But Zelda refused to marry him until he became financially secure. In 1919, he travelled to New York City to work on his first novel. In 1920, when Zelda had started considering offers from other men, Fitzgerald's novel *This Side of Paradise* was published to outstanding reviews. Fitzgerald and Zelda married in 1920 and began living the life of rich, carefree and fashionable youngsters in New York. His first short story collection *Flappers and Philosophers* was published in the same year.

In 1921, the couple had their first and only child-Francis Scot "Scottie" Fitzgerald. His second novel (*The Beautiful and the Damned*) and second short story collection (*Tales From the Jazz Age*) were both published in 1922. Their continuous partying and drinking were causing chaos and making their life problematic. To regain health and order, they moved from one city to another in Europe (which included Rome, Paris and the French Riviera), but in vain. Surrounded by Americans living abroad, Fitzgerald befriended celebrated contemporary author Hemingway and soon became intimate, much to the dislike of Zelda. She was becoming restless for her own fame and her behavior outraged friends and acquaintances.

Although his third novel-*The Great Gatsby*, was not immediately appraised, it is now considered as the pinnacle of his career. Despite its position in the American literary canon, the novel marked the beginning of the slow death of Fitzgerald's career and marriage. Soon after the novel was published Zelda was diagnosed with schizophrenia and institutionalized, first in Switzerland and later in Baltimore, Maryland. In 1926, his 3rd short story collection-*All the Sad Young Men* was published. As Zelda was moved from hospital to hospital, Fitzgerald stayed in nearby hotels. He fell deeper and deeper into alcoholism, making it increasingly difficult to concentrate on his work. It took him eight more years to publish anything worthwhile. His next novel *Tender is the Night* came in 1934. It describes in a somber manner a mentally ill woman and her physician husband. The heaviness of the novel is a window into Fitzgerald's own feelings as he dealt with Zelda's death and the shock of the Great Depression. In 1935 his final short story collection *Taps at Reveille* was published. Fitzgerald tried his hand with screenwriting for Hollywood without success. His final novel *The Last Tycoon* was left unfinished as he died in 1940. He was buried in Rockville, Maryland.

Unit 13(b): Synopsis of the Novel

Chapter One

Nick Carraway-born and brought up in a respectable family in the Midwest, begins narrating the story. Following a family tradition he attended the prestigious Yale University before enlisting in the army and going to West Asia to participate in the First World War. Returning from there, he settled down in New York and began working in the 'bond business. Though he had planned to roam across the cities of the East for several years, he could spend only one summer in New York. This book would narrate the history of that summer.
Arriving in spring, he found the city hot and uncomfortable already. So he rented a little house for himself at West Egg-twenty miles from the city. It was located between two luxurious houses belonging to millionaires at Long Island. Nick remembers himself being engrossed in work, trying to attain success as a businessman. The history of the summer properly began the day his cousin Daisy called him up and invited him to dine with her and her husband, Tom Buchanan. The Buchanans lived right across the Bay-at East Egg. Nick had known Tom during their days at Yale. He is the scion of a traditionally rich landowning family. He has a hulky physique of "enormous leverage", which Nick characterizes as a "cruel body". At the Buchanans' Nick also meets professional golfer Jordan Baker. On learning that Nick lives in West Egg, she presumes that he might be acquainted to Gatsby-a man who throws lavish parties

every weekend. Daisy asks for the full name of this person, but the conversation shifts to another topic. The Buchanans and Jordan Baker live privileged lives, contrasting sharply in sensibility and luxury with Nick's more modest and grounded lifestyle. Nick describes the immense beauty and desirability of Daisy. However, he senses an air of discord in the family when Tom leaves dinner table to attend a telephone call again and again, followed by a visibly distraught Daisy, who follows Tom. Jordan Baker gossips about Tom having "some woman". When Nick returns home to West Egg, he notices a solitary silhouetted figure gazing at the waters under a starlit sky, standing on the dock adjacent to Gatsby's mansion. Nick intuits that it might be the owner of the mansion-Mr Gatsby himself. He controls his impulse to converse with him, looking at his solemn manner of extending his arm towards a green light flashing at the end of someone's dock across the bay. When he looks again, the mysterious figure has vanished.

Chapter Two

The Second Chapter begins with a description of the desolate and forsaken expanse of formerly developed land, termed as the valley of ashes. It lies at the confluence of the city with the suburbs. This forlorn area is contains a decaying advertisement billboard on which are starkly depicted the Eyes of Doctor T.J. Eckleburg. Amid the predominance of grey all around, the eyes- "blue and gigantic", with "retinas are one yard high" immediately call attention towards themselves. It is here that Tom insists they get off the train in order for Nick to "meet [his] girl." Nick consequently encounters Tom's mistress-the sensuous Myrtle Wilson, wife of "spiritless" George Wilson, who owns a shabby garage. Under the pretense of visiting her sister in New York, she follows Tom and Nick on the next train to New York. Once in New York, Myrtle spies a man selling dogs on the way to their apartment and insists on having one. At the apartment, Myrtle calls up and invite her sister Catherine and their neighbours- the McKees to join the party. The following hours are spent in frenzy of drunkenness. Under the spell of intoxication,a belligerent Myrtle takes Daisy's name again and again, at which Tom is incensed and wildly strikes out at Myrtle, thereby breaking Myrtle's nose. The party thereafter enters a downward spiral, the guests depart, Nick leads Mr. McKee home and finally heads home himself.

Chapter Three

Chapter 3 is wholly concerned with Nick's impression of Gatsby. In the summer months, celebrities and commoners alike from far and wide flocked Gatsby's mansion to attend extravagant parties. In a beautiful turn of phrase Fitzgerald compares the pleasure-seeking "men and girls" to moths who came and went every weekend, "among the whisperings and the champagne and the stars." For their amusement, Gatsby gave uninhibited access to his pool, his boats, his car, besides serving two complete dinners and having a whole orchestra to entertain the guests. These parties would continue late into the night, accompanied by singing, dancing, flirting, gossips, etc.

One weekend Nick is formally invited by Gatsby to join in the festivities, whereas the others arrive uninvited, knowing only that there will be a party to which all and sundry are welcome. Nick tries without luck to meet the host. Milling around, Nick comes across Jordan Baker and the two inadvertently gather rumors about Gatsby. After several glasses of champagne, Nick begins a conversation with a fellow who is, unbeknownst to him, Gatsby himself. Later, Gatsby takes Jordan Baker aside to speak with her privately. Though their conversation is left undisclosed, Jordan passes along that it is "the most amazing thing."

Lest the reader be misled into thinking that Nick's summer was relatively mundane with only the three incidents outlined in the first three chapters being noteworthy, Nick interjects that much more happened to him- in the form of working, casually dating one of his female colleagues, and dining at the Yale Club. He makes no secret of his fascination for New York's "enchanted metropolitan twilight" and people madly rushing in search of "gayety." By mid-summer Nick and Jordan begin meeting each other more frequently. Nick cannot help feeling toward her "a sort of tender curiosity." He understands that Jordan is "incurably dishonest." He recalls having read in the newspapers that Jordan had once been accused of

cheating in a golf tournament. Notwithstanding her incurable dishonesty, Jordan intrigues Nick. By the end of the chapter Nick commends his own cardinal virtue, claiming modestly- "I am one of the few honest people that I have ever known."

Chapter Four

Nick acquaints us to the panorama of guests at Gatsby's parties- the Chester Beckers, the Leeches, Doctor Webster Civet, the Hornbeams, the Ismays, the Chrysties, and others. Gatsby's parties present a kaleidoscopic assortment of all kinds of fashionable people- socialites and debutantes, the famous and the infamous. A fellow called Klipspringer earns the title of "the boarder" since he can be found there most frequently.

One morning late in July, Gatsby arrives at Nick's and invites him to lunch with him at New York. During the "disconcerting ride" to the city, lest Nick harbor any misconceptions regarding Gatsby's past, Gatsby forbids Nick to listen to the rumors afloat. Nick is suspicious even as Gatsby babbles his descent from a wealthy Midwest family (in San Francisco), education at Oxford, tour across Europe and extraordinary heroics as army major during the Great War. An incredulous Nick is left doubtful when Gatsby, pulled over for speeding, is let go after he flashes a card from his pocket declaring that the police commissioner is ever-grateful to him for a service he had once lent.

At lunch Gatsby introduces Nick to Meyer Wolfshiem- a professional gambler and the man rumored to have fixed the 1919 World Series. Gatsby's conversation with Wolfshiem vaguely hints at the former's shady link to organized crime rackets. Later in the day, when Nick meets Jordan Baker, she recounts how one morning in 1917 she had met Daisy and an unknown admirer, a military officer and evidently in deep love. Daisy's family didn't approve of the match on account of his insecure financial status. The young man left for Europe to fight in World War I and after a long wait, Daisy was forced by circumstances to marry Tom Buchanan. The following April, Daisy gave birth to a daughter. Jordan continues, noting what Gatsby told her on the night of the party.

Gatsby returned from the war, expecting to find, convince and marry Daisy but the discovery of her marriage left him crestfallen. Determined to grow rich and gain eligibility for Daisy's hand, he worked hard for the next few years. It becomes clear that his throwing lavish parties and living in a West Egg mansion right across the Bay from the Buchanans was no coincidence. Jordan then relays Gatsby's request: that Nick invite Daisy over some afternoon so that he can arrange to come by and see her, as if by accident. As Chapter 4 ends, Nick reaches the realization that both Tom and Gatsby are linked by their pursuit of their respective dreams. Each is motivated by his desire to be loved, while Nick—lacking any such dream, pulls Jordan closer to him and kisses her. This moment of desire helps warm the reader to an otherwise aloof man.

