CONTENTS

UNIT 1 WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

"TINTERN ABBEY"

1.1. INTRODUCTION

Wordsworth is one of the leading poets of Romantic age. Romantic age in English Poetry begins with the publication of Lyrical Ballads (1798), a collection of poems jointly published by William Wordsworth and S.T. Coleridge. English poetry before Wordsworth was the poetry of urban upper middle class people narrating the follies and foibles of city life. Wordsworth attempted to bring poetry and common man closer by narrating the life and experiences of rural landscape. In this unit you will read one of the most popular poems of William Wordsworth, "Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey". This poem is one of the masterpieces Wordsworth. The poem celebrates the power of human mind and the magnificence of Nature. With the help of human memory and imagination, the spiritual powers of the Nature can be invoked in times of crisis, when one becomes tired of the materialistic life. In such times the mystical healing powers of Nature can give comfort to human beings suffering from pain and pangs of life. The healing touch of Nature, the mystical presence of Nature remains present with the lover of Nature even when he is away from Nature. This theme runs through the entire poem. It celebrates the relationship between Man and Nature. Before we read the poem it is better if we know some historical and literary background of the age in which the poem was written.

1.2. OBJECTIVES

At the end of the unit, the students should be able to:

- relate the historical and intellectual background of the Romantic age with themes and concerns of the poem,
- appreciate the poetic qualities of the poet on the basis of their reading of the poem,
- interpret and analyze the poem from the perspectives of language and other formalistic features,
- critically appreciate the poem, by focusing on the themes and philosophical issues.

1.3. ROMANTIC AGE

1.3.1. Historical and Intellectual Background

In English literature the period of 1798 -1832 is known as the Romantic Age. The age begins in 1798, the year Wordsworth and Coleridge published their Lyrical Ballads, and ends in 1832, a year which saw the death of Sir Walter Scott and the enactment of the First Reform Bill by the parliament. These years link literary and political events. The Romantic period was an era in which a literary revolution (Revival of Romanticism) took place alongside the social and economic revolutions. This is why in some histories of literature the Romantic period is called the 'Age of Revolutions'. The American Declaration of Independence from British Rule of 1776 marked the loss of the American colonies as a consequence of the American War of Independence (1775-1783). The French Revolution in 1789 not only abolished monarchy in France, it also paved the way

for abolishing the whole aristocratic system in the Europe. It attempted to reconstruct the whole social system on the basis of Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity. Britain's conservative rulers feared the revolutionary spirit and were well determined to prevent these forces from spreading to British society. It had a deep impact on all thinkers and literary writers, including Wordsworth. Another revolution that changed the face of the society for ever was Industrial Revolution. The Industrial Revolution completely transformed Britain's social structure. The invention of the steam-engine by James Watt in 1765 and the subsequent inventions of new machines for weaving, spinning and the like brought about a change in the industry, but it also changed the society. The factory system replaced the cottage industry and threw many people out of employment. This on the one hand led to the accumulation of wealth in the hands of manufacturers; on the other, it brought sufferings and hardships to working class. The growth in industry created a new middle class which demanded its share in power. This paved the way for expanding democracy in England. The First Reform Bill of 1832 was enacted to give power of vote to a larger section of society, which was concentrated in the hands of a few only so far. The development in industry also caused the migration of rural population from villages and towns to large cities. As a result the social and family life of people was changing rapidly. Another development that changed the life in the nineteenth century was the growth in science. Technological and scientific research was moving rapidly and the publication of Origin Species in 1858 was the culmination of scientific research that propounded the theory of evolution. This challenged the traditional religious foundations of human society.

1.3.2. Literary Background

The Elizabethan age is marked by the highest achievements in literary creations that give free expression to the romantic spirit of individual imagination. But in the 18th century giving expression to individual emotions was considered as vulgar and disgusting. Rationalism, intellectuality and restrain replaced the free, romantic, individual imagination. The readers of 18th century could not enjoy the boundless landscapes of imagination that stirred their emotions and feelings in the Elizabethan times. They were seldom exposed to the impassioned emotions in literature or to the thrills of colourful adventures. The Neo-classical age was dominated by common sense, moderation, and thoughtful expression of the social life of the age.

In these conditions, the time was ripe for revolution in literature as well. In the second half of the 18th century the writers began to breaks the restrictions of the Neo-classical age, and began to seek wholeheartedly a new freedom of expression. The spirit of romanticism, the fancy and imagination, the savage enthusiasm of rural life, all were getting preference over the dry intellectualism of the 18th century. The Romantic Movement, which Victor Hugo calls 'liberalism in literature', is simply the expression of life as seen by imagination, rather than by prosaic 'common sense', which was the central doctrine of life in the 18th century. William J. Long has beautifully summarized the characteristics of Romanticism:

There are various other characteristics of Romanticism, but these six –

- the protest against the bondage of rules,
- the return to nature and the human heart,
- the interest in old sagas and mediaeval romances as suggestive of heroic age,

- the sympathy for the toilers of the world,
- the emphasis upon individual genius,
- the return to Milton and Elizabethans, instead to Pope and Dryden for literary models

are the most noticeable and the most interesting.

When we study Wordsworth we need to keep in mind these characteristics of Romanticism in order to appreciate his poetry better.

Self Assessment Questions I

1. Name three revolutions of the Romantic Age. Write a short note on each, giving details of their influence on literary writings.
2. Define Romanticism. Give chief characteristics of English Romanticism.
3. Select a poem of your choice of any Romantic poet and describe its theme(s) in detail.
4. Write five sentences on the kind of poetry that you like.

1.4. INTRODUCTION TO THE POET

Wordsworth was born on April 7, 1770 at Cockermouth, Cumberland, England. His parents, John and Ann, died when Wordsworth was still a child. He lost his mother when he was eight and father when he was thirteen. But he could continue his studies. In 1787, Wordsworth went to St. John's College, Cambridge. Here he remained till 1791. He did not have deep passion for intellectual pursuits. In fact he was attracted by the laziness and wilderness of student life, but later he was repelled by this too. Soon financial difficulties also became a problem for him. He showed no liking for any other job except for wandering and writing poetry. Wordsworth published his early poems in 1793. In these poems we witness his love for Nature and also his powers of minute observation of human experiences. He grew up in the company of mountains and rivers, in the company of rustics and villagers. The mystical healing power of Nature on Man became a conviction for Wordsworth from his childhood onwards, and this conviction remained with him for the rest of his life. At this time he was also coming under the influence of French Revolution. In 1790 he made his first visit to France. Again in 1791 he went to France for the second time, and stayed there for longer time. During these years he developed strong indignation against social injustices. He spoke against his own country when England declared war against France. He was greatly influenced by the French Revolution, but his enthusiasm was cooled down when the French Revolution turned violent. But the basic tenets of French Revolution influenced the life of the poet forever. Liberty, Equality and Fraternity, the three slogans of the Revolution, guided the thought and imagination of the poet for the rest of his life. Wordsworth now settled down at Racedown in Doresetshire. A legacy of £900 eased his financial difficulties. Dorothy, his sister, dissuaded him from the dry intellectualism of Godwin. He came in contact with Coleridge again, who was living in Nether Stowey, in Somersetshire. Dorothy and Coleridge's company worked positively for the poet and his creative imagination. The great philosophical poem, The Recluse was conceived in this period. It was never completed, only the first part, The Prelude and The Excursion were completed. The years between 1797- 1814 were the most productive times of Wordsworth's life. In 1798

the first edition of Lyrical ballads was published. Coleridge contributed the most fascinating poem, "The Ancient Mariner", the poem that you are going to read in the second unit of this course. In 1798 Wordsworth, his sister Dorothy, and Coleridge went to Germany. He came back and settled down in his native mountains till 1813. The he shifted to Rydal Mountain to live there for the rest of his life. In1802, he married Mary Hutchinson. He spent most of his life in close contact with Nature. In 1850 he died, with the whole nation mourning his death.

Some of the most famous poems of Wordsworth are – "Tintern Abbey", "The Sparrow's Nest", "My Heart Leaps Up", "The Solitary Reaper", "To the Cuckoo", "I Wandered Lonely as A Cloud", "Ode to Duty", "Intimations of Immortality from recollections of Early Childhood".

Wordsworth is the leading poet of Romantic Age. The following are the chief characteristics of Wordsworth as a poet:

a. Wordsworth revolted against the 18th century artificial poetic diction and declared that poetry should be written in 'a selection of language really used by men'. The poetic language should be simple, direct and plain.

b. He empathized with humble and rustic life and his poetic subjects were the shepherds, the huntsmen, the solitary reaper, the leech gatherer and not famous men and women stupefied with victory and intoxicated with glory and power.

c. He dealt with country side of life and not with the clubs and artificial life of cities.

d. Wordsworth is considered the greatest poet of Nature. Nature is the soul of his poetry. Nature pictures come alive in his poems. He believes that God shines through all objects of Nature, investing them with celestial light. This immanence of God in Nature gives him mystic visions. Wordsworth believes that beneath the matter of universe there was soul, a living principle, acting and even thinking. This soul was Nature for Wordsworth.

e. The most characteristic quality of Wordsworth's poetry is its imaginative appeal: its power to transform a person, place or thing into something rich and strange. Wordsworth looked at the world not with his eyes but with his soul which changed the world for him to its own likeness.

f. His poetry is full of lyrical and musical notes. His poetry has its own music which is second to none in the Romantic Age.

1.5. "TINTERN ABBEY"

Five years have past; five summers, with the length
Of five long winters! and again I hear
These waters, rolling from their mountain-springs
With a soft inland murmur.—Once again
Do I behold these steep and lofty cliffs,
That on a wild secluded scene impress
Thoughts of more deep seclusion; and connect
The landscape with the quiet of the sky.
The day is come when I again repose

Here, under this dark sycamore, and view
These plots of cottage-ground, these orchard-tufts,
Which at this season, with their unripe fruits,
Are clad in one green hue, and lose themselves
'Mid groves and copses. Once again I see
These hedge-rows, hardly hedge-rows, little lines
Of sportive wood run wild: these pastoral farms,
Green to the very door; and wreaths of smoke
Sent up, in silence, from among the trees!
With some uncertain notice, as might seem
Of vagrant dwellers in the houseless woods,
Or of some Hermit's cave, where by his fire
The Hermit sits alone.

These beauteous forms,
Through a long absence, have not been to me
As is a landscape to a blind man's eye:
But oft, in lonely rooms, and 'mid the din
Of towns and cities, I have owed to them
In hours of weariness, sensations sweet,
Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart;
And passing even into my purer mind,
With tranquil restoration:—feelings too
Of unremembered pleasure: such, perhaps,
As have no slight or trivial influence
On that best portion of a good man's life,
His little, nameless, unremembered, acts
Of kindness and of love. Nor less, I trust,
To them I may have owed another gift,
Of aspect more sublime; that blessed mood,
In which the burthen of the mystery,
In which the heavy and the weary weight
Of all this unintelligible world,
Is lightened:—that serene and blessed mood,
In which the affections gently lead us on,—
Until, the breath of this corporeal frame
And even the motion of our human blood
Almost suspended, we are laid asleep
In body, and become a living soul:
While with an eye made quiet by the power
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
We see into the life of things.