Chapter Five

Upon returning home that evening Nick finds Gatsby's house lit top to bottom (without there being any party) and Gatsby waiting for him. Nick assures him that he will call Daisy the next day and invite her to tea. Gatsby offers to arrange for Nick a way to augment his income only to be declined.

The next day, Nick rings up and invites Daisy alone to tea a few days later. Gatsby, desiring absolute perfection, sends a man to cut Nick's grass and later and get flowers delivered. Arriving an hour before Daisy, Gatsby is nervous and, for the first time in the novel, a little unsure of himself. At the appointed time, Daisy arrives. Nick ushers Daisy into the house to find that Gatsby has disappeared, only to reemerge at the front door, looking pale and tragic. Gatsby ushers himself into the living room and joins Daisy. The awkward reunion is unnaturally polite at first. All three feel somewhat embarrassed, but amid the tea preparations, a greater sense of ease overtakes the group. Excusing himself, Nick leaves the house and roams around the neighbourhood for half an hour. On returning he finds that Gatsby transformed- from embarrassment to unbounded delight, almost radiant in glee. Daisy's voice similarly betrays "unexpected joy" as the trio move leave for a visit to Gatsby's mansion. Awe-struck by its magnificence,

Daisy wanders from room to room, savoring the distinct ambience of each part of the estate, couched in opulence. Nick notices Gatsby's evident sense of wonder at Daisy's presence in his house-something he had contrived to attain so long. Daisy, at seeing Gatsby's array of shirts, buries her head in them weeping at their beauty. By the end of the afternoon, Gatsby has shown Daisy all the material stability he possesses, yet Nick hints that perhaps Daisy doesn't measure up — not because of a shortcoming on her part, but because of the magnitude of the dream that Gatsby has built over the past five years. While Nick departs at the end of the chapter, Daisy and Gatsby are left together.

Chapter Six

The beginning of this chapter marks the onset of Gatsby's downfall, signaled by the arrival of a suspicious reporter comes to Gatsby, asking him "if he had anything to say." Gatsby and his grandiose parties had become the talk of the town and by summer's end he was rumored to be involved in illegal businesses.

Nick here gives a detailed account of Gatsby's real background-James Gatz became Jay Gatsby on the fateful day when, on the shores of Lake Superior, he saw Dan Cody drop anchor on his yacht. Impoverished Jay Gatz's younger days had been spent roaming parts of Minnesota, whence he had imbibed the toughness of character, which became so prominent later on. The chance meeting with Cody gave Gatsby the opportunity to shape the fiction that would define his life. Cody, fifty years old with a penchant for women, took Gatsby under his wing and prepared him for the yachting life, and they embarked for the West Indies and the Barbary Coast. During their five years together, Cody and Gatsby went around the continent three times; in the end, Cody was mysteriously undone by his lady love.

Having spent the intermediate weeks with Jordan, Nick goes to visit Gatsby and is surprised to find there Tom Buchanan and two others from his social circle. After exchanging some social small talk Gatsby is invited to dine with the group, which he accepts. Tom and his friends criticize Gatsby behind his back for accepting this half-hearted invitation. To them, it shows Gatsby's cultural inferiority in stark contrast to their own.

Gatsby in return invites Tom and Daisy to the next gala party at his mansion, where he makes every effort to impress the Buchanans by pointing out all the celebrities present, then introduces Tom to them as "the polo player." Gatsby and Daisy dance, marking the only time Gatsby really gets involved with one of his own parties. Later, Daisy and Gatsby adjourn to Nick's steps for a half-hour of privacy. When they return for dinner, Tom leaves to dine with another group. Daisy, aware of Tom's penchant for casual affairs, describes the girl as "common but pretty", sarcastically offering a pencil in case he wants to take down her address. Daisy finds the party unnerving and abominable. The Buchanans leave, the party breaks up and Nick and Gatsby review the evening. Gatsby, fearing Daisy did not have a good time, worries about her. When Nick cautions Gatsby that "You can't repeat the past," Gatsby answers with conviction "Why of course you can!" Nick finds his belief exceedingly "sentimental".

Chapter Seven

With curiosity about Gatsby mounting, the gala Saturday parties abruptly cease. Nick learns that Gatsby's old servants have been substituted with a bunch of people recommended by Wolfshiem, as he feared the old lot susceptible to spreading rumours about Daisy. The day being unbearably hot, the party heads for lunch to the Buchanans' house. When Tom leaves the room to speak with his mistress on the phone, Daisy boldly kisses Gatsby, declaring her love for him. Later, after Daisy suggests they go to town, the soft glance that passes between Daisy and Gatsby makes it clear that Daisy and Tom are having an affair.

Infuriated, Tom agrees to leave for the city. He takes a bottle of whiskey along with him. Tom takes Jordan and Nick on board Gatsby's car, while Gatsby and Daisy travel by Tom's. Noticing the car is low on gas, Tom stops at Wilson's station for a re-fill. Wilson is visibly unwell and announces his decision to head for the West shortly. His abrupt decision is prompted by the discovery of Myrtle's illicit affair, with a lover of undisclosed 31ormandy. Doubly enraged at the potential loss of his mistress and his wife, Tom

spitefully confronts Gatsby about his intentions at the Plaza Hotel. Undeterred, Gatsby tells Tom that Daisy has loved him rather than Tom all along. Tom, is incredulous and demands Daisy to confirm. Daisy, feeling emotionally pressed, fails to admit that she never loved Tom. Gatsby senses his carefully constructed dream on the brink of collapse and tries an alternative tactic by declaring that Daisy would soon leave Tom for Gatsby. Tom assures him that Daisy will never leave him for a bootlegger. Tom orders Daisy and Gatsby to head home (in Gatsby's own car this time). Tom, Jordan, and Nick follow in Tom's car.

The narration now skips to George Wilson who has been found ill by his neighbor, Michaelis. Wilson explains he has Myrtle locked inside and she will remain so until they leave in two days' time. Michaelis, astonished, heads back to his restaurant. A few hours later, Myrtle's voice is heard. Trying to break free George Wilson, she rushes out into the road, where she sees the yellow vehicle (in which Tom had come earlier in the day) appearing at break-neck speed. But this time Gatsby and Daisy were aboard the car. Unsuspecting Myrtle's sudden dashing movement the car fails to stop, runs Myrtle over, then realizing what had just occurred, continues on its journey. When Nick, Tom, and Jordan arrive shortly afterwards, they find that a crowd has gathered. In order to find out the cause of the congregation, Tom steps out of the car and discovers Myrtle's lifeless body lying on a worktable. He learns the car that struck Myrtle matches Gatsby's in description. Whimpering in anger, he leaves the place.

On reaching East Egg, Tom suggests Nick wait inside until the cab arrives to take him home. By now disgusted with the blatant cruelty and corruption of Tom, Daisy, and the class they represent, Nick declines the offer. Waiting outside Buchanan residency, Nick runs into Gatsby who asks if they witnessed any trouble on the road. Nick reports the accident and in the ensuing conversation learns Daisy, not Gatsby, was driving at the time. Gatsby is chivalrous in offering to take the blame entirely. As Nick leaves, Gatsby- the paragon of chivalry and lost dreams, decides to hide outside Buchanan residency, to ensure Tom doesn't bully Daisy. Nick, just before leaving, peeps inside to find Tom and Daisy sitting peacefully together, from which Nick surmises that Daisy's reconciliation with Tom is complete at the time of danger. It increases Nick's repulsion towards the entire class.

Chapter Eight

All night Nick remains awake for Gatsby to return. When he hears a car pull over at Gatsby's early in the morning, he goes over to Gatsby's. Gatsby reveals that nothing happened while he kept his watch. Apprehending that Gatsby's "death car" might be tracked down, he suggests that Gatsby leave town for a while. Gatsby then recounts the story of his past, "because 'Jay Gatsby' had broken up like glass against Tom's hard malice." Gatsby reveals how during their courtship, his physical intimacy with Daisy had bonded him to her inexorably. Nick learns how at the end of the war Gatsby's return home got unavoidably delayed. Daisy, unable to wait any longer, broke off their relationship.

Back in the United States, Gatsby went in search of Daisy to Louisville, but finding that she was already married and enjoying her honeymoon, Gatsby was left with the idea that if he had only searched harder he would have found her. As Gatsby and Nick finish breakfast Gatsby's gardener arrives and declares that he plans to drain the pool because the season is over. But Gatsby asks him to wait because he hasn't used the pool at all. Nick takes leave, catches the train to New York. Before leaving, he pays Gatsby the only compliment he ever paid her:"They're a rotten crowd . . . You're worth the whole damn bunch put together." At office Nick feels uneasy, preoccupied with the past day's adventures. He calls up Gatsby but is unable to reach him, decides to head home early.

Fitzgerald's narrative once again goes back in time, to the evening prior, in the valley of ashes where George Wilson, despondent over Myrtle's death, appears irrational when Michaelis attempts to engage him in conversation. Michaelis is concerned about his psychological health and stays with him all night. He takes leave only in the morning but returns four hours later to find Wilson missing.

The narrative now focuses on Wilson who roams from place to place before finally arriving at Gatsby's house. There he finds Gatsby floating on an air mattress in the pool. Wilson, sure that Gatsby is responsible for Myrtle's death, shoots and kills Gatsby. Nick finds Gatsby's body floating in the pool and, while starting to the house with the body, the gardener discovers Wilson's lifeless body lying in the grass nearby.