If this
Be but a vain belief, yet, oh! how oft—
In darkness and amid the many shapes
Of joyless daylight; when the fretful stir
Unprofitable, and the fever of the world,

Have hung upon the beatings of my heart—
How oft, in spirit, have I turned to thee,
O sylvan Wye! thou wanderer thro' the woods,
How often has my spirit turned to thee!
And now, with gleams of half-extinguished thought,
With many recognitions dim and faint,
And somewhat of a sad perplexity,
The picture of the mind revives again:
While here I stand, not only with the sense
Of present pleasure, but with pleasing thoughts
That in this moment there is life and food
For future years. And so I dare to hope,
Though changed, no doubt, from what I was when first
I came among these hills; when like a roe
I bounded o'er the mountains, by the sides
Of the deep rivers, and the lonely streams,
Wherever nature led: more like a man
Flying from something that he dreads, than one
Who sought the thing he loved. For nature then
(The coarser pleasures of my boyish days,
And their glad animal movements all gone by)
To me was all in all.—I cannot paint
What then I was. The sounding cataract
Haunted me like a passion: the tall rock,
The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood,
Their colours and their forms, were then to me
An appetite; a feeling and a love,
That had no need of a remoter charm,
By thought supplied, nor any interest
Unborrowed from the eye.—That time is past,
And all its aching joys are now no more,
And all its dizzy raptures. Not for this
Faint I, nor mourn nor murmur, other gifts
Have followed; for such loss, I would believe,
Abundant recompence. For I have learned
To look on nature, not as in the hour
Of thoughtless youth; but hearing oftentimes
The still, sad music of humanity,
Nor harsh nor grating, though of ample power
To chasten and subdue. And I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man;
A motion and a spirit, that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,

And rolls through all things. Therefore am I still
A lover of the meadows and the woods,
And mountains; and of all that we behold
From this green earth; of all the mighty world
Of eye, and ear,—both what they half create,
And what perceive; well pleased to recognise
In nature and the language of the sense,
The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse,
The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul
Of all my moral being.
Nor perchance,
If I were not thus taught, should I the more
Suffer my genial spirits to decay:
For thou art with me here upon the banks
Of this fair river; thou my dearest Friend,
My dear, dear Friend; and in thy voice I catch
The language of my former heart, and read
My former pleasures in the shooting lights
Of thy wild eyes. Oh! yet a little while
May I behold in thee what I was once,
My dear, dear Sister! and this prayer I make,
Knowing that Nature never did betray
The heart that loved her; 'tis her privilege,
Through all the years of this our life, to lead
From joy to joy: for she can so inform
The mind that is within us, so impress
With quietness and beauty, and so feed
With lofty thoughts, that neither evil tongues,
Rash judgments, nor the sneers of selfish men,
Nor greetings where no kindness is, nor all
The dreary intercourse of daily life,
Shall e'er prevail against us, or disturb
Our cheerful faith, that all which we behold
Is full of blessings. Therefore let the moon
Shine on thee in thy solitary walk;
And let the misty mountain-winds be free
To blow against thee: and, in after years,
When these wild ecstasies shall be matured
Into a sober pleasure; when thy mind
Shall be a mansion for all lovely forms,
Thy memory be as a dwelling-place
For all sweet sounds and harmonies; oh! then,
If solitude, or fear, or pain, or grief,
Should be thy portion, with what healing thoughts
Of tender joy wilt thou remember me,
And these my exhortations! Nor, perchance—
If I should be where I no more can hear
Thy voice, nor catch from thy wild eyes these gleams

Of past existence—wilt thou then forget
That on the banks of this delightful stream
We stood together; and that I, so long
A worshipper of Nature, hither came
Unwearied in that service: rather say
With warmer love—oh! with far deeper zeal
Of holier love. Nor wilt thou then forget,
That after many wanderings, many years
Of absence, these steep woods and lofty cliffs,
And this green pastoral landscape, were to me
More dear, both for themselves and for thy sake!

1.6. INTRODUCTION TO THE POEM

Some biographical details related with the composition of the poem will help in appreciating the poem. Wordsworth first visited Tintern Abbey, an old ruin, in 1793. Wordsworth's friend William Culvert requested the poet to come for a walking tour of southern England. Near Stonehenge, Wordsworth was struck by a mystical experience as he saw the visions of the ancient Britons. In that mood as he reached near the valley of the Wye River, and for the first time he saw Tintern Abbey. It is important to remember that in 1792 Wordsworth had returned from France full of the great ideas of French Revolution, but he was soon filled with dejection when England declared war on France. Wordsworth wrote the poem almost five years later, and by that time matters in France had deteriorated. In the meantime, he had become acquainted with Godwin's ideas and had written poems such as "The Cumberland Beggar" and "The Ruined Cottage" in sympathy with the poor. He had settled with his sister Dorothy near Alfoxden and had started working with Coleridge. In 1798 Wordsworth and his sister had just spent a week with Coleridge at Stowey, preparing poems for the printer. Then the Wordsworths took a tour to the Wye valley, where they viewed the abbey from the same vantage point Wordsworth had enjoyed five years before. On his second visit of Tintern Abbey, Wordsworth recalled his earlier experience of the scene. He felt the "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" now and as he and his sister left the Wye and continued their tour, the poem was composed.

Dear students it is necessary to read the poem at least three times, because poetry reading itself is an experience. Poetry cannot be enjoyed and appreciated without experiencing the recital of the poem. You can also listen to the poem's recitalfrom some of the renderings that are available on the internet. So let us read the poem first. Before you read the poem, you look at the Tintern Abbey photograph. This should stir your imagination to recreate the scene.

1.7. CRITICAL APPRECIATION OF THE POEM

Though the poem is generally known as "Tintern Abbey", its full title is "Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey; On Revisiting the Banks of the Wye During a Tour, July 13, 1798". The poem was written in July of 1798 and was published as the last poem of Lyrical Ballads (1798). At the age of twenty three, Wordsworth

visited the abbey for the first time in 1793. In 1798 Wordsworth visited the abbey again, this time with his sister Dorothy, who is referred as 'friend' in the whole poem. (Please read Introduction to the Poem once again.)

The poem deals with several themes, which are interrelated with one dominant theme, and that theme is the relationship of Man with Nature. This dominant theme of the poem is interwoven with the complex issues of human life: mortality, spirituality, familial love, memory, and others. The poet uses blank verse and iambic pentameter and that suits the poet in dealing with the complex emotions that have overpowered the poet. The choice of blank verse gives the freedom to narrate the poetic emotions but the choice of meter, iambic pentameter, puts some restrain on the poet. The choice of meter also provides the necessary poetic elegance to the language. The flow of emotions and thoughts smoothly matches with the flow of lines in the poem. The language of the poem moves like waves, flowing in wavy manner with the ideas and thoughts of the poet. The poet uses the repetitions very well. He repeats the words and sounds, and these repetitions echo the repetitions of the ideas and thoughts that the poet has lived for quite some time now. Let us now analyze the poem in detail. At this stage you are advised to read the first stanza of the poem once again. Pay attention to language, figures, meter and stanza forms of the poem.

In the first stanza of the poem, the poet introduces the readers to the natural beauty of the Wye river area. Wordsworth begins the poem by telling the readers that it has been five years when he visited the abbey first. "Five years have passed; five summers, with the length / Of five long winters! and again I hear / These waters...". Then the poet describes the landscape by giving poetic descriptions of each minute detail of the natural beauty of the area. He paints the pictures of Nature by giving the imagery of "Steep and lofty cliffs," the "wild secluded scene," the "quiet of the sky," the "dark sycamore", the trees of the orchard, and the "pastoral farms" with "wreaths of smoke" billowing from their chimneys. The memory of the beautiful scenes visited by him five years before never left him even when he was living in the midst of the din and the hustle and bustle of the city of London. Often he used to remember the experiences with Nature, which he received in his visit to this place five years ago. The gap of five years never created separation between the poet the Nature. Once again, now he gets an opportunity to hear the gentle murmur of Wye and he looks at the steep and lofty cliffs of the mountains. While resting under dark sycamore he looks at the cottages, hedgerows, the pastoral farms and the curling smoke rising towards the sky.

In the second stanza, Wordsworth describes the influence of Nature on his life. How the Nature inspired and sustained him in the intervening time of past five years."In lonely rooms, and 'mid the din / Of towns and cities" the Nature worked like a spiritual energy that gave him strength to sustain in the times of crisis. The recollections of the beautiful scenes of Nature sometimes created trance like moods for the poet, in which he forgot his physical existence and became in direct communion with the Nature. Nature is described with religious fervor. Words like "sublime," "blessed" and "serene" are used, emphasizing poet's spiritual relationship with Nature.

> These beauteous forms,
> Through a long absence, have not been to me
> As is a landscape to a blind man's eye:
> But oft, in lonely rooms, and 'mid the din

Of towns and cities, I have owed to them
In hours of weariness, sensations sweet,
Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart;
And passing even into my purer mind,
With tranquil restoration:

Here it should also be pointed out that for Wordsworth Nature is like God. This is known as the Pantheistic view of Nature. It is to be noted that while Wordsworth uses many words related to spirituality and religion in this poem, he never refers to God or Christianity. It seems that Nature is playing that role in this poem.

…that serene and blessed mood,
In which the affections gently lead us on,—
Until, the breath of this corporeal frame
And even the motion of our human blood
Almost suspended, we are laid asleep
In body, and become a living soul:
While with an eye made quiet by the power
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
We see into the life of things.

In the third stanza of the poem, the poet continues with his descriptions of the healing power of Nature. The poet repeats this again and again that the memories of his companionship with the Nature five years back in this Wye river valley filled him with the mystical healing powers that sustained him in the times of crisis.

In darkness and amid the many shapes
Of joyless daylight; when the fretful stir
Unprofitable, and the fever of the world,
Have hung upon the beatings of my heart—
How oft, in spirit, have I turned to thee,
O sylvan Wye! thou wanderer thro' the woods,
How often has my spirit turned to thee!

It is poet's firm belief that the Nature can bless us with peace of mind even in the "fretful stir" and "fever of the world". The spiritual power of the Nature strengthens the soul and spirit of human beings. Wordsworth then gives the description of the changes that have occurred in his views of Nature from the times of his first visit. In his youth, he loved Nature for its charms and beauty, enjoying the woods, flowers, mountains, rivers like a young lover of Nature.

The sounding cataract
Haunted me like a passion: the tall rock,
The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood,
Their colours and their forms, were then to me
An appetite; a feeling and a love,
That had no need of a remoter charm,
By thought supplied, nor any interest
Unborrowed from the eye.—That time is past,
And all its aching joys are now no more,
And all its dizzy raptures.

Now after five years, Wordsworth's relationship with Nature has become very different. He now looks at Nature as spiritual teacher, as a companion who shares all the "sad music of humanity". Wordsworth admits that his relationship with Nature in his youth was like that of a doe, frolicking from one place to another without bothering much about the depth of the relationship. Now the Nature is not just source of pleasure and happiness but a source of self-realization, a source of fulfillment of soul.

> And I have felt
> A presence that disturbs me with the joy
> Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
> Of something far more deeply interfused,
> Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
> And the round ocean and the living air,
> And the blue sky, and in the mind of man;
> A motion and a spirit, that impels
> All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
> And rolls through all things.

Clearly, the Nature for Wordsworth is not just a source of happiness and joy. It is the godly energy that enlivens the whole world, the whole cosmos, all the beings. Everything that exists shares the spiritual energy that Nature is. In fact Nature for Wordsworth becomes the very source of his existence in this world. For the poet all the fine things of his life are directly related with Nature. However, he still has love for the charms of physical beauty of Nature, but now Nature has become a companion, a friend, a nurse, of the poet's soul.

> The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse,
> The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul
> Of all my moral being.

In the last stanza, Wordsworth gives a description about his sister Dorothy. Dorothy herself is a worshipper of Nature, a great admirer of the spiritual powers of Nature. Wordsworth thanks Dorothy for her friendship with the poet, because the poet is assured that even if the poet becomes oblivious of his strong ties with Nature, she, Dorothy is there to remind the poet of benign quality of Nature. Wordsworth asserts that even if he becomes unsuccessful in recognizing the moral life in Nature, he will not fail in his relationship with Nature because his sister Dorothy is with him. The mystery in Nature's sublime beauty will unfold before him through 'the shooting lights' of her wild eyes. Nature will soothe Dorothy also whenever she faces the sorrows and sufferings of the world. She can recollect these hours of delight in Nature's company and can draw inspiration and strength from the recollections of these times that she lived with Nature.

> Therefore let the moon
> Shine on thee in thy solitary walk;
> And let the misty mountain-winds be free
> To blow against thee: and, in after years,
> When these wild ecstasies shall be matured
> Into a sober pleasure; when thy mind
> Shall be a mansion for all lovely forms,
> Thy memory be as a dwelling-place
> For all sweet sounds and harmonies; oh! then,

If solitude, or fear, or pain, or grief,
Should be thy portion, with what healing thoughts
Of tender joy wilt thou remember me,
And these my exhortations!

1.8. GLOSSARY

Vagrant dwellers: Gypsies who move from place to place
A long absence: Wordsworth wants to say about the absence of five years between his first and second visit of the bank of the Wye
Present pleasure: Physical activities unconnected with the mind
Other gifts: The gifts of contemplative delight
Sad music of humanity: The woes and sorrows of life
Chasten and subdue: Makes the mind pure and selfless
Interfused: Present everywhere
Thou: Poet's sister Dorothy
'Tis her privilege: Nature is a source of permanent joy
Dreary intercourse of daily life: The deadening dull influence of the fretful turmoil of our everyday life

Self Assessment Questions II

1. Write a note on the growth of the poet's mind.
2. What is Wordsworth's exhortation to his sister?

1.9. SUMMING UP

In this unit we have read one of the most fascinating poems of William Wordsworth, "Tintern Abbey". To appreciate the poem better it is necessary that we have some knowledge of the historical and intellectual background of the age in which the poem was composed. The Romantic Age (1798-1832) saw some very significant developments, like French Revolution, Industrial Revolution and First Reform Bill. Along with these, the developments in science and technology also influenced the literary writers. William Wordsworth was deeply influenced by the French Revolution (1789). He was a worshipper of Nature and believed in the immanence of Nature. In his poetry we find the voices of common Man like peasants, solitary reapers, and others who live life in the lap of Nature.

"Tintern Abbey" was written in 1798, five years after the first visit to the abbey. In this poem Wordsworth celebrates the healing power of Nature. A lover of Nature can invoke the mystical powers of Nature, even when he is away from the Nature. In the critical times of life when one faces the burden of materialism, the miseries of city life, the existential questions of life, Nature can provide the necessary spiritual strength to face such challenges of life. The poet's sister Dorothy is also influenced by the healing powers of the Nature. The poet admires Dorothy for her communion with the Nature, and feels assured that even if the poet forgets the benign quality of the Nature, his sister Dorothy is there to remind him of the same.

1.10. ANSWERS TO SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

1. Refer to our discussion at Section 13.1
2. Refer to our discussion at Section 13.2.
3. Go through some major Romantic poets and construct your own answer
4. Think of the kind of poetry you like and write five sentences about it

II

1. Refer to our discussions at sections 1.6 & 1.7.
2. Refer to our discussions at sections 1.6 & 1.7.

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1.12. TERMINAL AND MODEL QUESTIONS

1. Briefly describe the social and intellectual background of Romantic Age that influenced Wordsworth.
2. Write an essay on Wordsworth as Nature poet.
3. Write a critical appreciation of "Tintern Abbey". Illustrate from the poem.

UNIT 2 SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE

"The Rime of the Ancient Mariner"

2.1. INTRODUCTION

Dear students, in this unit we are going to study one of the greatest poems of English literature – "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" by S. T. Coleridge. This poem is represents the chief characteristics of the Romantic poetry. We have already read about the characteristics of the Romantic age and its poetry. Coleridge along with Wordsworth created a new kind poetic style, new kind of language, imagery and music in English poetry. In Lyrical Ballads while Wordsworth planned to write about the magnificence of Nature, Coleridge planned to bring the world of supernatural closer to human beings. This particular poem is the masterpiece of Coleridge.

2.2. OBJECTIVES

After studying this unit, the students will be able to appreciate Romantic poetry in general and "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" in particular. The students are expected to explain the imagery, language and musical quality of the poem. One important aim of literary studies is to relate literature with human life. Students are expected to relate this poem with larger issues of human life. One of the issues of human life is peaceful co-existence – co-existence of all beings on this earth.

2.3. INTRODUCTION TO THE POET

Dear students, in this part of the unit we are going to give you some facts on Coleridge's life. Some basic characteristics of his poetry are also being presented here. You will make better understanding of Coleridge as poet only when you read his poetry and appreciate it by yourself. Coleridge was a man of stupendous and many-sided genius. He had a fine sensitive moral nature. By temperament, he was indolent, erratic, and visionary. Ill-health and mental depression early affected his creativity and will power to work. His addiction of opium paralyzed his intellect and will to work. For the greater part of his life he was a drifter. But he was a visionary, dreamer of dreams, a poet of extraordinary imaginative faculty.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge was born on October 21, 1772, at Ottery St Mary, Devon. He was the youngest son of some thirteen children of John Coleridge, a minister. His father died in 1781. In 1791 he joined Jesus College, but ran up large debts, and in 1793 he was enlisted in the 15th Light Dragoons. His brother got him discharged by reason of insanity, and he returned to Cambridge. He left his studies again in 1794 without a degree to tour Wales. With his friends Robert Southey and others, he had begun planning the establishment of a 'pantisocracy', a type of communist Utopia on the banks of the Susquehanna River in Pennsylvania, but the project came to nothing. He married Sarah Fricker in October 1795. They moved to Cleveden near Bristol, where he produced The Watchman, a political periodical. His friendship with Wordsworth began in 1797. The intellectual and artistic exchanges between the two culminated in Lyrical Ballads, 1798, in which "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" was first published. Coleridge died on July 23, 1834.

> It is essential to poetry that it be simple, and appeal to the elements and primary laws of our nature; that it be sensuous, and by its imagery elicit truth at flash; that it be impassioned, and be able to move our feelings and awaken our affections. In comparing different poets with each other, we should inquire which have brought into the fullest play our imagination and our reason, or have created the greatest excitement and produced the completest harmony. (Lectures and Notes on Shakespeare and other Dramatists)

One very important point can be inferred from what is said by Coleridge above. The point is that poetry must have the power to bring alive the imaginative faculty of human beings - the imagination that is impassioned, sensuous, and creative. Coleridge's poetry represents the culmination of early romanticism in its purest form. He belongs to the mediaeval revival, but he is far too original to be classified as part of any movement. The distinctive qualities of his poetry are all his own. In pictorial power, felicity of language, and word music he is one of the greatest masters. In his subtle and suggestive treatment of the supernatural he stands alone. He eliminates from his supernaturalism the crude material horrors then popular with the writers of the romantic school. He gives it a psychological foundation. The marvels of the narrative, the spiritual story of the hero, the relationship between the Nature and human life, all are superbly dealt with by this poetic genius. Wordsworth saved naturalism from the hard literalism of Crabbe by touching reality with imagination. Coleridge redeemed romance from coarse sensationalism by linking it with psychological truth.

IMPORTANT WORKS:

Poetry:

Poems (1796)
"The Ancient Mariner" (in *Lyrical Ballads*, 1798)
"Translation of Schiller's Wallenstein" (1800)
"Remorse" (1813)
"Cristabel", "Kubla Khan", etc. (1816)
"Sibylline Leaves" (1817)

Prose:

"The Friend" (1809-10)
"The Statesman's Manual" (1816)
"Biographia Literaria" (1817)
"Aids to Reflection" (1825)
"Confessions of an Enquiring Spirit" (1844)
"Essay on Method" (1845)
"Table Talk" (1884)
"Anima Poetae" (1895)

2.4. INTRODUCTION TO THE POEM

"The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" was first published in 1798. Almost twenty years later Coleridge, in his *Biographia Literaria* (chap. XIV), gave an account of the occasion of the poem:

> During the first year that Mr. Wordsworth and I were neighbours, our conversations 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 colours of imagination. The sudden charm, which accidents of light and shade, which moonlight or sunset diffused over a known and familiar landscape, appeared to represent the practicability of combining both. These are the poetry of nature. The thought suggested itself (to which of us I do not recollect) that a series of poems might be composed of two sorts. 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. For the second class, subjects were to be chosen from ordinary life; the characters and incidents were to be such, as will be found in every village and its vicinity where there is a meditative and feeling mind to seek after them, or to notice them, when they present themselves. In this idea originated the plan of the *Lyrical Ballads*; in which it was agreed, that my endeavours should be directed to persons and characters supernatural, or at least romantic; yet so as to transfer from our inward nature a human interest and a semblance of truth sufficient to procure for these shadows of imagination that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment, which constitutes poetic faith. Mr. Wordsworth, on the other hand, was to propose to himself as his object, to give the charm of novelty to things of every day, and to excite a feeling analogous to the supernatural, by awakening the mind's attention from the lethargy of custom, and directing it to the loveliness and the wonders of the world before us; an inexhaustible treasure, but for which, in consequence of the film of familiarity and selfish solicitude we have eyes, yet see not, and hearts that neither feel or understand. With this view I wrote "The Ancient Mariner", and was preparing among other poems, The Dark Ladie, and the Christabel in which I should have more nearly realized my ideal, than I had done in my first attempt.

This poem is the culmination of Romantic age poetry. This poem is an excellent example of Romantic poetry and is often read to understand the characteristics of this age. The poem has several strands and the students are advised to read the poem several times to explore its layers of aesthetic pleasure. One of the most significant aspects of the poem is that Coleridge the supernatural elements as part of the natural world. While for Wordsworth the Nature is endowed with supernatural powers, for Coleridge the Supernatural is the integral part of the human world. It was revised and re-published in 1817 in the version that is popular today. Coleridge used the sources that include superstitions, folk tales, and real-life sea voyages to mysterious lands. William Wordsworth also provided Coleridge some ideas.

The poem's setting is in the times of late Middle Ages. The poet creates the places that help in evoking the supernatural environment. The byway in a hall in which a wedding reception is being held, a sailing ship with 201 crew members, including the ancient mariner, the Atlantic Ocean, the South Pole, the Pacific Ocean, the mariner's undisclosed native country – all create the eerie, mysterious atmosphere of the supernatural.

One of the dominant themes of the poem is that all beings and things that inhabit the natural world have an inherent value and beauty, and that it is necessary for human beings to recognize this and respect all lives. The life of all living beings is sacred and pious and human beings cannot claim any privilege over other beings. This realization is apparent when the mariner spontaneously appreciates the beauty of the sea snakes; his heart is filled with love for life of other beings. The ancient mariner's final words to the wedding guest teach human beings the best lessons of life: "He prayeth best, who loveth best/ All things both great and small;/ For the dear God who loveth us,/ He made and loveth all." Mariner's unthinking, destructive act, leads to the tribulations and miseries that others around him also suffer. When the mariner shoots an albatross, he does it casually and without animosity. Yet this impulsive, destructive act is his doing. We have to be responsible for all our acts. The acts against the basic laws of life make life full of sufferings not only for person who commits those inhuman acts but also for the people who live with such persons. The evil has tendency to involve the innocents in the sufferings. Related with this is another issue of life, and that is that destruction and creation are related with each other. Destruction leads to the creation of something new. The loss of the mariner's ship, shipmates, and his own former self ultimately leads to the regeneration of the mariner. Man is a sinful creature, but redemption is possible if he does penance. This theme of the poem is in fact runs through the whole poem. The ancient mariner kills the albatross and commits a sin against the basic rule of life. But then, after this terrifying experience, he experiences a change of heart and genuinely engages in penance for his sin.