Chapter Nine

The police and the journalists frequent Gatsby's mansion following his death. Entrusted with the execution of Gatsby's final rites, Nick wonders how to contact Gatsby's kin (if any). He rings up Daisy to inform her about the situation but learns she and Tom have left on a trip, leaving no itinerary. While hundreds had turned up for his parties, nobody-not even Wolfsheim or Klipspringer want to get involved in Gatsby's funeral. Later that afternoon when Gatsby's phone rings, Nick answers. Upon telling the unknown speaker that Gatsby is dead, the speaker hangs up.

Three days later, Nick receives a telegram from Henry C. Gatz, Gatsby's father in Minnesota. Learning of Jimmy's (Gatsby's) death through a Chicago newspaper. Gatz refuses to take the body to the Midwest, noting "Jimmy always liked it better down East." Mr. Gatz takes great pride in the wealth that his son had amassed in life, by virtue of his discipline and perseverance. Finally at Gatsby's graveside the little group that assembles include a few servants, the mail carrier, the minister, Nick, and Mr. Gatz. That Gatsby, in whose parties hundreds used to come should die and be buried alone seems cruel injustice to Nick. Only "Owl Eyes," a grumpy looking old man who attended some of Gatsby's parties, unexpectedly makes an appearance at his funeral (and he only made it to the gate after the services ended).

Nick then moves to memories of traveling West when he came home from college. As the train moved further and further West he became more and more comfortable, as if he were returning to a special place just his own. These reveries launch Nick into a contrast between the merits of the Midwest and the vices of the East. The story reaches conclusion when Nick interacts with two people from his past. One of them is Jordan-for whom there remains a soft corner though he dispels the tenderness the next time he meets her. Another day in autumn, Nick meets Tom who makes the first move to speak. Initially Nick refuses to shake Tom's hand, upset with what Tom has come to represent. In the course of their short discussion, Nick learns that Tom had informed George Wilson about the real owner of the "death car". Nick before leaving shakes hands with Tom as the realization dawns upon him that Tom was as irresponsible, pampered, adamant and careless as a child.

Nick is so devastated by the death of Gatsby and the irresponsible behavior of genteel society that he decides to leave West Egg and return West. On the night before his departure he strolls across Gatsby's mansion, contrasting its previous glamour and the crowds it attracted with its present desolation. The ending of the novel is poetic in its suggestiveness-

"Gatsby believed in the Green light and the orgastic future that year by year recedes before us. It eluded us then, but that's no matter-tomorrow we will run faster, stretch out our arms farther…An one fine morning-

So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past."

Unit 14(a): The 'Jazz Age'

Born in the mid-1890s in New Orleans, Jazz was a mixture of Blues and marching band music. It was mainly played by and appreciated among African-American and Creole communities, to the accompaniment of U.S Army instruments like the cornet or marching drums. A key feature of jazz music was improvisation, since most of the former virtuoso jazz musicians weren't able to read musical

notations at all. It wasn't long before the American whites started noticing the popularity of jazz and started playing it too. Therefore it would be safe to say that

The twenties, sometimes referred to as the "Jazz Age", was the time for experiments and discovering new jazz-styles. During this period of burgeoning industrialization black people and new-Orleans-musicians moved from the country site south to Chicago. In Chicago their influence precipitated in the creation of (white) Chicago-Style. Several Chicago musicians later moved to New York, which was another notable centre of jazz, too.

The musical revolution begun by jazz saw the introduction of saxophone as a potent musical instrument for the first time. Seen as provocative to close intimate dancing, many among the more orthodox denounced the loud and extraordinary sound of the sax, disapproving of its negative influence on the younger generation. The music of jazz was thought to be propitious in instigating rebellion and sowing seeds of dissension against moral traditions.

The yet barely known new musical form called jazz sound spread all over America through the medium of national radio, thereby garnering huge popularity. Several important clubs, even greater number of speakeasies (illegal pubs) helped jazz bands to get famous and featured their songs. This supposedly rebellion-inducing, dissension sowing form of music Jazz often got connected with alcohol, intimate dancing and "other socially questionable activities".

The Jazz Age in The Great Gatsby:

Settled by the Puritans from Europe in huge numbers, American society for almost a century after acquiring independence, was characterized by its parsimony. But the early 20th century saw the nation enter its glorious position as world-leader in industry and technology. Cities like New York boomed in financial importance, soon to be followed by the ushering in of a new culture. New York in the Jazz Age offered the spectacle of profusion all around. Prodigality came to characterize the new way of life for the wealthy and coveted by the rest. Parties were not cheap affairs anymore in this age of affluence, when prudery was considered the opposite of popular.

In Fitzgerald's novel Gatsby's parties may be looked upon as typical representations of this attitude bred by the contemporary social outlook. His extravagant are marked unmistakably by "charm, notoriety [and] mere good manners", weighted more than money as a social asset." All the gossip rampant about Gatsby among his guests testifies to this statement, especially because most of them do not even know him. Good manners are reflected by gentlemen who always offer a helpful hand to charming ladies. The age was one in which men and women were overcoming not only prudery, but they were getting rid of all inhibitions too. At Gatsby's parties "people were not invited – they went there […] came for the party with a simplicity of heart that was its own ticket of admission." This spontaneous society considered Gatsby's huge premises an amusement park-perennially animated with chatter and laughter, underlain by seemingly interminable supplies food and drink. The sheer volume and gathering of these parties offer privacy at bidding, since any two individuals growing intimate would not even be noticed by the others who are busy enjoying themselves.

The narrator Nick Carraway describes repeatedly and in detail Gatsby's mansion, surrounding gardens, the intricate decoration and all the decorations that accompanied each weekend party. Sometimes they seem a little exaggerated: "Several hundred feet of canvas and enough colored lights to make a Christmas tree out of Gatsby's enormous garden" are hung up so that "the halls and salons and verandas are gaudy with primary colors". But one also gets the idea of Gatsby the host ready to go to any extent to please his hoards of uninvited guests from these descriptions. On every occasion turkey, ham, salads and pastry pigs would await his guests. Five crates full of oranges and lemons would be delivered every weekend ready to cater to the guests. Despite the contemporary Prohibition alcohol would be literally poured out.

Fashion, dress, hairdo and similar matters are foregrounded time and again. Women's hair is "shorn in strange new ways" and around the women's necks are "shawls beyond the dreams of Castile". They wear "golden and silver slippers" and the best example is Gatsby himself "in a white flannel suit, silver shirt, and gold-colored tie" himself.
During the course of one such party Gatsby's guests are entertained by cocktail music played by a typical jazz orchestra consisting of oboes, trombones, saxophones, viols, cornets and piccolos, low and high drums. Popular jazz songs of the contemporary period such as "Three O'Clock in the Morning" (attributed as the "neat, sad little waltz of that year") or W.C.Handy's (1873-1958) "Beale Street Blues", a famous jazz blues melody are played. Another song that is played in one of Gatsby's parties attended by Nick is Vladimir Tostoff's "Jazz History of the World".

Virtues and Morality in the Jazz Age

Strict adherence to neither virtue nor morality was particularly in favour during the Jazz Age. Exhibitionism and opulence prevailed during the period:
"The American public not only embraced customs that fell outside the arm of the law, but it also admired figures who lived without restraint." The massive enthusiasm surrounding Gatsby, who flaunts the law with his business dealings and socializes with seemingly endless funds, testifies to this claim. That Gatsby's millions have been made through shady dealings is an idea voiced in cavalier tones by his guests, suspiciously by Nick and disparagingly by Tom. Mysterious callers keep ringing up Gatsby from different parts of the country, which Gatsby attends solemnly and excuses himself from the rest while speaking to them. The secrecy he maintains in the entire affair Nick as well as the readers guessing about Gatsby's ethical standards.
Tom presumes bootlegging to be the source of Gatsby's rapidly amassed wealth. After his death Nick, who is the only one genuinely concerned about Gatsby's final rites receives the telephone call meant for Gatsby. The unknown caller's utterance confirms what had been a suspicion all along, especially when the caller abruptly disconnects midway after being told that Mr Gatsby is no more.
The onset of Prohibition in the early 20th century USA had triggered a corresponding flourish in the bootlegging industry. Without the state or federal taxes imposed on them, the liquor became cheaper and alcohol consumption increased manifold. Though socially accepted and even prized at the time, Fitzgerald does not show it in a positive light.

Materialism in the Jazz Age and *The Great Gatsby*

The Jazz Age was unmistakably marked by heightened materialism. In *The Great Gatsby*, characters are superficial and materialistic.
For instance, Daisy Buchanan is visibly affected by the beauty, excess and variety of Gatsby's rich linen shirts. "Suddenly with a strained sound Daisy bent her head into the shirts and began to cry stormily. 'They're such beautiful shirts,' she sobbed, her voice muffled in the thick folds. 'It makes me sad because I've never seen such—such beautiful shirts before" (Fitzgerald 98). Clearly, Daisy is infected with materialism.
Other emphasis on objects and money can easily be located in the novel. "Every Friday five crates of oranges and lemons arrived from a fruiterer in New York – every Monday these same oranges and lemons left his backdoor in a pyramid of pulpless halves" (Fitzgerald 43).
The pulp-less halves might be considered as metaphoric representations of the guests, insipid people obsessed with external appearance and material acquisitiveness..

Disillusionment in *The Great Gatsby*

When the fateful summer began, the urbane society with its promise of plentiful wealth, success and enjoyment had seemed to beckon Nick. By the end of the novel, the upper class' ethical vacuity hidden

behind the façade of opulence seems abhorrent to Nick, culminating in his disillusionment with all that the commercially successful East had come to stand for.