"The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" like other Romantic age poetry is very rich in the use of symbols. The ancient mariner himself can be interpreted as Adam who committed the original sin that brought woe upon mankind. In this context the killing of the albatross is the sin. The crewmen can be treated like Christians who have inherited the sin and for which they have to indulge in repentance. The ancient mariner shoots the albatross with a crossbow, a weapon with the same shape as the cross on which Christ died. The ship carries Death and Life-in-Death. Death, of course, is a consequence of original sin. Life-in-Death is the separation from God. The Hermit represents redemption. He hears the mariner's confession and pronounces a penance, requiring the mariner to tell his tale the world over to warn others of the consequences of sin. The wedding celebration represents that the everyday life continues merrily without realization of the higher rules of the universe. The mariner educates one of the wedding guests about the importance abiding by the laws of God. A marriage is a beginning, and new life will come from it. Will the newlyweds and their children abide by God's laws, or will they thoughtlessly shoot albatrosses? These questions have remained unanswered even till now.

Most of the stanzas in the poem have four lines, but some have five or six lines. In the four-line stanzas, the second and fourth lines usually rhyme. In the five- and six-line stanzas, the second or third line usually rhymes with the final line. The meter used is iambic tetrameter and iambic trimester.

Self Assessment Questions

1. Write an essay on the characteristics of Romantic poetry. Relate these characteristics with Coleridge as a poet.
2. Read at least one more poem by S.T. Coleridge. After reading "The Ancient Mariner", compare the two poems with regard to their theme, setting, symbols, imagery and language.
3. Supernatural beings appear in this poem as symbolic or allegorical figures, representing the forces of nature, life, death, and retribution. Write a Note on the significance of supernatural elements in Coleridge's poetry.

2.5. "THE RIME OF THE ANCIENT MARINER"

PART I

It is an ancient Mariner,
And he stoppeth one of three.
'By thy long grey beard and glittering eye,
Now wherefore stopp'st thou me?

The Bridegroom's doors are opened wide,
And I am next of kin;
The guests are met, the feast is set:
May'st hear the merry din.'

He holds him with his skinny hand,
'There was a ship,' quoth he.
'Hold off! unhand me, grey-beard loon!'
Eftsoons his hand dropt he.

He holds him with his glittering eye—
The Wedding-Guest stood still,
And listens like a three years' child:
The Mariner hath his will.

The Wedding-Guest sat on a stone:
He cannot choose but hear;
And thus spake on that ancient man,
The bright-eyed Mariner.

'The ship was cheered, the harbour cleared,
Merrily did we drop
Below the kirk, below the hill,
Below the lighthouse top.

The Sun came up upon the left,
Out of the sea came he!
And he shone bright, and on the right

Went down into the sea.

Higher and higher every day,
Till over the mast at noon—'
The Wedding-Guest here beat his breast,
For he heard the loud bassoon.

The bride hath paced into the hall,
Red as a rose is she;
Nodding their heads before her goes
The merry minstrelsy.

The Wedding-Guest he beat his breast,
Yet he cannot choose but hear;
And thus spake on that ancient man,
The bright-eyed Mariner.

And now the STORM-BLAST came, and he
Was tyrannous and strong:
He struck with his o'ertaking wings,
And chased us south along.

With sloping masts and dipping prow,
As who pursued with yell and blow
Still treads the shadow of his foe,
And forward bends his head,
The ship drove fast, loud roared the blast,
And southward aye we fled.

And now there came both mist and snow,
And it grew wondrous cold:
And ice, mast-high, came floating by,
As green as emerald.

And through the drifts the snowy clifts
Did send a dismal sheen:
Nor shapes of men nor beasts we ken—
The ice was all between.

The ice was here, the ice was there,
The ice was all around:
It cracked and growled, and roared and howled,
Like noises in a swound!

At length did cross an Albatross,
Thorough the fog it came;
As if it had been a Christian soul,
We hailed it in God's name.

It ate the food it ne'er had eat,
And round and round it flew.
The ice did split with a thunder-fit;
The helmsman steered us through!

And a good south wind sprung up behind;
The Albatross did follow,
And every day, for food or play,
Came to the mariner's hollo!

In mist or cloud, on mast or shroud,
It perched for vespers nine;
Whiles all the night, through fog-smoke white,
Glimmered the white Moon-shine.'

'God save thee, ancient Mariner!
From the fiends, that plague thee thus!—
Why look'st thou so?'—With my cross-bow
I shot the ALBATROSS.

PART II
The Sun now rose upon the right:
Out of the sea came he,
Still hid in mist, and on the left
Went down into the sea.

And the good south wind still blew behind,
But no sweet bird did follow,
Nor any day for food or play
Came to the mariner's hollo!

And I had done a hellish thing,
And it would work 'em woe:
For all averred, I had killed the bird
That made the breeze to blow.
Ah wretch! said they, the bird to slay,
That made the breeze to blow!
Nor dim nor red, like God's own head,
The glorious Sun uprist:
Then all averred, I had killed the bird
That brought the fog and mist.
'Twas right, said they, such birds to slay,
That bring the fog and mist.

The fair breeze blew, the white foam flew,
The furrow followed free;
We were the first that ever burst

Into that silent sea.

Down dropt the breeze, the sails dropt down,
'Twas sad as sad could be;
And we did speak only to break
The silence of the sea!

All in a hot and copper sky,
The bloody Sun, at noon,
Right up above the mast did stand,
No bigger than the Moon.

Day after day, day after day,
We stuck, nor breath nor motion;
As idle as a painted ship
Upon a painted ocean.

Water, water, every where,
And all the boards did shrink;
Water, water, every where,
Nor any drop to drink.

The very deep did rot: O Christ!
That ever this should be!
Yea, slimy things did crawl with legs
Upon the slimy sea.

About, about, in reel and rout
The death-fires danced at night;
The water, like a witch's oils,
Burnt green, and blue and white.

And some in dreams assurèd were
Of the Spirit that plagued us so;
Nine fathom deep he had followed us
From the land of mist and snow.

And every tongue, through utter drought,
Was withered at the root;
We could not speak, no more than if
We had been choked with soot.

Ah! well a-day! what evil looks
Had I from old and young!
Instead of the cross, the Albatross
About my neck was hung.

PART III

There passed a weary time. Each throat
Was parched, and glazed each eye.
A weary time! a weary time!
How glazed each weary eye,

When looking westward, I beheld
A something in the sky.

At first it seemed a little speck,
And then it seemed a mist;
It moved and moved, and took at last
A certain shape, I wist.

A speck, a mist, a shape, I wist!
And still it neared and neared:
As if it dodged a water-sprite,
It plunged and tacked and veered.

With throats unslaked, with black lips baked,
We could nor laugh nor wail;
Through utter drought all dumb we stood!
I bit my arm, I sucked the blood,
And cried, A sail! a sail!

With throats unslaked, with black lips baked,
Agape they heard me call:
Gramercy! they for joy did grin,
And all at once their breath drew in.
As they were drinking all.

See! see! (I cried) she tacks no more!
Hither to work us weal;
Without a breeze, without a tide,
She steadies with upright keel!

The western wave was all a-flame.
The day was well nigh done!
Almost upon the western wave
Rested the broad bright Sun;
When that strange shape drove suddenly
Betwixt us and the Sun.

And straight the Sun was flecked with bars,
(Heaven's Mother send us grace!)
As if through a dungeon-grate he peered
With broad and burning face.

Alas! (thought I, and my heart beat loud)
How fast she nears and nears!
Are those her sails that glance in the Sun,
Like restless gossameres?

Are those her ribs through which the Sun
Did peer, as through a grate?
And is that Woman all her crew?
Is that a DEATH? and are there two?
Is DEATH that woman's mate?

Her lips were red, her looks were free,
Her locks were yellow as gold:
Her skin was as white as leprosy,
The Night-mare LIFE-IN-DEATH was she,
Who thicks man's blood with cold.

The naked hulk alongside came,
And the twain were casting dice;
'The game is done! I've won! I've won!'
Quoth she, and whistles thrice.

The Sun's rim dips; the stars rush out;
At one stride comes the dark;
With far-heard whisper, o'er the sea,
Off shot the spectre-bark.

We listened and looked sideways up!
Fear at my heart, as at a cup,
My life-blood seemed to sip!
The stars were dim, and thick the night,
The steersman's face by his lamp gleamed white;
From the sails the dew did drip—
Till clomb above the eastern bar
The hornèd Moon, with one bright star
Within the nether tip.

One after one, by the star-dogged Moon,
Too quick for groan or sigh,
Each turned his face with a ghastly pang,
And cursed me with his eye.

Four times fifty living men,
(And I heard nor sigh nor groan)
With heavy thump, a lifeless lump,
They dropped down one by one.

The souls did from their bodies fly,—

They fled to bliss or woe!
And every soul, it passed me by,
Like the whizz of my cross-bow!

PART IV

'I fear thee, ancient Mariner!
I fear thy skinny hand!
And thou art long, and lank, and brown,
As is the ribbed sea-sand.

I fear thee and thy glittering eye,
And thy skinny hand, so brown.'—
Fear not, fear not, thou Wedding-Guest!
This body dropt not down.

Alone, alone, all, all alone,
Alone on a wide wide sea!
And never a saint took pity on
My soul in agony.

The many men, so beautiful!
And they all dead did lie:
And a thousand thousand slimy things
Lived on; and so did I.

I looked upon the rotting sea,
And drew my eyes away;
I looked upon the rotting deck,
And there the dead men lay.

I looked to heaven, and tried to pray;
But or ever a prayer had gusht,
A wicked whisper came, and made
My heart as dry as dust.

I closed my lids, and kept them close,
And the balls like pulses beat;
For the sky and the sea, and the sea and the sky
Lay dead like a load on my weary eye,
And the dead were at my feet.

The cold sweat melted from their limbs,
Nor rot nor reek did they:
The look with which they looked on me
Had never passed away.

An orphan's curse would drag to hell

A spirit from on high;
But oh! more horrible than that
Is the curse in a dead man's eye!
Seven days, seven nights, I saw that curse,
And yet I could not die.

The moving Moon went up the sky,
And no where did abide:
Softly she was going up,
And a star or two beside—

Her beams bemocked the sultry main,
Like April hoar-frost spread;
But where the ship's huge shadow lay,
The charmèd water burnt alway
A still and awful red.

Beyond the shadow of the ship,
I watched the water-snakes:
They moved in tracks of shining white,
And when they reared, the elfish light
Fell off in hoary flakes.

Within the shadow of the ship
I watched their rich attire:
Blue, glossy green, and velvet black,
They coiled and swam; and every track
Was a flash of golden fire.

O happy living things! no tongue
Their beauty might declare:
A spring of love gushed from my heart,
And I blessed them unaware:
Sure my kind saint took pity on me,
And I blessed them unaware.

The self-same moment I could pray;
And from my neck so free
The Albatross fell off, and sank
Like lead into the sea.

PART V
Oh sleep! it is a gentle thing,
Beloved from pole to pole!
To Mary Queen the praise be given!
She sent the gentle sleep from Heaven,
That slid into my soul.

The silly buckets on the deck,
That had so long remained,
I dreamt that they were filled with dew;
And when I awoke, it rained.

My lips were wet, my throat was cold,
My garments all were dank;
Sure I had drunken in my dreams,
And still my body drank.

I moved, and could not feel my limbs:
I was so light—almost
I thought that I had died in sleep,
And was a blessed ghost.

And soon I heard a roaring wind:
It did not come anear;
But with its sound it shook the sails,
That were so thin and sere.

The upper air burst into life!
And a hundred fire-flags sheen,
To and fro they were hurried about!
And to and fro, and in and out,
The wan stars danced between.

And the coming wind did roar more loud,
And the sails did sigh like sedge,
And the rain poured down from one black cloud;
The Moon was at its edge.

The thick black cloud was cleft, and still
The Moon was at its side:
Like waters shot from some high crag,
The lightning fell with never a jag,
A river steep and wide.

The loud wind never reached the ship,
Yet now the ship moved on!
Beneath the lightning and the Moon
The dead men gave a groan.

They groaned, they stirred, they all uprose,
Nor spake, nor moved their eyes;
It had been strange, even in a dream,
To have seen those dead men rise.

The helmsman steered, the ship moved on;

Yet never a breeze up-blew;
The mariners all 'gan work the ropes,
Where they were wont to do;
They raised their limbs like lifeless tools—
We were a ghastly crew.

The body of my brother's son
Stood by me, knee to knee:
The body and I pulled at one rope,
But he said nought to me.

'I fear thee, ancient Mariner!'
Be calm, thou Wedding-Guest!
'Twas not those souls that fled in pain,
Which to their corses came again,
But a troop of spirits blest:

For when it dawned—they dropped their arms,
And clustered round the mast;
Sweet sounds rose slowly through their mouths,
And from their bodies passed.

Around, around, flew each sweet sound,
Then darted to the Sun;
Slowly the sounds came back again,
Now mixed, now one by one.

Sometimes a-dropping from the sky
I heard the sky-lark sing;
Sometimes all little birds that are,
How they seemed to fill the sea and air
With their sweet jargoning!

And now 'twas like all instruments,
Now like a lonely flute;
And now it is an angel's song,
That makes the heavens be mute.

It ceased; yet still the sails made on
A pleasant noise till noon,
A noise like of a hidden brook
In the leafy month of June,
That to the sleeping woods all night
Singeth a quiet tune.

Till noon we quietly sailed on,
Yet never a breeze did breathe:
Slowly and smoothly went the ship,

Moved onward from beneath.

Under the keel nine fathom deep,
From the land of mist and snow,
The spirit slid: and it was he
That made the ship to go.
The sails at noon left off their tune,
And the ship stood still also.

The Sun, right up above the mast,
Had fixed her to the ocean:
But in a minute she 'gan stir,
With a short uneasy motion—
Backwards and forwards half her length
With a short uneasy motion.

Then like a pawing horse let go,
She made a sudden bound:
It flung the blood into my head,
And I fell down in a swound.

How long in that same fit I lay,
I have not to declare;
But ere my living life returned,
I heard and in my soul discerned
Two voices in the air.

'Is it he?' quoth one, 'Is this the man?
By him who died on cross,
With his cruel bow he laid full low
The harmless Albatross.

The spirit who bideth by himself
In the land of mist and snow,
He loved the bird that loved the man
Who shot him with his bow.'

The other was a softer voice,
As soft as honey-dew:
Quoth he, 'The man hath penance done,
And penance more will do.'

PART VI

First Voice
'But tell me, tell me! speak again,
Thy soft response renewing—
What makes that ship drive on so fast?

What is the ocean doing?'

Second Voice
Still as a slave before his lord,
The ocean hath no blast;
His great bright eye most silently
Up to the Moon is cast—

If he may know which way to go;
For she guides him smooth or grim.
See, brother, see! how graciously
She looketh down on him.'

First Voice
'But why drives on that ship so fast,
Without or wave or wind?'

Second Voice
'The air is cut away before,
And closes from behind.

Fly, brother, fly! more high, more high!
Or we shall be belated:
For slow and slow that ship will go,
When the Mariner's trance is abated.'

I woke, and we were sailing on
As in a gentle weather:
'Twas night, calm night, the moon was high;
The dead men stood together.

All stood together on the deck,
For a charnel-dungeon fitter:
All fixed on me their stony eyes,
That in the Moon did glitter.

The pang, the curse, with which they died,
Had never passed away:
I could not draw my eyes from theirs,
Nor turn them up to pray.

And now this spell was snapt: once more
I viewed the ocean green,
And looked far forth, yet little saw
Of what had else been seen—

Like one, that on a lonesome road
Doth walk in fear and dread,

And having once turned round walks on,
And turns no more his head;
Because he knows, a frightful fiend
Doth close behind him tread.

But soon there breathed a wind on me,
Nor sound nor motion made:
Its path was not upon the sea,
In ripple or in shade.

It raised my hair, it fanned my cheek
Like a meadow-gale of spring—
It mingled strangely with my fears,
Yet it felt like a welcoming.

Swiftly, swiftly flew the ship,
Yet she sailed softly too:
Sweetly, sweetly blew the breeze—
On me alone it blew.

Oh! dream of joy! is this indeed
The light-house top I see?
Is this the hill? is this the kirk?
Is this mine own countree?

We drifted o'er the harbour-bar,
And I with sobs did pray—
O let me be awake, my God!
Or let me sleep alway.

The harbour-bay was clear as glass,
So smoothly it was strewn!
And on the bay the moonlight lay,
And the shadow of the Moon.

The rock shone bright, the kirk no less,
That stands above the rock:
The moonlight steeped in silentness
The steady weathercock.

And the bay was white with silent light,
Till rising from the same,
Full many shapes, that shadows were,
In crimson colours came.

A little distance from the prow
Those crimson shadows were:
I turned my eyes upon the deck—

Oh, Christ! what saw I there!

Each corse lay flat, lifeless and flat,
And, by the holy rood!
A man all light, a seraph-man,
On every corse there stood.

This seraph-band, each waved his hand:
It was a heavenly sight!
They stood as signals to the land,
Each one a lovely light;

This seraph-band, each waved his hand,
No voice did they impart—
No voice; but oh! the silence sank
Like music on my heart.

But soon I heard the dash of oars,
I heard the Pilot's cheer;
My head was turned perforce away
And I saw a boat appear.

The Pilot and the Pilot's boy,
I heard them coming fast:
Dear Lord in Heaven! it was a joy
The dead men could not blast.

I saw a third—I heard his voice:
It is the Hermit good!
He singeth loud his godly hymns
That he makes in the wood.
He'll shrieve my soul, he'll wash away
The Albatross's blood.

PART VII
This Hermit good lives in that wood
Which slopes down to the sea.
How loudly his sweet voice he rears!
He loves to talk with marineres
That come from a far countree.

He kneels at morn, and noon, and eve—
He hath a cushion plump:
It is the moss that wholly hides
The rotted old oak-stump.

The skiff-boat neared: I heard them talk,
'Why, this is strange, I trow!

Where are those lights so many and fair,
That signal made but now?'

'Strange, by my faith!' the Hermit said—
'And they answered not our cheer!
The planks looked warped! and see those sails,
How thin they are and sere!
I never saw aught like to them,
Unless perchance it were

Brown skeletons of leaves that lag
My forest-brook along;
When the ivy-tod is heavy with snow,
And the owlet whoops to the wolf below,
That eats the she-wolf's young.'

'Dear Lord! it hath a fiendish look—
(The Pilot made reply)
I am a-feared'—'Push on, push on!'
Said the Hermit cheerily.

The boat came closer to the ship,
But I nor spake nor stirred;
The boat came close beneath the ship,
And straight a sound was heard.

Under the water it rumbled on,
Still louder and more dread:
It reached the ship, it split the bay;
The ship went down like lead.

Stunned by that loud and dreadful sound,
Which sky and ocean smote,
Like one that hath been seven days drowned
My body lay afloat;
But swift as dreams, myself I found
Within the Pilot's boat.

Upon the whirl, where sank the ship,
The boat spun round and round;
And all was still, save that the hill
Was telling of the sound.

I moved my lips—the Pilot shrieked
And fell down in a fit;
The holy Hermit raised his eyes,
And prayed where he did sit.

I took the oars: the Pilot's boy,
Who now doth crazy go,
Laughed loud and long, and all the while
His eyes went to and fro.
'Ha! ha!' quoth he, 'full plain I see,
The Devil knows how to row.'

And now, all in my own countree,
I stood on the firm land!
The Hermit stepped forth from the boat,
And scarcely he could stand.

'O shrieve me, shrieve me, holy man!'
The Hermit crossed his brow.
'Say quick,' quoth he, 'I bid thee say—
What manner of man art thou?'

Forthwith this frame of mine was wrenched
With a woful agony,
Which forced me to begin my tale;
And then it left me free.

Since then, at an uncertain hour,
That agony returns:
And till my ghastly tale is told,
This heart within me burns.

I pass, like night, from land to land;
I have strange power of speech;
That moment that his face I see,
I know the man that must hear me:
To him my tale I teach.

What loud uproar bursts from that door!
The wedding-guests are there:
But in the garden-bower the bride
And bride-maids singing are:
And hark the little vesper bell,
Which biddeth me to prayer!

O Wedding-Guest! this soul hath been
Alone on a wide wide sea:
So lonely 'twas, that God himself
Scarce seemèd there to be.

O sweeter than the marriage-feast,

'Tis sweeter far to me,
To walk together to the kirk
With a goodly company!—

To walk together to the kirk,
And all together pray,
While each to his great Father bends,
Old men, and babes, and loving friends
And youths and maidens gay!

Farewell, farewell! but this I tell
To thee, thou Wedding-Guest!
He prayeth well, who loveth well
Both man and bird and beast.

He prayeth best, who loveth best
All things both great and small;
For the dear God who loveth us,
He made and loveth all.

The Mariner, whose eye is bright,
Whose beard with age is hoar,
Is gone: and now the Wedding-Guest
Turned from the bridegroom's door.

He went like one that hath been stunned,
And is of sense forlorn:
A sadder and a wiser man,
He rose the morrow morn.

2.6. SUMMARY AND DETAILED NOTES

2.6.1. Summary and Notes Part I

The poem begins in an abrupt manner and we are immediately introduced to the main figure – the Mariner. An old Mariner stops one of the three wedding guests. The guest is awestruck by his flowing grey beard and bright, flashing eyes and he asks the Mariner as to why he has stopped him. The guest is obviously reluctant to be held back by the Mariner. He says that the wedding is going to take place very soon – the bridegroom's doors are wide-open and he (the guest) is a close relative. The other guests have assembled and the wedding-feast is ready. He further says that the Mariner can himself hear the happy noises emanating from inside the hall. The guest becomes impatient and feels irritated at being thus interrupted and delayed. The Mariner holds the guest with his bony, very thin hand and starts saying. "There was a ship." The guest loses his patience and becomes furious. He addresses the Mariner as a crazy man and shouts at him to keep away and leave his hand. The Mariner drops his hand immediately. But he holds him (the guest) with blazing eyes. The guest is spell bound by the eyes of the Mariner and is compelled to listen attentively to him like a three-year old child. The Mariner ultimately

has his way. The guest sits on a stone because he has no other alternative but to hear and thus the Mariner with glittering eyes begins his tale.

The Mariner begins his tale. He says that when they set out on their voyage, their friends and relatives came to cheer and see them off / bid farewell of them. The harbour was cleared and they started happily on heir voyage. Soon the objects on the sea-shore like the church, the hill and the lighthouse top started disappearing from their view. The ship sailed southward with a good and fair weather. The sun rose from the left-side, shining brightly and set on the right side. As the ship approached the Equator, the sun came nearly overhead. At this point of time becomes very impatient and starts beating his breast because he can hear the loud bridal music. The bride has come into the hall looking as beautiful and glowing, blushing as a red-rose. She is led by the happy, joyous minstrels nodding their heads. The wedding guest, though extremely agitated, has no other choice but listen to the Mariner's tale. And hence, the bright-eyed Mariner continues his tale.