But Nick is not the only character to be disillusioned. Gatsby-whose inexorable capacity for hope of a reunion with Daisy lies at the heart of the novel, also faces disillusionment upon meeting Daisy, resulting from the sheer enormity of his dream. Nick felt that during the brief period of union with Daisy, her real self must have fallen short of the expectation that had built up in the mind of Gatsby. Gatsby remains as generous host in the middle of hundreds of strangers, still he is aloof from all, resulting in disillusionment.

Unit 14(b): Narrative Technique

A successful instance of modern narrative art- F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* unites content and form seamlessly. *The Great Gatsby* is not only the magnum opus of F. Scott Fitzgerald, but also one of the most outstanding exponents of twentieth century American fiction. Fitzgerald's handling of unique narrative point of view and the exquisite arrangement of spatio-temporal structure culminates in dramatic effects that strengthen the specific artistic charm and highlight the novel's conceptual content.

The entire story featuring Gatsby as protagonist is based on Nick's memories and told as his first person account. Besides being the narrator, Nick features as a key character in the story. A witness of the ups and downs in the lives of several people, Nick is a moral critic of sorts, commenting obliquely on the ethical standards of people around him. Based on his obliquely poised critiques, readers are driven to judge every character. Fitzgerald's chosen method of narrativization makes the story an integral whole as well as evocative.

Nick performs several functions in *The Great Gatsby* by being "both in and out of the story". Nick is the protagonist Gatsby's neighbor; he is also Daisy's cousin; he had been Tom's classmate in college and for a brief period he is quite close to Daisy's friend, Jordan Baker. Fitzgerald lends him use curious eyes to view Gatsby's actions and holds sympathy to suppose Gatsby's thoughts. This creates distinct art effects. Through Nick's eyes readers learn everything that happens. This aspect colours the readers' viewpoint to a certain extent. As a witness possessed with key information, Nick can observe Gatsby's actions standing a few steps behind. Moreover, the sense of suspicion regarding Gatsby's behavior that starts to build up is carefully constructed using Nick as a narrator possessed with key, though incomplete information. However, the story consists of events recollected in retrospect. This means Nick has had access to them prior to his divulging it with readers. Therefore he can emplot his story using this material in the order that suits the writer.

The Transgression of the Point of View

Notwithstanding its vivid and persuasive effect on readers, the first person narrative does have some shortcomings. The narrator's knowledge of events and intentions is limited. This hinders the narrator's ability to reveal other characters' inner beings. For a more complete narration, the narrator must transcend his narrative limits to present things, a phenomenon known as the transgression of the point of view.
For instance, in Chapter Five, witnessing Gatsby and Daisy reunite after five years, Nick tries to present things from Gatsby's perspective", transgressing the perspective of his own self.

> "As I went over to say good-by I saw that the expression of bewilderment had come back into Gatsby's face, as though a faint doubt had occurred to him as to the quality of his present happiness. Almost five years! There must have been moments even that afternoon when Daisy tumbled short of his dreams-not through her own fault, but because of the colossal vitality of his illusion. It had gone beyond her, beyond everything. He had thrown himself into it with a creative passion, adding to it all the time, decking it out with every bright feather that drifted his way. No

amount of five or 31ormandy can challenge what a man will store up in his ghostly heart." (Fitzgerald 128).

Through this transgression, the narrator allows readers a peep into Gatsby's mind and lets them catch Gatsby's emotion changes. In this way, readers feel reasonable about Gatsby's feeling—"a faint doubt had occurred to him as to the quality of his present happiness" and faithful about the narrator's comment.

Similarly chapter six describes Gatsby and Daisy's courtship five years ago. Once again, Nick could not possibly have known what Gatsby felt then, as he neither knew Gatsby nor of his affair with Daisy.

Shifts in Point of View

Unlike the transgression of the point of view, the shift of the point of view is another special figure in *The Great Gatsby*. The latter is "legal" while the former is "illegal". It is an expedient measure to use the transgression little range and temporarily when needed. But when the narration needs from one point of view to another largely for a long time, the transgression is incompetent but only the shift of the point of view can do. In *The Great Gatsby*, the shift mainly presents in the first person narration, though limited in essence, tending to be omniscient or partially omniscient.

In chapter two, when the narrator pictures Tom's mistress, he uses the shift of the point of view. It is a rumor for Nick about Tom having a mistress, so when he states about this event, it is reasonable for him to use the omniscient narrative. But quickly, the omniscient narrative tends to the first person narrative – "Though I was curious to see her, I had no desire to meet her—but I did." (Fitzgerald 1982:31). Here, this changes result on the development of the story's plot for *The Great Gatsby* is about the story of Gatsby not of Tom. Thus, in order to not be far away from the center event and let readers' attention focus on the latter narration, the narrator must change the narrative eyes to avoid enlarging readers' observation.

In chapter seven, where the narrator Nike presents Daisy and Gatsby's emotional reactions after Gatsby and Tom's direct conflict, he firstly uses the eye of "I" to observe Gatsby, Daisy and Tom, then instead by the eye of "he". It is to say that the point of view tends from the first person narration to the omniscience. Through this change, the narrator makes readers know clear that after Tom's malicious attack, Gatsby's dash is shortened and Daisy's emotional direction changes accordingly, from Gatsby to Tom again. As a symbol for Gatsby's pursuing ideal, Daisy's gradual cowering means Gatsby's pursuit disperses little by little until nothing. The narrator and readers all know it, but Gatsby himself knows nothing about it, more exactly speaking, he is unwilling to know it. From this point, his shift makes up for the point of view of first person's shortcoming. More important, it usefully adjusts narrative distance effectively satirizes Gatsby's hopeless pursuit and reaches a satiric effects. In the same chapter, there are also some phenomena of the shift of the point of view in the event of Daisy's driving killing Tom's mistress Myrtle. When the event happened, Nike was not at hand. His narration about the event is not his experience but from a character in the story named Michaelis' description. In order to tell this story, Nike gives up his eyes but makes use of the characters and then lets readers observe the whole story through the character's eyes. This shortens the narration distance and builds a feeling of experience personally for readers and also reinforces the narrative truth.

The similar shift phenomenon also appears in other place in the novel. Here does not to present one by one. One more which needs to mention is that the shift from one point of view to another is the narration requirement for observing character's inner being, developing story's plot and producing narrative truth. Such requirement fulfills by these changes in *The Great Gatsby*. All of these turn up Fitzgerald's novel's narrative features.

Arrangement of Spatio-temporal Structure

The exquisite spatio-temporal structure is another narrative technique in *The Great Gatsby*. As to the temporal narrative arrangement, the novel follows the seasonal cycle in time sequence but adjusts the speed and order of particular time, thereby characterizing itself by the non-linear development of story, a strategy widely adopted in modern fiction. As to the spatial arrangement, the contrast of East and West, East and West Eggs, and New York and Foul Dust in the novel, constitute the beyond-geographic-sense metaphors, which reveal and highlight the theme of the novel.

The Narrative Time

The narrative time is one of the most important research parts for narrative theorists. The traditional narrative works press on the description and reproduction to the truth of real life, lacking some temporal arrangement skills—omission, abbreviation, extension, pause, flashback and so on, while the modern fiction broke away from the form of linear narration, beginning to extend or shorten the narrative time. Fitzgerald was lived in 1920s which was called "the transformation from traditional fiction to modern fiction" (McMichael 1980:64). In his novels, there are some new points on the narrative time.

Like other modern fiction, *The Great Gatsby* reflects author's concerns on the time. In the novel, Fitzgerald arranges the narrative time skillfully. The whole story is based on Nike's memories for the experiences in the East with two year's time-span. It is almost omission for Nike's life when he came back from east. Unusually, Nick's East's experience exactly completes a seasonal cycle. According to Northrop Frye's literature meanings in seasonal cycle, for instance, spring means "revival and refreshing" (Wu Zhizhe 1997:90). In the novel, Nike goes to East restlessly after coming back from the war field. It is just in the spring at that time. Nike feels that he himself is becoming "an exploiter" and has a new life and hopes in a new area. There are some senses of relaxing and joyful between the lines. Summer is "a season at zenith of power" (Wu Zhizhe 1997:90). It is used to celebrate hero. In the summer, Nike acquaints with Gatsby. And through all the summer nights, there are parties in Gatsby's blue gardens. Gatsby takes an incomparable way to arrange his feasts and also takes an incomparable permanence to pursue his dream. At last, he meets Daisy wish-fulfilled and wins her favor. Though Nike does not make any comment as a stranger, he names Gatsby "the son of God" (Fitzgerald 1982:153) in a narrative. Nike's favor for Gatsby' spirit coincides in temporal metaphors. Autumn is "the stage of hero's comedown and dying process" (Wu Zhizhe 1997:90). When the author arranges Nike and Gatsby's farewell, he mentions of Gatsby—"disappeared among the yellowing trees" (Fitzgerald 1982:216), then Gatsby is killed in his pool, above him "the touch of a cluster of leaves revolved it slowly, tracing, like the leg of transit, a thin red circle in the water" (Fitzgerald 1982:217). Finally, Nike goes back to West. Winter is "the stage of hero dying tragically" (Wu Zhizhe 1997:90), corresponding to Nike's mood of disheartening to the East and going back home after Gatsby' death.