The Mariner tells the guest that there was a sudden rush of wind and a terrible storm that overpowered the ship, which was driven southward very fast. The storm grew fierce and the wind blew with such force that the masts and the prow of the ship were bent forward in the surf as if it were fleeing an enemy. The ship drove fast towards southward as the storm and commotion grew louder. Then the sailors reached the polar region which was very cold as it was covered with mist and snow, and from the snow-covered mountain cliffs, a gloomy and fearful radiance emanated. The sailors were the only living beings and no humans or animals could be discerned amidst the ice all around. It was a terrifying world where the ice made terrible cracking, groaning sounds. The mariners listened to these sounds as if they were in a fit or swoon.

At last an Albatross came there through the fog and mist. All the Mariners were very happy and welcomed its sudden appearance as that of a Christian soul. It ate the food that it had never eaten, i.e. it had never been fed by human-beings. It started circling round the ship. The ice split with a thunderous sound and the helmsman steered the ship through it. A good south wind started blowing from behind. The Albatross followed the ship. Every day it would respond to the mariners' call for its food or for playing and thus it became their playmate and companion. It came through mist or clouds; it would sit on different parts of the ship for nine evenings. All this time, the moon shone dimly through his white fog looking like smoke. At this point, the Mariner stops. The guest is perplexed and asks him why he looks in this strange manner and what is torturing him. The Mariner replies that he killed the Albatross with his cross-bow.

Notes:

It is an ancient Mariner: This kind of direct, abrupt beginning is a feature of ballad poetry

Ancient : Suggests two meanings: "old" and "of old time primitive" The use of this term evokes the atmosphere of the past

One of three: Notice the poet's use of odd numbers like three, seven and nine. Such numbers are considered appropriate to be supernatural or the mystical

May'st: the pronoun 'thou' (you) is omitted. It manifests the impatience and irritation of the wedding guest

Loon: crazy person

Eftsoons: immediately, soon after. (The word is archaic; Coleridge makes frequent use of archaic words to suit the time of the story)
Like a three years' child: With rapt attention; children make good listeners of the thrilling stories
Hath his will: The Mariner now controls the will of the guest
Kirk: Scottish and Northern English Church
Upon the left: The sun rises on the left side because they are sailing southwards
He: the sun
Till over the mast at noon: as the ship approaches the equator (the line), the sun starts shining overhead, thus giving the impression that it has gained more height
Basoon: a musical instrument of oboe family
Minstrelsy: company of minstrels (medieval musicians)
He: personification of the storm
Prow: forepart of a ship
Mast: upright to which ships yards and sails are attached
Treads the shadow: can get no further than the shadow of his pursuer
Ken: know, (recognize)
Cracked … howled: the ice produces terrifying sounds, an example of Onomatopoeia
Swound: deliberate archaism; swoon, fain from extreme emotion
Albatross: a large sea bird, considered to be a bird of god omen
Helmsman: a person who steers a boat
Hollo: shout, call
Shroud: ropes from the mast – head
Vespers: a service of evening prayer
Nine: notice the use of odd numbers
Fog smoke white: white fog looking like smoke

2.6.2. Summary and Notes Part II

The ship started sailing northward. The sun rose from the right side and set down on the left side. The earlier events are repeated. The nice south-wind still blew from behind but the bird did not follow them (as it was killed by the Mariner); nor did it respond to the call of the Mariners for food or play. The Mariners felt that the old Mariner had done an evil act by killing the bird and it would bring disastrous results. They cried out that he (the Mariner) had killed bird of good omen, a bird which had made the good south wind to blow. However, the consequences of the Mariner's heinous, gruesome act were not evident at this stage. There was glorious sunrise. The sun was bright like the glory of God's own head. When the sailors saw the glorious sunrise and the bright and pleasant weather, they changed their opinion. They thought that the bird was evil and it had brought not the breeze but the fog and mist with it. So they decided that he was right to kill such a bird. In this way, they became accomplices in the Mariner's crime. The favourable breeze continued to blow, and the ship entered the Pacific Ocean and sailed northward. The sailors were the first to enter the silent sea. They were stranded there as the breeze ceased to blow, the sails dropped and the atmosphere around became very gloomy as the ship came to a standstill. The albatross began to be avenged. The silence in the sea became very oppressive and the sailors spoke themselves to break the monotony.

The crime of the Mariner aroused the wrath of the spirits and it brought many changes in the external nature. The atmosphere around became very hot. The colour of the sky changed, it was like burning copper. The sun became bloody red in colour, it was no longer 'glorious'. At noon, the sun, stood right up above the mast. The ship remained stuck up, fixed for a prolonged period of time. There was neither wind, nor tide, nor any movement. The sailors remained there for many days in succession, suffering from heat and thirst. The ship remained as idle as a ship upon an ocean in a picture or painting. The ocean thickened. There was water all around and yet the wooden boards were shrinking because of excessive heat. The sailors had no water to drink and they suffered from extreme heat and thirst. The sea seemed to have rotten as a hideous slime had formed upon that water. It was a horrible situation. Slimy creatures (like snake) crawled upon that slimy sea. At the time of night death fires bobbed about in a disorderly and whirling motion. The water around them burned like witch's oil, giving out green, blue and white flames. Some sailors were convinced in their hallucinations that it was a polar spirit that was torturing them thus for killing the Albatross. The spirit had followed them nine fathom deep from the land of mist and snow. Because of excessive heat and lack of water, the tongue of every sailor dried at the root. They could not speak at all, like a man whose throat is stifled with dirt and grime. The sailors were filled with loathing for the Mariner and looked accusingly at him for subjecting them to such horror. To express their hatred for the Mariner, they hung the dead Albatross around his neck instead of the cross.

Notes:

The sun …….. he : The ship was sailing upwards and the sailors had doubled Cape horn
Word'em woe: bring misery and disaster on them
Uprist: uprose (archaism)
The fair…… free: notice the use of alliteration
That silent sea: the Pacific Ocean, which was unusually quiet
Copper sky: hot and red like burning copper
Bloody sun: the sun's blood-like red colour. The bloody sun is an image of evil
Right…….stand: the ship was exactly at the Equator
Day after……..day: repetition to create the effect of a prolonged, monotonous situation
Stuck: remained motionless
As idle……ocean: simile; image of an inactive ship
The very deep did rot: exaggeration; the sea seemed rotten
O Chris: ironically, the Mariner seeks Chris's mercy after having committed an evil act
Death-fires: Ominous fires supposed to bring disaster and death; "the phosphorescent light which emanates from certain "fire-fish."
Spirit: the polar spirit, furious at the killing of the Albatross
Plagued: tortured
Nine: an ominous number
Well-a-day: a miserable day
Evil looks: the looks expressing hatred and accusation. The sailors could not speak, so they tried to convey their hatred with their eyes

2.6.3. Summary and Notes Part III

The third part begins with a recapitulation of the terrible condition of the sailors.

All the sailors passed a tedious time. The throat of each of them was parched due to lack of water and their eyes had become glassy. In such a terrible situation the Mariner looked towards the west and noticed something vague in the sky. At first, it looked like a small spot, then it appeared to be a mist; it continued to move forward and ultimately it took a definite shape. It plunged in the water and kept on changing directions as if trying to escape a water-spirit. (The Mariners were so happy to see the approaching ship that they did not notice its eccentric behavior.) The throats of all the sailors were absolutely dry for lack of water and their lips had turned black due to excessive heat and therefore they could neither laugh nor cry. They stood their absolutely quiet. The Ancient Mariner bit his arm, sucked the blood (to moisten his throat) and cried that a ship was approaching them. The sailors heard him and they smiled out of joy as they expected the ship to relieve them of their agony. Immediately they drew in their breaths as if all of them were drinking water.

The Mariner continues to narrate his horrific experience to the wedding guest. (He tells the guest) that the sailors were trapped in their ship on the windless ocean for some time. The Mariner realized that the ship that was approaching them was no more changing is course and was coming towards them. The sailors felt as if it was there to bring them happiness. Strangely enough, the approaching ship managed to turn its course to them, even though there was still no wind or tide. It was evening time and the western wave had acquired a reddish glow. The day had almost ended and the bright sun was about o decline towards the western part of the sea. The Mariner's initial joy on seeing the ship turned to dread as he realized that it was approaching them menacingly fast. Suddenly it crossed the path of the setting sun, and its masts made the sun look as though it was imprisoned and was peeping through a prison cell. The Mariner realized that the ship had sails which were like cobwebs and they were glimmering in the sky. As the ship came nearer, the Mariner could see he persons who were on board: there were only two – Death, a naked man and The Nigh-mare Life-in Death, a naked woman. The woman was eerily beautiful. Her lips were red, her looks were voluptuous. Her hairs were golden yellow and her skin had a detestable white complexion as that of a leper. Her appearance was so terrifying as to curdle man's blood. Death and Life-in-Death were gambling with dice for the Ancient Mariner's soul. Life-in-Death won the game and whistled thrice.

The sun suddenly sank in the ocean, the night fell in an instant, the stars come out in the sky and it was dark all around. With far-heard whisper, the ghost ship sped away and disappeared from right. All the Mariners were scared and looked sideways up in apprehension. Fear was growing at the Ancient Mariner's heart and it was as if a monster was sucking his blood. Sip by sip. It was a dark, wintry night and stars were quite dull and dim. The steer man's face gleamed white by the light of his lamp and dew drops fell from the sails. In the Eastern horizon, the crescent moon rose, followed by one bright star inside its bottom rim. All of a sudden, by the evil influence of the star-moon, two-hundred sailors twined towards the Ancient Mariner with a deadly pain and cursed him with their eyes. Then they dropped down dead without a sound. Then each sailor's soul zoomed out of his body like the sound of the string how. In reminded the Mariner of his crow-bow with which he had killed the Albatross. The souls went to either heaven or hell, but the Ancient Mariner is doomed to a fate worse than death. Even the sailors

whose souls go to the hell are better than him because he is destined to be trapped in his living-hell whereas their souls have freed their bodies.

Notes:

Wist: (archaism) knew
Tack: change course, beat against the wind
Gramercy: (archaic); 'grand mercy', many thanks
Steadies……keel: keeps on sailing forward straight towards them without changing direction
Strange shape: refers to the ship; hint of the supernatural
Grate: fireplace; (metal) frame holding fuel in fire place
Life-in-Death: a name marked by contrasts. The horrible, repelling description of this evil spirit suggests the strangeness of her character
Thicks: thickens, curdles
With cold: with extreme fear
Hulk: the skeleton ship; body of a dismantled ship
Twain: two, Death and Life-in-Death
The game is done: the game is finished
Thrice: an ominous number Life-in-Death whistles thrice to indicate her victory. She has won the Ancient Mariner's soul. Other sailors will die, but he will suffer a life worse than death.
Death and Life-in-Death are allegorical figures, though frighteningly real for the sailors. Life-in-Death, who takes the form of an alluring naked woman, symbolizes perpetual temptation.
Off shot: disappeared, sped away
Spectre-bark: ghost ship
Fear……..sip!: Fear is personified as a monster, drinking his blood, sip by sip, from the cup of his heart.
Clomb: climbed
The star-dogged: pursued, followed closely by the star. It was a common superstition among sailors that whenever a star follows the moon, it is indicative of impending disaster.

2.6.4. Summary and Notes Part IV

The Wedding guest expresses his horror at the tale and feels that he is talking to a ghost. He says that he fears the Ancient Mariner because he is unnaturally skinny, tall and so tanned and wrinkled that he resembles the sand. The guest tells him that his (the Mariner's) glittering eyes also generate fear in her. The Mariner assures the guest that he is not a ghost; he is the only sailor who did not die on his ship, but suffered terrible loneliness. His soul was in extreme agony but nobody took pity on him. The dead bodies of so many men were lying around him and his only living company was the slimy creatures in the rotting sea. Wherever he looked, it was a filthy sight, with the slimy creatures in the sea, and the dead bodies on the deck.

The Mariner continues to narrate his extreme physical and mental torture. He tells the guest that in such a situation, he looked towards heaven and tried to pray but realized that he could not pray. Instead of prayer, he could produce only a muffled curse which made

his heart as arid as dust. He closed his eyelids but the eyeballs beat within like pulses. He could not get any respite as the weight of the world around (the sky and the sea) lay like a burden on his already weary eyes. The dead bodies of the sailors were lying at his feet. Surprisingly, the bodies of the sailors did not decompose or rot and cold sweat continued to flow from their bodies and they cursed him continuously with their open eyes. The Mariner remarks that even an orphan's curse drags a spirit from heaven to hell, but a curse in a dead man's eyes is more dreadful than that. For seven days, the Mariner remained alone on that ship, suffering from extreme mental agony, but he could not die. The moon went up the sky, two without stopping anywhere. Her white beams which were spread like a thin layer seemed to mock at the hot, sweltering sea of white frost. But where the huge-shadow of the ship was falling, the charmed water burnt away in an awful red colour.

Beyond the shadow of the ship, the Mariner could see the beautiful water-shakes frolicking beside the boat. They were moving in the shining – whiteness of the moonlight and wherever they went / crept, they left a flash of golden colour. The sailor was attracted towards them because of their beautiful, coloured skins- blue, shiny green and velvety black. They continued to coil and swim mirthfully and the track created by their swimming appeared like a flash of golden fire. As the Mariner was, he felt hat it was impossible to describe their beauty in words. A stream of love flowed out from his heart and he blessed them in his heart unconsciously. As soon as the Mariner blessed the water-snakes, his guardian spirit took pity on him. At the same moment, the Mariner could pray and the Albatross down from his neck and sank into sea. It was symbolic of the fact that the burden of sin had fallen from his neck.

Notes:

I fear….. Land: The wedding expresses his fear of the Mariner because he feels that he is talking to a ghost, not a living being
Lank: thin and tall
Ribbed sea-sand: the waves of the ebbing tide leave ripple-like marks on the sand as they recede. The suggestion is that of a human skeleton
Dropt not down: I did not die
These lines depict the terror of his loneliness in a poignant and splendid manner
Never a saint: the Mariner has been abandoned even by the saints
And a thousand……on: the Mariner despises the slimy things
So did I: note of despair for his futile life
Guhst: gushed, flowed out
Or ever: before ever
A wicked whisper: an evil whisper coming from within
Seven days, seven nights: a number associated with mystery; The poem has also been written in seven parts.
Hoar frost: frozen water vapour, a thin layer of white frost
Shining white: white moon beams
Deared: raised (their heads)
Elfish: elf is a small and mischievous mythological beng; Here it suggests both the supernatural character of the water-creatures as well as their playfulness.

2.6.5. Summary and Notes Part V

The Mariner tells the Wedding Guest that after a long, wearisome time, he could finally get some sleep, which is a gentle thing and is loved by everybody in this world. He thanked the Virgin Mary for finally allowing him to sleep. In his sleep the Mariner dreamt that the empty buckets on the deck were filled with dew. When he woke up, he found that it was actually raining. The Mariner drank and drank after so many days of thirst. He felt that his lips and garments were wet and his throat was cold. Although he had been drinking in his dreams, his body still continued to absorb water. The Mariner tried to move but he could not feel his limbs because they were extremely light (as the heavy burden of sin had been removed from his shoulders). He finally became so light headed that he felt that he had died in his sleep and had become a ghost. Suddenly he heard a loud wind far off but it did not come near him. This sound, however was so loud that it shook the already and withered sails of the ship.

There was a commotion and movement in the upper atmosphere. The sky lit up with darting flashes of fire and pale stars. The wind roared more loudly, the soils quivered like thin grass. The rain poured from a single cloud and the moon was at its corner. The thick black cloud split into two, and yet the moon was seen by its side. The lightning fell in unbroken torrents without any break, like a sheet of water in a sleep and wide river. The loud wind could not reach the ship and yet it began to sail. Just then, all the dead men gave a groan and stood up.The dead men got up, but they neither spoke, nor moved their eyes. It would have been strange even in a dream to have witnessed those dead men get up once again.

It was a very unusual sight. The helmsman continued to steer the ship which moved on in the absence of wind. The sailors went about their jobs in the ship. They looked fearful like a ghostly crew as they moved their lifeless limbs. The body of the son of the Ancient Mariner's son stood very close to him. They (the Mariner and his brother's son) pulled the rope together but they did not talk to each other. The Wedding Guest proclaims again that he still fears the Mariner, but the Mariner quickly assures him that there is nothing to fear because they (the sailors) were not those souls which had earlier fled their bodies in pain and returned as ghosts. They were not evil but a troop of blessed spirits had entered their bodies. At dawn, they even gathered around the mast and sang so beautifully that they sounded like an orchestra. The whole atmosphere was filled with sweet sounds which seemed to go up to the sun and come down. Sometimes the sounds seemed to be mixed sometimes individual.

The sweet sounds continued to fill the atmosphere. Sometimes he heard the sound of a skylark singing from heaven and sometimes the confused singing voice of all the small birds, filling the ship and the air with their sweetness. Sometimes he heard the mixed musical sound of all the instruments, sometimes the sound of a single flute; sometimes it was like an angel's song that he heavens themselves were charmed and became silent. The musical sound stopped but the sailor could hear he pleasant sound produced by the sails ill noon. It resembled the sound produced in a hidden brook at night in a quiet forest in the leafy month of June. Till noon the ship ailed on miraculously in the absence of wind, slowly and smoothly as if it was moving onward from beneath. The ship was moving at the wish of the Polar spirit that had followed them from the icy world. Once the ship reached the equator, it stopped moving and the soils stopped singing.

Once the ship reached the equator, and the sun was directly overhead, it stopped moving and the sails slopped singing. After a minute, it began to rock back and forth uneasily. Then it suddenly jolted like an excited horse and the Mariner fell down in a swoon / fainted. He lay for an indeterminate period of time on the ship's deck, during which he heard two voices in the air. The first voice asked the other if he (the Mariner) was the same man who had killed the harmless, innocent Albatross with his bow. The Polar-spirit loved the bird and the bird loved the man and therefore the Mariner had committed a great sin by killing it. The second voice, softer than the first declared that he had done some penance and he would continue to pay for his crime – his sufferings were not at an end as he has not yet redeemed.

Notes:

Silly: empty (obsolete usage)
So light: The body of the Mariner had become light because the burden of sin had fallen off.
Anear: near
Burst into life: movement in the upper air
Like water…wide: simile; The lightning has been compared to a steep and wide river.
Norspabe….eyes : a horrible image. The dead men got up, but they neither spoke, nor moved their eyes.
Gan: began
Corses: corpses, dead bodies
A troop of spirit blest: a group of heavenly, blessed spirits
Dropped their arms: stopped working
A – Dropping: in the process of dropping
It was he: it was the polar spirit that was making the ship move
The sun….mast: The ship reached the equator and the sun was overhead
Pawing: striking the ground with hoofs due to impatience
Fell….swound: became unconscious
Living life: as contrasted with his present life-in-death
Who died on Cross: Jesus Christ
Bideth: lives

2.6.6. Summary and Notes Part VI

Part VI opens with a dialogue between two voices. The first voice, the ancient Mariner says, asked the second voice to remind it as to what moved the Ancient Mariner's ship along so fast. The second voice replied that the sea was obeying its master (i.e. the Moon) and therefore there was no stormy wind on it. The sea was being guided by the Moon to remain calm or stormy. The first voice asked again what could be driving the ship in the absence of wave or wind, and the second voice replied that the air was pushing the ship from behind in lieu of wind. It again said that they had to fly higher and higher otherwise they would be late; and the ship would go slower and slower when he Mariner awoke from his trance / regained consciousness. Blast – strong gust, wind. The ocean is cam before the moon, just as an obedient slave is calm or humble before his master.

The Mariner awoke in the night to find that they were sailing slowly and quietly. It was the time of night, the moon was above them. The dead sailors were clustered on the deck,

again cursing him with their glittering, stony eyes. The Mariner tells the guest that the charnel-dungeon would have been a better place for them than the deck. Their eyes still had the expression of suffering and curse with which they had died. The Mariner was mesmerized – he was not able to draw his eyes away from theirs, and could not turn them up to prey. Suddenly, the spell broke up, the curse was finally expiated and once again he saw the green ocean. He looked here and there but – did not see anything else. He, however, was not relieved. Like a lone walker who walks with fear on a lonely road, the Mariner did not look back because he feared that a scary, dreadful monster was chasing him.

Just then, a wind began to blow without any motion or sound. It was a mysterious breeze as it touched only the Mariner without touching the sea. It raised his hair and it blew air on his cheek like a gentle breeze in the spring season and the Mariner welcomed it. In this way the ship sailed smoothly and quickly and the breeze blew softly. The Ancient Mariner could see the shore of his own country and was very excited to see the lighthouse top, the hill and the church. The ship reached the harbour bar. The Mariner, happy to be alive, sobbed and prayed to God that either he should awake to find that it was a reality; or if it was a dream, he should continue sleeping forever.

The harbour-day was crystal-clear, spread out in glimmering moonlight. On the surface of the bay, the Mariner saw the moonlight and the reflection of the moon. The rock and the Church upon the rock were shining brightly. There was absolute silence there and the weathercock was motionless. Amidst such silence and white moonlight at the bay arose the angels in bright shades of red. These shadows were seen at a little distance from the front part of the ship. Then the Mariner looked at the deck and again saw, to his utter surprise, that all the dead bodies lay flat and lifeless and on every corpse there stood an angel in the form of a halo.

The angels waved their hands silently, serving as beacons to guide the ship into post. It was a divine sight. The angels waved their hands to signal that the sea-shore had been arrived at, but they did not speak. This silence, however, had a deep impact on the Mariner and it permeated his soul like sweet, soothing music. Soon after the Mariner heard of the oars and the Pilot's cheer, he looked back and saw a boat coming in his direction. When he saw the Pilot and the Pilot's boy, he felt such a joy which could not be lessened even by the presence of the dead bodies around him. He saw and listened to the voice of the tired man – the good hermit, who was singing holy hymns in a loud voice. The Mariner was cheered by the Hermit's singing because he thought that the Hermit would cleanse his soul and wash away the sin of killing the Albatross.

Notes:

His great….cast : The vast and bright bosom of the sea is cast towards his master, the moon, to receive orders.
She: the Moon
Charnel: place containing corpses or bones
Yet….seen: The Mariner no more saw any spectral forms.
Its path……shade: there was no sign of the breeze touching the sea-water
Meadow-gale: breeze blowing through the meadows
Countree: country
Holy rood: the holy cross of Christ

Seraph man: Member of highest of nine orders of angels
Shrieve: cleanse, purify

2.6.7. Summary and Notes Part VII

The good Hermit lived in a forest. He uses to sing holy hymns in a loud and sweet voice. He loved to talk to the sailors who came from a far off country. He had a rounded cushion to kneel upon for prayer and he used to pray every morning, at noon and in the evening. The small boat came near the ship and the Mariner listened to the sailors' conversation. They were wondering as to where those light had vanished which had given them a signal. The Hermit said that it was all very strange and that nobody at the ship had answered their cheering call. He pointed to the ship and remarked on how the ship looked strange with its deformed boards and the flimsy and withered sails. He had never seen anything like them unless it was by chance that he saw the decayed leaves that remain at the end of Autumn when the ivy-bush is heavy with snow and the owl screeches to the wolf below who has a tendency to devour its young ones.