When the author handles the text processing, he does not arrange the narrative time equally, but effectively adjusts the speed, extending one season, one day or one point during his narrative. For example, the first three chapters are mainly about three nights. Chapter one is the night of Nike's visit to Daisy and Tom. Chapter two is mainly about the night of Nike and Tom and his mistress in New York. Chapter three is the description of the night of Nike's attendance in Gatsby's feast. Nike calls these three nights "they were merely casual events in a crowded summer" (Fitzgerald 1982:25), but in the story, these three nights takes up a large description from page one to page seventy-five while other time is omitted. This change of the speed of narrative time brings a particular narrative effect. The extending description of these three nights reflects author's perspectives and thoughts for three kinds of people.

Another feature on the arrangement in narrative time is the order of particular time. In *The Great Gatsby*, the author firstly lets Nike catch a lot of gossips about Gatsby, giving the character a mysterious veil and producing a suspension, then Jodan's saying about Gatsby and Daisy's love story, adding a romantic color for characters. Finally, he uncovers the character's veil little by little, opening Gatsby's various vicissitudes gradually before reader's view until his death. Such order disorganizes the time sequence of

narration, making the structure of the fiction has an internal tension. In the description of Nike and Gatsby's association, the time directs to "now" while in other people's description about Gatsby's experiences, the time directs to "past". This two different time directions go through each other and alternate constantly, disorganizing the linear development of story. Let us make an analysis and compare the time sequence between in the story and in the narrative words. Here are things about Gatsby in the story: A. Gatsby' boyhood (in chapter 8); B. Gatsby's life when he was in 17 in Dan Cody's yacht (in chapter6); C. Gatsby met Daisy and fell love with her (in chapter4,6,8); D. Gatsby's experience of visiting Daisy after the war (in chapter8); E. Gatsby took part in Wolfsheim's illegal business (in chapter8); F. Gatsby's end. The normal time sequence is A-B-C-D-E-F-G. But after the author's artful handling, the order presents C-BC-DCF-E-A.

The Spatial Structure

The spatial structure is very profound and abstract in *The Great Gatsby*. The contrasts of East and West, East and West Eggs, and New York and Foul Dust in the novel constitute the vivid spatial framework.
The early culture of America arose from Eastern Colony. After the Independence War, American was independence in politics from Britain, but also contacted with them in culture and ideology. Along with the culture extending to Middle Western, the Western Culture presented a new activity and attracted many dream-cherishing exploits because there were more chances and large free space to them. Thus, "East" and "West" are not only two opposite geographic meanings, but also two different cultural meaning. In *The Great Gatsby*, Nike's experience from West to East then back to West is not so much the changes in space as the seeking for the source of spirit and culture.

Nike is from West in a wealthy family, his family's prosperity corresponded to the development of West. Nike calls this area where is the dream place for many American—"the warm center of the world" (Fitzgerald 1982:3). But after the Great War, he loses heart for it and wants to skip from her. At that time, East has finished the Industrial Revolution. The property in East gives Nike a new hope. He believes that he is becoming a settle like his ancestor. Nevertheless, after witnessing Gatsby's tragedy, he again feels sorry about his nation's civilization and back to West. The recurrence of place and action forms the spatial lock, no way to break out.

The contradiction between "East" and "West" also embody in the conflict of the "East Egg" and "West Egg" which releases Gatsby's tragedy and highlights the theme. From the beginning, the author tries to make metaphors to East and West Eggs. Their physical resemblances are both like "the egg in the Columbus story" (Fitzgerald 1982:6) but "their dissimilarity in every particular except shape and size" (Fitzgerald 1982:7). Tom and Daisy live on the East Egg who are born in rich and powerful families and social status while Gatsby is on the West Egg who is born in a humble family but cherishes dream and longs for success. The author arranges an important symbol in the novel that is the green light played an important role in the process of modeling the protagonist Gatsby's character. At the end of chapter one, when Nike goes back home in the evening and sees that Gatsby stares at the green light—"he stretched out his arms toward the dark water in a curious way, and, far as I was from him, I could have sworn he was trembling. Involuntarily, I glanced seaward—and distinguished nothing except a single green light, minute and faraway, that might have been the end of a dock." (Fitzgerald 1982:29)

This green light means the dream and hope to Gatsby, which he adheres constantly all his life to pursue and seek hard. However, the green light is of puzzled, dangerous and destructive. When Gatsby closes one more step to it, he also nears to destruction and death. The green light arranges at the end of the novel exactly proves this symbolic and ironic meaning—"Gatsby believed in the green light, the orgiastic future that year by year reached before us. It eluded us then, but that's no matter—tomorrow we will run faster, stretch out our arms farther— And one fine morning—" (Fitzgerald 1982:24)

Another important symbolic temporal location is New York and Foul Dust. As a modern city, New York is the center of modern civilization. But between this center and West Egg, there locates a certain desolate area of land named by the author the valley of ashes, which is full of symbolic meanings. This is the place that "where ashes grow like wheat into ridges and hills and grotesque gardens; where ashes take the forms of houses and chimneys and rising smoke" (Fitzgerald 1982:30). Wilson and his wife Myrtle live in this valley of ashes. Wilson believes Tom's words and shoots Gatsby, then suicide; Myrtle degenerates herself as Tom's mistress and finally dies under Daisy's driving. These two tragedies express the darkness of the modern civilization center. The author connects the depiction of space with character's feelings and fully releases the narrator's disappointment and disgust to this modern civilization center.

To sum up, Fitzgerald is skillful and creative enough to use kinds of distinctive narrative techniques to enrich the depth of the novel and emphasize the theme. Through using the new and unique narrative point of view and the exquisite arrangement of spatio-temporal structure, he successfully makes the novel more charming and splendid in Modern American Fiction, even in the World Fiction. The famous critic Thomas Stearns Eliot who is known as his rigor on literature values appreciated *The Great Gatsby* as "the first step on American fiction after Henry James" (Poupard 1984:149). Such high comment enough lights us to recognize correctly the novel's literature values and the prominent status in American fiction history.

Unit 15(a): The American Dream

F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* appeared in 1925, 6 years before the first literary reference to 'the American Dream' in J.T. Adams's novel *Epic of America*. With the Gold coast mansions of Long island, New York as its setting, Fitzgerald's literary classic captures the aspirations that represented the opulent, excessive, and exuberant 1920s. As Fitzgerald illustrates
through this microcosm of American society, despite the optimism of the era, the dreams of status-seeking Long islanders soon become nightmares. Using Jay Gatsby to exemplify the rise and fall of the American Dream, Fitzgerald's novel traces the arc of a life as it begins in wonder, reaches for the stars, confronts society's spiritual emptiness and gratuitous materialism, and ends in tragic death.

Throughout *The Great Gatsby*, narrator Nick Carraway searches for a world that is "in uniform, and at a sort of moral attention forever". Disillusioned by the death and destruction of World War I, Nick decides to relocate from the Midwest to New York during the summer of 1922 to seek his fortune as a Wall Street bonds trader. On the advice of his affluent cousin Daisy Buchanan, he rents "a house in one of the strangest communities in north America": Long island. Expecting to find personal fulfillment there, he comes up against the "foul dust" of moral decay. At the center of
nick's empirical observations lies Jay Gatsby. Like the Long island he inhabits, Gatsby lives in a world of deception that replaces the "moral attention" nick is so desperately seeking. Gatsby refashions himself by changing his name from the ethnic-sounding James Gatz to Jay Gatsby, claiming he is Oxford-educated, speaking in a staged British accent, and addressing everyone as "old sport." Fitzgerald reinforces this image of moral vacuity by portraying Long island as a "valley of ashes" or "wasteland"—a metaphorical device he most likely borrowed from T. S. Eliot. The hues of the terrain—grey, cloudy, faded—reflect the polluted environment and offer a bleak depiction of humanity. Dr. Eckleburg's piercing, unblinking, blue billboard eyes glare over this new generation
of Americans. Like an omnipresent God, Dr. Eckleburg monitors Long island and its inhabitants, his golden spectacles glittering over the wasteland of despair.

Fitzgerald contrasts the valley of ashes with the "eggs," the two peninsulas described by nick that jut out of Long island's north shore. Gatsby's West egg (present-day Great neck) is the domicile of nouveau riche Americans who made their fortunes during the booming years of the United States stock market and lived like Gilded Age robber barons. Gatsby, who acquired his wealth through organized crime (e.g., distributing illegal alcohol, trading in stolen securities, and bribing police officers), is part of this new element of society. As such, he can never participate in the arrogant, inherited "old wealth" of

tom and Daisy Buchanan, who live in east egg (present-day 31ormandy31 and Port Washington), the playground of upper-class, white Anglo-Saxon Protestant Americans.

Unlike the inhabitants of east egg (where the sun symbolically rises), Gatsby and the other newly minted, self-made millionaires of the Gold coast are crude, garish, and flamboyant. Gatsby exposes his questionable background through numerous *faux pas* (e.g., he states that San Francisco is in the 31ormand). Nick even characterizes his manners as having "sprung from the swamps of Louisiana or from the lower east Side of new York" (32). Gatsby lives in "a colossal affair by any standard—it was a factual imitation of Hôtel de Ville in 31ormandy, with a tower on one side, spanking new under a thin beard of raw ivy, and a marble swimming pool and more than forty acres of lawn and garden" (3-4). He bought the mansion from another nouveau riche family that was so tactless they sold the estate with their father's black funeral wreath "still [hanging] on the door"

Gatsby, just like the brand new monstrosity he inhabits, is "flashy": he wears pink suits, gaudy shirts, and drives an extravagant Rolls Royce. Despite all of their obvious wealth, the nouveau riche are imposters—cheap materialistic imitations of the American Dream. They can never possess the Buchanans's old-wealth taste, epitomized by their "cheerful red and white Georgian colonial mansion, overlooking the bay" (4). On Long island, aristocratic grace and elegance cannot be purchased, only inherited.

Tom's violent attitudes towards those he deems inferior are not only evident in his racism, but also through sexist encounters with his wife Daisy, and his mistress du jour, myrtle Wilson, an aspiring social climber whom he met while riding the Long island Railroad into the city. Tom is not afraid to lash out against women (especially his lower-class mistress whose materialism makes him feel powerful) in order to exert authority over them. He cheated on Daisy a week after they were married with the chambermaid from their honeymoon resort, and speaks to all women with a tone of paternal contempt, even calling myrtle's "mongrel" dog (and presumably its owner) a "bitch" (18). When myrtle oversteps her boundaries, Tom becomes abusive, and with "a short deft movement [breaks] her nose with his open hand" (25). After he discovers Daisy's relationship with Gatsby he becomes outraged, and threatens to beat his wife. Afraid of what Tom might do to her, Gatsby keeps vigil outside the Buchanans's home, all night long, to "protect" Daisy, just as a hero would his lady: "I'm just going to wait here and see if he tries to bother her about that unpleasantness this afternoon."

Despite the racism, sexism, and vice-laden violence of old wealth, the nouveau riche continue to be attached to their lifestyle. As Nick notes, "Americans, while occasionally willing to be serfs, have always been obstinate about being peasantry" (58). Gatsby escapes this "peasantry" through conspicuous consumption, his accumulation of meaningless materialistic trophies, such as his piles of silk shirts, ostentatious car, extravagant mansion, and library full of unread books. To Gatsby, these status symbols *are* the 'American Dream'.

When Daisy realizes that the shirts represent Gatsby's self-destructive obsession with the American Dream (which he perceives to be the accumulation of wealth), she begins to cry with a passion that foreshadows Gatsby's eventual demise: "They're such beautiful shirts, her voice muffled in the thick folds. "it makes me sad because I've never seen such—such beautiful shirts before".

Fitzgerald uses Gatsby's elaborately staged weekend parties as another metaphor for the greed, material excess, and unrestrained desire for pleasure that resulted in the corruption and disintegration of the American Dream. The anonymous guests, who are nouveau riche social climbers and freeloaders, attend Gatsby's spectacles with the hope of acquiring aristocratic wealth, power, and status. On the other hand, the parties, where guests dance to jazz music on tables, mingle with Roosevelts, and drink bootleg "champagne . . . in glasses bigger than finger bowls," subsume Gatsby's real identity (31). Illusion, conjecture, intrigue, and gossip sustain this identity.

Daisy Buchanan, Jordan Baker, and myrtle Wilson epitomize yet another bitter manifestation of the American Dream: the fickle, bored, selfish, and materialistic "new woman" of the 1920s. Although Gatsby creates an aura of sublime purity around his "flower" Daisy, she is anything but innocent. When

nick begins to question Daisy about her empty existence, she admits, in a jaded tone of experience, that it is all a "sophisticated" act: "I think everything's terrible anyhow . . . everybody thinks so—the most advanced people. And I know. I've been everywhere and seen everything and done everything . . . Sophisticated—God, i'm sophisticated!" (12). Gatsby is so entranced by Daisy, however, that he embraces her façade: "It excited him that many men had already loved Daisy—it increased her value in his eyes" (99). Tom's relatively public love affair with myrtle Wilson has turned Daisy into a caustic cynic who maintains her aristocratic socialite image because it strokes her vanity and camouflages her husband's infidelities. She is indifferent to her daughter Pammy, and plans on raising her to be "a fool—that's the best thing a girl can be in this world, a beautiful little fool," most likely so she will not have to suffer the indignity of struggling with a moral conscience.

Daisy, whose voice is "full of money," is Gatsby's "silver idol" of illusion (76, 120). Obsessed with the idea of recreating the past "just as it was," Gatsby is blind to Daisy's selfish, juvenile, and self-destructive personality. He cannot confront the fact that she would never abandon her family to be with him, and refuses to acknowledge tom and Pammy, for to do so would extinguish the nostalgic flame of their romance. The innocence and hope with which Gatsby stares at the "green light that burns all night at the end of [Daisy's] dock," is, like his own future, metaphorically shrouded in an impenetrable mist (61). In the end, Gatsby becomes Daisy's victim, and a victim of the elusive American Dream.

Jordan Baker, like Daisy, also represents the "new woman" of the 1920s: independent, intelligent, and witty, yet cynical, elusive, and conniving. A well-known amateur golfer, Jordan, like Daisy, suffers from spiritual emptiness; her constant yawning symbolizes her empty life and adolescent ennui. She is constantly manipulating her surroundings in a childish effort to maintain her superficial image.

Jordan applies the same strategies to her romantic entanglements as she does to her career. She deceives nick into thinking that they have a future together and then, when she realizes that he cannot secure her materialistic needs, she capriciously decides to marry someone who can. Unlike Gatsby, nick is able to see through the charade of innocence feigned by Daisy and Jordan, and is able to save himself from their self-destructive influence.

Like her east egg counterparts, myrtle Wilson, who lives "on the other side of town" in the "valley of ashes," is also consumed by materialism, spiritual emptiness, and elusive dreams. As Tom's mistress, myrtle endures his constant abuse because she is attracted to the old wealth and glamour he represents. Tom indulges her, even acquiring a small apartment in new York city for their romantic trysts. Aspiring to join the ranks of the east egg aristocracy, she, like Gatsby, tries to transcend her working-class roots by mimicking their nonchalant sophistication and superior manners. However, myrtle's act is inherently flawed because she does not possess the social skills that would allow her to detect the subtleties of her chosen role. Myrtle naively believes that dressing like a member of the old wealth elite will grant her instant admission into their exclusive world. Clearly, myrtle is conscious of the way in which clothing serves as a class marker. Like Gatsby, she cannot comprehend that attaining the American Dream is far more complicated than slipping into a disguise of cream-colored chiffon, and is therefore doomed to a life of disillusionment.

Even though for a fleeting moment, Gatsby is able to recapture his past with Daisy, he eventually realizes that his fascination with Daisy is grounded not in genuine love, but in deceptive memories of their romance in Louisville. When Daisy refuses to admit that she never loved tom, Gatsby's ability to reclaim his lost years and feel he is married to Daisy, if only in spirit, disappears. Cynicism replaces enchantment when he painfully comprehends that it is "saddening to look through new eyes at things upon which you have expended your own powers of adjustment" (69). Gatsby "wanted to recover something, some idea of himself perhaps, that had gone into loving Daisy. His life had been confused and disordered since then, but if he could at once return to a certain starting place and go over it all slowly, he could find out what that thing was" (73). After devoting so many years to this elusive dream, Gatsby cannot go back in time and relive these lost years. His dream comes to a bitter end. Myrtle's accident, which Fitzgerald describes in graphic detail, is important not only for its conflation of sex and violence, but also for its role in the death of Gatsby's idealism. Daisy accidentally kills Myrtle with Gatsby's Rolls

Royce—the quintessential symbol of Jazz Age materialism—and then leaves the scene of the crime for the security and respectability of East Egg:

When [two passersby tore open myrtle's] shirtwaist . . . they saw that her left breast was swinging loose like a flap and there was no need to listen for the heart beneath. [Her] mouth was wide open and ripped at the corners as though she had choked a little in giving up the tremendous vitality she had stored so long. (92)

The fact that myrtle's breast was violently ripped open "like a flap" illustrates how she, and her breast, were simply sexualized pawns, objects to be played with by old-wealth men like Tom who had social permission to abuse, and then discard, working-class women when they grew tired of them. Myrtle died with her mouth ripped open, as if gasping for air, because her vision of the American Dream had left her suffocating in the valley of ashes. The only way out became using her body to acquire the materialism that she believed defined happiness.

In the end, Daisy ultimately chooses tom over Gatsby, and then allows Gatsby to take the blame for killing myrtle. She rationalizes her selfish behavior, claiming, "it takes two to make an accident" (39). This sequence of lies leads George Wilson to believe, erroneously, that Gatsby is having an affair with his wife, and was behind the wheel of the Rolls Royce that killed her. The shame of the affair compels Wilson to shoot Gatsby and then commit suicide. Instead of attending Gatsby's funeral, Daisy hastily flees Long island without leaving any forwarding address. She could have intervened and saved Gatsby's life. But for Daisy, self-preservation is far more valuable than personal honor. As nick comments, Daisy is no more than a "grotesque rose" (108). Gatsby, as nick knows, is "worth the whole damn bunch put together" (103).

Gatsby's death, like his unrelenting quest for personal fulfillment, is marked by solitude and desecration. Daisy flees with Tom, while Gatsby's perpetually freeloading houseguest, Ewing Klipspringer, moves on to his next target in Greenwich, Connecticut, and a boy even scrawls an obscene word on Gatsby's pure white steps (we are left to imagine what sort of slur this could be). Even his underworld connection, meyer Wolfsheim (who allegedly fixed the 1919 World Series), refuses to get "mixed up" with the mess, declaring that the only way to survive in this world is to "move on" (110). The only souls worthy enough to accompany Gatsby on his final journey are the three characters who, at the end of the novel, still have their moral integrity intact: nick, Henry Gatz (Gatsby's father), and Owl-eyes, a party guest who is in perpetual awe of Gatsby's library of unread books. Gatsby's party is over, and the only tangible proofs of his life are the possessions—the books, the mansions, the cars—he acquired. Gatsby's indomitable optimism and his insistence that the past can be recreated destroys any hope for a salvageable future. While standing outside the Gatsby mansion, looking across Manhattan Bay, Nick realizes that Gatsby's death, like his life, is the product of an elusive, outlived dream. As the moon shines in the night sky, Nick wonders how "for a transitory enchanted moment, man must have held his breath in the presence of this continent, compelled into an aesthetic contemplation he neither understood nor desired, face to face for the last time in history with something commensurate to his capacity for wonder" (182). Daisy had been Gatsby's "continent," the "new world" that he had once wished to conquer. But Gatsby became a victim of the greed, apathy, and indifference that corrupts dreams, betrays promises, and destroys possibilities. Nick's final commentary serves as a poetic epilogue on the futility and emptiness of Jay Gatsby's life. His conversation with Gatsby's father at the end of the novel reveals what made Gatsby, and the American Dream that he tried to achieve, "great": individualism, a dedication to self-improvement, an unwavering "capacity for wonder," and a steadfast devotion to a "righteous" set of moral and social values. Gatsby "had a big future before him . . . He was only a young man but he had a lot of brain power . . . if he'd of lived he'd of been a great man . . . He'd of helped build up the country" (112). Gatsby, like the young men who perished during WWI, does not live to realize this impossible dream. Despite all of his efforts, Gatsby is unable to disown his humble past; he manages to obtain the artificial security of wealth, but can never secure the respectability of old money that Daisy represents. In his blind pursuit of wealth, status, and success for his own gain, Gatsby follows a dream that ultimately becomes a nightmare.

Unit 15(b): Gender

The novel was written and is set in the decade following World War I, which ended in November 1918. The Roaring Twenties, or the Jazz Age, a term coined by Fitzgerald, was a period of enormous social change in America, especially in the area of women's rights. (A Feminist Reading of the Great Gatsby, 2013) Before World War I, American women did not enjoy universal suffrage. In 1920, two years after the end of the war, they were finally given the vote. Before the war, standard dress for women included long skirts, tightly laced corsets, high-buttoned shoes, and long hair. A few years after the war, skirts became shorter, laced corsets began to disappear, modern footwear frequently replaced high-buttoned shoes, and "bobbed" hair became the fashion for young women.

Perhaps most alarming for proponents of the old ways, was that women's behavior began to change. Women could now be seen smoking and drinking, often in the company of men and without chaperones, even the new dances of the era, which seemed wild and sexual. In other words, as we often see during times of social change, a "New Woman" emerged in the 1920s. (Bode, 1990) And, again as usual, her appearance on the scene evoked a good deal of negative reaction from conservative members of society, both male and female, who felt, as they generally did at these times, that women's rejection of any aspect of their traditional role inevitably would result in the destruction of the family and the moral decline of society as a whole.

Literary works often reflect the ideological conflicts of their culture, whether or not it is their intention to do so, because, like the rest of us, authors are influenced by the ideological tenor of the times. One of the greatest writers F. Scott Fitzgerald perfectly explained the new era for females in his novel The Great Gatsby. In spite of numerous differences of female characters, Daisy Buchanan, Jordan Baker, and Myrtle Wilson, are all versions of the New Woman. Women share much of the focus that the men do in this book; however, they are not always shown in a positive light. In fact, they are often seen as negative things. Fitzgerald presents very contrasting roles for women in The Great Gatsby, making distinct challenges to both Flappers and the traditional woman. (Flapper Fashion Look Book, 2013) For example, Jordan Baker represents the new woman of the 1920's, who is characterized as an erogenous and therefore
oddly desirable for Nick, the narrator. Jordan is a symbol for the principles of the Flappers, as she is arrogant, unemotional, and often irresponsible. Fitzgerald criticizes Jordan in The Great Gatsby. However, Gatsby also criticizes the traditional roles of women by his characterization of Daisy, a damsel in distress and object of desire in men. Daisy abandons love and Gatsby and settles down with Tom, a man who is wealthy and can provide for her financially. Yet Daisy also embodies some Flapper values of irresponsibility and detachment, in her treatment of her daughter, as well as irresponsibility for her actions. To Fitzgerald, Daisy may have embodied the 1920's woman in transition between old and new values.
As we begin the book, Daisy is seen as a sort of pessimist when mentioning her newly born female baby. When she first offhandedly mentions her daughter, she doesn't even specify the gender. This could be taken several ways. One way is that Daisy doesn't care much about her daughter at all. This idea is supported later when Daisy says after Nick has asked about her daughter, "I suppose she talks, and–eats, and everything." (Fitzgerald, n.d.) Another way to look at it, which seems to be more plausible given the context of the book, is that she is disappointed in having a female, rather than a male, child. When Daisy is explaining to Nick her daughter's birth, she explains how she wept and said of her daughter, "… I hope she'll be a fool – that's the best thing a girl can be in this world, a beautiful little fool." (Fitzgerald, n.d.) This not only shows Daisy's cynicism for the world they live in, but also her idea of women in the world. In her eyes, women have no place in this world to be intelligent, only beautiful and stupid. The best thing a woman could be in the world is eye-candy for the hulking brutes. To her, that is the best way for a

woman to get ahead in life. While this may seem as recognition of the plight of women in the world from Daisy, her actions later in the book imply that she wants to do nothing to change it. Gatsby describes her as having a "voice full of money." The ideal woman Gatsby once loved has been corrupted with money and the lifestyle that Tom has provided for her. She has allowed herself to become a snooty, rich American. When Daisy is finally confronted with whom she should choose, Tom or Gatsby, she ends up staying with her cheating, hulking, brute of a husband. While this may seem the fault of the husband, and cheating most certainly is
his fault, going back to him even though she knows he is a cheater makes her look nearly as bad because she is comfortable with her wealthy lifestyle that Tom provides for her. Before 1920s it was considered that women's main role in their lives was to take care of their husbands and children, but in the novel we can see that later they care more about themselves and about their place in society and they became careless and unfaithful towards their families. Myrtle cheats on Wilson with Tom. "Tom's got some women in New York."
Mr. Wilson finds out about the affair and locks Myrtle in her room. In a desperate attempt to escape she runs into the street getting hit by Daisy thinking it's Tom. Daisy also cheats on her husband with Jay Gatsby. "He knew that when he kissed this girl, and forever wed his unutterable visions to her perishable breath, his mind would never romp again like the mind of God." This affair is different from Tom and Myrtles in that it's based on a previous love that she used to have for Gatsby, which he still has for her. The re-kindled relationship exhibits her unfaithfulness to her husband. Another kind of unfaithfulness could be Jordan Baker. The above quote shows that she was aware of the affair, but did not tell Daisy. Although it's a sticky situation her refrain from telling Daisy the truth was a betrayal to their friendship. All the women in the Great Gatsby to some extent or another are unfaithful, whether it is their husbands, or friends.
From their unfaithfulness stems foolishness. Myrtle and Tom's views of their affair were completely different. Myrtle saw it as a way to receive materialistic gifts and as a way out of poverty. Tom thought of it as a game where Myrtle was just a sex object kept on a leash of luxurious bestowments. Myrtle's foolishness is that she saw what she wanted to see, a man who was providing her lavish gifts because she thought he loved her. She thought Tom would leave Daisy for her sake. In reality Tom was using her, but blinded by her own foolishness she couldn't see it. Daisy is also foolish. Her foolishness is also in roots with her unfaithfulness, Tom and Gatsby fight as Tom knows of their adultery. Staying with Gatsby she decides to drive the car overwhelmed with anger and realizes her fun with Gatsby has ended. Daisy ends up hitting Myrtle with the car killing her. And as a result of Myrtle's death Gatsby gets killed for Daisy's foolish behavior. Daisy is also foolish in the context that if she had waited for Gatsby to come back from the war and married him instead of Tom, she would not have regretted about marrying him. Daisy's dissatisfaction with her marriage is revealed through her attempt to become unfaithful to Tom.
The marriage also has other problems like Tom being rude with Daisy. He bruises Daisy's knuckle. Tom's aggressiveness is also showed when strikes Myrtle. Tom's display of physical power over daisy and Myrtle reflacts that in both relationships they are powerless. It was mentioned before that Myrtle was locked in her room by Wilson. This contributes to the idea that men back then had control and power over their wives. Tom doesn't use physical dominance but flaunts that Daisy won't leave him. Later he tells Daisy that she can go to Gatsby, exhibiting power over Gatsby as well.

Unit 16(a): Memory

The novel begins with the homodiegetic narrator Nick's careful "turning over in [his] mind" of an advice given by his father years ago. A person prone to reserving his judgments and thereby "privy to the secret griefs of wild, unknown men" (Fitzgerald 4), scion of a well-to-do family in the mid-west and a veteran of the Great War, Nick Carraway follows the trail of successful young men of his era in coming to New York and joining the bond business. Putting up at a "weather-beaten cardboard bungalow at eighty a

month" (Fitzgerald 4) among the nouveaux riches West Egg, he unwittingly becomes the neighbour of millionaire Jay Gatsby from whose mansion, lawns and private beaches floated "music (…) through the summer nights" (Fitzgerald 26). It is interesting to note his repeated mention of fast-paced life in the modern American city, accentuated by the favourable weather (Fitzgerald 5) and his resolve to capitalize on the lucrative economic prospects of the 1920's economic boom.

Nick identifies his visit to Buchanan residence in old-moneyed East Egg as the beginning of the "history of the summer" (Fitzgerald 6). Readers, intimated of the narrator's intentions early on, form a pattern of expectation of the course of events to follow. However they quickly find their expectations frustrated, as Nick proves false to his own claim of being reserved in his judgments (Fitzgerald 3). From bodies-Tom Buchanan's as "cruel" (Fitzgerald 7), Miss Baker's as "jaunty" (Fitzgerald 9) to the claret he is offered as "corky" (Fitzgerald 10), Nick proves himself not just as perceptive, but highly judgmental. Such a failure to remain true to his promises makes Nick unreliable as narrator, forcing readers to take him with a pinch of salt.

Allusions to Gatsby, the eponymous character begin, couched in romantic suspense when his name being brought up by Miss Baker elicits a concerned reaction by Daisy Buchanan, only to be stifled by the announcement of dinner. The aura is mystified when Nick returns home to find the supposed proprietor of Gatsby mansion standing alone, emotionally worked up (Fitzgerald 16) on his dock, extending his arm towards a green light, before vanishing abruptly. Even later, when he is invited to Gatsby's party (Fitzgerald 27) Nick tries to search for his elusive host in vain, acquainting himself with many of the fantastical rumours about the man, before meeting the man himself-"an elegant roughneck a year or two over thirty, whose elaborate formality of speech just missed being absurd" (Fitzgerald 32). Nick's expectation of finding a man advanced in years at the helm of affairs was visibly frustrated at this discovery, forcing him to take stock of the situation anew.

When Gatsby comes calling on Nick and they subsequently drive to New York in Gatsby's "gorgeous car", Gatsby plainly tells Nick the details of his life, corroborating his claims with authentic-looking artifacts. Nick gets the feeling of "skimming hastily through a dozen magazines" (Fitzgerald 43), "with an effort managing to restrain (…) incredulous laughter" (Fitzgerald 42). When Meyer Wolfsheim at a 42nd Street cellar testifies to Gatsby's being "a man of fine breeding" (Fitzgerald 47) he chooses the very same words as Gatsby himself had done, thereby heightening the sense of suspicion to a level of disbelief, notwithstanding the seeming authenticity of the Oxford photograph Gatsby had adduced in favour of his history. When a visibly irritated Nick meets Miss Jordan Baker and learns of Gatsby's past (and his affair with Daisy) he is dumbfounded by "the modesty" (Fitzgerald 51) of Gatsby's demand. The fact that Miss Baker had come across Gatsby the soldier (and Daisy's lover) in Louisville reinstates Gatsby's position to Nick partially, but the balance is always precarious, since Gatsby can never furnish adequate explanation regarding the source of his fascinating wealth.

Nick perpetually feels at a loss, while trying to fathom the essence of Daisy's beauty, like his inability to comprehend Gatsby completely. Surprisingly Gatsby comes to his aid at the party at the Buchanans' when he characterises Daisy's voice as "full of money" (Fitzgerald 76) and Nick feels this to be the fact that has long eluded him. He goes onto elaborate the idea by likening her to the spotless princesses of folklore, resplendent in their lavishness (Fitzgerald 99). Gatsby succeeds in identifying the secret behind the charm in Daisy's voice because he had been acutely aware of his own lack of wealth, even before he met Daisy. And it was this gulf that he had set out to fill. With his illegally earned millions, Gatsby silently moved closer to Daisy, acquiring a mansion exactly across the bay from her, expecting her to walk into one of his gaudy parties. When with the help of Nick and Jordan they begin corresponding once again, Gatsby tries to wean Daisy away from Tom, severing her marital ties, returning to Jay Gatsby as in her Louisville days. Considering the immense pressure this would force Daisy into, Nick

reminds him of the impossibility of recreating the past. To this Gatsby replied: "Can't repeat the past? (...) Why of course you can!" (Fitzgerald 70)

The lines which describe Gatsby explicitly voicing his "extraordinary gift for hope" simultaneously suggest the impending fall, as Gatsby "broke off and began to walk up and down the desolate path of fruit rinds and discarded favours and crushed flowers (Fitzgerald 70). While the path that Gatsby walked had always been desolate and murky on account of his shadowy businesses, the 'discarded favours' and 'crushed favours' foreshadow the destruction of the long-nurtured dream. It is the sheer weight of Gatsby's dream that checks its flight, bringing it down to ground and shatters it to pieces. Tom Buchanan serves as the representative of that class of traditionally rich men (like Braddock Washington of 'The Diamond as Big as the Ritz' or Anson Hunter of 'The Rich Boy') who feel insecure and suffocated as social climbers share the platform of social exclusivity guaranteed by wealth with them. When Daisy accidentally kills Myrtle Wilson while driving Gatsby's car (which Myrtle's wife Wilson, recognizes), Tom finds a way to incite the emotionally unstable Wilson to serve his end. When Tom and Daisy leave for a vacation without corresponding or even sending a word of condolence, Nick sums up his description of the Buchanans as "careless people", who "smashed up things and creatures and then retreated back into their money or their vast carelessness" (Fitzgerald 114).

Nick comes to the belated realization that both Tom and Daisy care only for deriving the maximum entertainment from the present, their success in doing so being guaranteed by their families' prestigious socio- economic clout. In the case of Tom this enjoins with his awareness of this illustriousness, culminating in his sneering upon anyone or anything that falls short of maintaining adequate decorum. Daisy on the other hand cherishes the memory of love and humanity transcending class boundaries. But in the end, she proves herself to be the "beautiful fool" (Fitzgerald 13) too engrossed with comfort to take a bold leap of faith. Jordan Baker, to Nick's disgust, is found to be equally vacuous and of a piece with Tom, Daisy and "the whole damn bunch put together" (Fitzgerald 98).

Gatsby, on the contrary, had built himself up into the romantic persona that he exuded, based on a firm belief of his own worth and unflinching hard work. All along, he had employed his present and planned his future in order that he may replicate the summer and autumn of 1917, when he and Daisy became lovers in Louisville. Apart from the workings of Gatsby's mind, readers of Fitzgerald's novel gain access to this cherished past through the narration of Jordan Baker. But her description of this period is also couched in distinctly romantic terms, for instance the dominance of pristine white in descriptions of Daisy Fay (her "white" dresses, "little white roadster", their "white girlhood", etc). Told in flashbacks, the narrative purposefully allows an idea of the past to shrink into a foreshortened background, while this background is brought up again and again in newer situations (Iser 111) in the present. What Jordan Baker reports is her memory of Daisy and Jay Gatsby in Louisville in the summer and autumn of 1917. But it is strikingly similar to the way in which Gatsby uses his memory to complete what was left unfinished under the pressure of past compulsions. Moreover, this is the history of the unfinished Gatsby-Daisy affair which Nick comes to learn and in turn to pass on to readers. Gatsby serves to bring the affair to its consummation; Nick records the attempt and readers are consequently told about the culmination.

Gatsby's "incorruptible dream" (Fitzgerald 98), enlivened in his re-telling the events of his life to Nick on the last night of his life to win back Daisy elicits from Nick the only explicit compliment he ever gave Gatsby. But that dream had been dreamt and the future of his dreams constructed intensely within the confines of his psyche, so that its revelation in front of others proves harmful to the dream itself. Even the symbolic power of the green light burning at the end of the Buchanans' dock seemingly diminishes once he has mentioned it to Daisy, as if "his count of enchanted objects had diminished by one". Quite perceptibly, thus, Fitzgerald weaves an imminence of doom into the narrative in the second half of the novel, preparing the way for Wilson's mistaken retribution and the tragic fall of Gatsby. In

spite of Gatsby's dubious 'gonnegtions', there were some who believed in the general virtue of his character and endeavours, not least among whom was Gatsby's own father-Mr. Henry C. Gatz, who brings along with him a copy of *Hopalong Cassidy* on which the young James Gatz had inscribed the details of his daily schedule, reflecting his high regard for the value of time, besides the focus on an all-round development of brain and brawn (Fitzgerald 110). While Gatsby's industriousness till the end of his days captivated Nick, his moral degeneration concurrent with social ascent served as a cruel parody to the supposed idealism of Gatsby's youth. Moreover, Gatsby's schedule itself (written on the back cover of a sensationalist dime-novel) becomes a parody of Benjamin Franklin's 'Scheme of Employment for the Twenty-Four Hours of a Natural Day', outlined in Franklin's 1791 *Autobiography*. In a final estimation, Gatsby therefore remains a failure in spite of his heroic endeavour- he fails to win acceptance among the rich (who attend his gala parties but spread rumours about him), he fails to convince them of his goodwill (none other than Nick, not even Meyer Wolfsheim, attend his funeral) and most importantly he fails to unite with Daisy in his lifetime.

Nick, who began the novel with an intention of recounting the "history of the summer" (Fitzgerald 6), tells us a lot about himself in the process. His narration of the story is ineluctably shrouded in his romantic view of Gatsby, his view of the promising summer offered by the East that changes course into a "haunted" place, "distorted between (…) power of correction (Fitzgerald 112)." The elaborate plans he had made, of making himself a "well rounded" man (Fitzgerald 7) at the beginning of the summer vapourize after Gatsby's death, leaving him with the agonizing awareness of being thirty, with a "a decade of loneliness, a thinning list of single men to know, a thinning briefcase of enthusiasm, thinning hair" (Fitzgerald 87) staring him at the face. His story, that promised to set out towards the future, harks back, like Gatsby's, "boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past. (Fitzgerald 115)".

Suggested Reading

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Assignments

1. Analyze the use of imagery in Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby.*

2. Present a detailed study of Nick Carraway's function as narrator in *The Great Gatsby.*

3. Do you think *The Great Gatsby* is an indictment of 'The American Dream'? Give reasons.

4. Comment on the significance of the green light in *The Great Gatsby.*

5. How do questions of class feature in Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*?

6. *The Great Gatsby* by Fitzgerald presents different versions of 'The New Woman'. Present a thorough analysis of Fitzgerald's handling of the same.