The pilot replied that the ship had a devilish look and that he was scared. He was afraid, but the hermit encouraged him to steer the boat closer. Just as the boat reached the ship, a terrible noise came from under the water. The sound became louder, it reached the ship, it split the bay into two and the ship sank straightaway into the sea like lead. This loud and dreadful noise shook the sky and the ocean. Shocked by the sound, the Mariner's body floated on the sea for a moment looking like one who had been drowned for seven days. However, soon after he was rescued and found himself on the Pilot's boat. The boat spun in the whirlpool created by the ship's sinking, and all was quiet save the loud sound echoing off of a hill.

When the Ancient Mariner moved his lips, the Pilot was terrified because he thought that the Mariner was dead. He fainted with a shriek. The Hermit began to pray. The Mariner began to row the boat and the Pilot's Boy laughed crazily thinking that the Mariner was the devil. They reached the sea-shore and stood on the firm land. The Hermit stepped forth from but found it difficult to stand firmly on the ground. The Mariner begged the Hermit to absolve him of his sins. The Hermit crossed himself and asked him what sort of man he was to discern whether he was human or not. At that time the whole body of the Mariner was wracked with a severe pain and he was instantly compelled to share his story with the Hermit. The Mariner tells the Wedding guest that ever since then, the urge to narrate his story has troubled him at unpredictable times, and his heart burns with an extreme agony until he tells his tale to someone. He wanders from place to place, and has the strange power to single out the person in each location who must hear his horrible story.

The Ancient Mariner explains that while he hears the loud sounds of wedding celebrations coming from the marriage feast, the guests are all assembled the bride and the bride maids are singing; he prefers to spend his time with others in prayer. The sound of the evening bell reminds him that the time of prayer has come. He tells the guest that he has been so lonely on the vast ocean that he doubted even God's. He again says that he likes more to go to the church in the company of good people than the marriage feasts. It is a pleasure to go the Church and pray there where everybody – old men, children, loving friends and happy young men and maidens – bows his / her head with reverence to God.

The Mariner now bids farewell to the guest. He gives his final advice to the guest: the man who loves both humans and animals, renders proper service to God. God has created everything in this world and he bestows hi love and benevolence on everyone. Hence, only the man, who loves the great and the insignificant alike, prays properly. After giving his advice to the Mariner, whose eyes are blazing and whose beard is grey due to old age, goes away. The horrific story of the Mariner has had a terrible impact on the guest. He goes away like a person who has been deeply shaken and who is bereft of his senses when he got up the next morning, he had grown more serious and wiser.

Notes

Trow: think, believe
Those lights: the angels with the halos who had appeared to make signals to shore.
Ivy-tod: ivy-bush
Whoops: cry, screech
That….young: the male wolf has a tendency to eat its young
Seven: note the use of number seven
Telling of the sound: echoing the dreadful sound
His eyes….fro: his eyes rolled here and there like those of a mad man
This heart….burns: he feels intense agony and suffering in his heart.
From the gloomy, weird and the supernatural, the story comes back to the mirth and pleasure of the wedding feast. This intermingling of the natural and the supernatural shows the dramatic skill of Coleridge.

2.7. SUMMARY

In this unit you were introduced to Samuel Taylor Coleridge, yet another important Romantic poet in the line of William Wordsworth. You read the biographical account and the contribution made by S.T. Coleridge as a poet *par excellence.*You also examined some of the characteristics of Coleridge's poetic style. Coleridge's well known poem "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" was also discussed at length in this unit.

2.8. ANSWERS TO SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

1. Refer to the write-up on Romantic poets in the previous unit. Also refer to the sections 2.3 and 2.4. of this unit and construct your own answer
2. Read some more poems by Coleridge that interest you and then compare them with regard to thought, theme, setting, symbols, imagery and language with "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner".
3. Refer to the Section 2.4.

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2.10. TERMINAL AND MODEL QUESTIONS

1. Discuss Coleridge's use of imagery in this poem, citing examples from the poem.
2. Write an essay on the theme of the poem.
3. How does Coleridge incorporate supernatural elements in the poem? What is the function of these elements? How do the supernatural elements relate to the natural elements?
4. Discuss the language used in the poem, with special reference to figures of speech, rhyme, rhythm, and symbols.
5. Write a note on the Ballad form of poetry, illustrating from "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner".
6. Attempt a critical appreciation of the poem.

UNIT 3 P. B. SHELLEY

"To a Skylark" "Stanzas Written in Dejection- December 1818, Near Naples"

3.1. INTRODUCTION

In the present unit you will read about Percy Bysshe Shelley, a very eminent Romantic poet and his two very famous odes. Shelley and Keats were the two prominent poets and true representatives of the younger generation of the Romantics. Both these poets knew each other well though they were not very intimate. Both died very young, Shelley met his end at the age of thirty, while Keats kicked the bucket when he was twenty six years of age. They both suffered throughout their lives and that pain is very much reflected in their poems. Let us begin with Shelley who is often referred to as a Romantic rebel.

3.2. OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit you will be able to:

- Understand the Age of Romanticism
- Know about the life of Percy Bysshe Shelley
- Examine Shelley as a poet and learn something about his poetic style
- Critically examine and appreciate his two famous odes

3.3. THE ROMANTIC AGE

The Romantic period is a convenient term for describing that period in English literary history dating from 1789, the time of the French Revolution, to about 1830. The first generation of Romantic poets includes Blake, Wordsworth and Coleridge; the second includes Byron, Shelley and Keats. The 'big six', as they are often called, by no means regarded themselves as part of a unified group. 'Romanticism' was only created as a distinct movement and object of study in the later part of the nineteenth century. They were actually much divided in their political, religious and artistic beliefs. Nevertheless, a number of general characteristics might be seen as loosely characteristic of Romanticism. These include a valuing of feeling and emotion over reason; an interest in the investigation of the self; a focus on the imagination; a yearning towards something transcendent, beyond the ordinary world; and a rebellion against outmoded poetic and political institutions.

The first thirty years of nineteenth century are remarkable in England for the number of men of the highest genius who in them gave their best work to the world. To them belongs much of the finest verse of Wordsworth and Coleridge, together with the life's work of Byron, Shelley, and Keats. This wonderful age is often called the Second Renaissance, because its only parallel in our literature is the first great Renaissance which gave us Shakespeare and his comrades. Like all great movements, the Second Renaissance cannot be summarized; but it may perhaps be said that among its chief elements were revolt against conventional diction and stereotyped metre, against formality and shallowness and self-satisfaction, and a re-awakening to freshness and realism of phrase, to the subtle harmonies of verse , to external nature , to human passion, to a sense of the wonder of the world, and to appreciation of all the glories of Greece and Rome and of our own older literature.

What really distinguishes the classical poetry of Alexander Pope from the Romantic poetry of the Nineteenth Century is the power of imagination. The pseudo-classical poetry of the eighteenth century looked askance at flights of imagination keeping the muse of poetry trudging on the earth. The Romantic poets, right from Wordsworth to Keats, believed in the efficacy and potency of imagination in the creation good poetry. It was the faculty of imagination which opened for the Romantic poets that door which gave them a glimpse of the invisible and the infinite. Even Wordsworth , who was otherwise interested in the presentation of the external realities of life, was considerably indebted to the power of imagination in having a glimpse of eternal truths 'that wake to perish never'. It was by his imaginative apprehension of the supreme reality that Wordsworth could feel the mystic presence of a spirit pervading through the universe. It was imagination that gave to Wordsworth an insight into the heart of things and revealed to him truth beyond the reach of intelligence and understanding. Coleridge was of imagination all compact and his supernatural poetry is the creation of his romantic imagination. He had an imagination vision of something unseen behind human actions, which is more vivid than the fantastic world. To Coleridge the creations of his imagination seemed to have greater reality than the perception of reality by his senses.

Keats could recreate the old World of Hellenism and medievalism only through the power of his imagination. Like Wordsworth, Keats too believed that ultimate reality could be apprehended by imagination alone. It is only through imagination that we can apprehend the subtle link between truth and beauty in human life.

Shelley, of all the Romantic poets, was the most imaginative, and regarded poetry as the "the expression of the imagination." It was the unifying force aiming at the diversity of values, and its supreme importance lay in giving to the poet a handle to create a world his own liking where he could find refuge from fever and fret of the world. Shelley's visionary and dreamy pictures were the creation of his imagination. At all times Shelley was in the world of imagination and felt happy in keeping association with creatures of his imagination. The dream like quality of his poetry is outcome of an exuberance of imagination suffusing his poetry. One needs considerable power of imagination to understand Shelley's airy flights, and his mercurial similes and metaphors. One needs an extra dose of imagination to pierce through the skin of Shelley's tangled thoughts, and a proper appreciation of Shelley's poetry is only possible by cultivating the power of imagination.

3.4. PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY (1792-1822)

3.4.1. Shelley's life

Shelley was born in Sussex, the heir to a baronetcy and a great fortune. He was educated at Eton and oxford, but from a very early age showed great eccentricity of character. He frequented graveyards, studied alchemy, and read books of dreadful import. While he was at the university he wrote several extraordinary pamphlets, one of which, The Necessity of Atheism, caused him to be expelled from Oxford. He had already developed extreme notions on religion, politics, and morality generally, a violence that was entirely theoretical, for by nature he was among the most unselfish and amiable of mankind. An early and unhappy marriage which he contracted brought about a painful quarrel with his

relatives. This was finally composed by the poet's father, Sir Timothy Shelley, who settled an annuity upon his son. The poet immediately took to the life that suited him best, ardently devoting himself to his writing and wandering where the spirit led him. In 1816 his first wife committed suicide; and Shelley, having married the daughter of William Godwin, settled in Italy (18180), the land he loved the best. The intoxication of Rome's blue sky and the delicious unrestraint of his Italian existence set his genius blossoming into the rarest beauty. In the full flower of it he was drowned, when he was only thirty years old, in a sudden squall that over took his yacht in the Gulf of Spezzia. His body- a fit consummation- was burned on the beach where it was found and his ashes were laid beside those of Keats in the Roman cemetery that he had nobly hymned. It is impossible to estimate the loss to literature that was caused by his early extinction. The crudeness of his earlier opinions was passing away, and his vision was gaining immeasurably in clearness and intensity.

Nothing of him that doth fade,

But doth suffer a sea-change

Into something rich and strange.

"And so," writes Lady Shelley, "the sea and the earth closed over one who was great as a poet, and still greater as a philanthropist; and of whom it may be said, that his wild spiritual character seems to have prepared him for being thus snatched from life under circumstances of mingled terror and beauty, while his powers were yet in their spring freshness, and age had not come to render the ethereal body decrepit, or to wither the heart which could not be consumed by fire."

3.4.2. Shelley as a Poet

P.B. Shelley occupies a position of his own among the Romantic poets. In his case there was an intimate relationship between his inner personality and the expression of his poetic thoughts. Man, Method and Manner all combine together in his poetry. "His poetry is the expression of the man himself, springing from the heart rather than from the brain, and we must understand the man to understand to his poetry." There is the least pose of affectation. He felt sincerely and intensely and poetry was the natural medium of his expression. Verse flowers out of him as freely and spontaneously as fragrance goes out of a rose. Byron and Keats were artists who spent some time and labour in composing their poems. We can detect the hand of a killed and jeweled artist in the poetry of Keats. But in the cast of Shelley, there was no scope for affectation. It was all natural the flow of language was unrestrained, for poetry was to him the natural mode of utterance. "Wordsworth, Coleridge even Keats-in fact almost every poet that ever wrote" says H. Crump, were occasionally pedestrian and trivial; Shelley never.

In Shelley's case we have one special thing to keep in view. He was from his looks, ways and living a poet incarnate, and a brief discourse with Shelley revealed his highly sensitive and tender nature. He was an extremely emotional and what is popularly known as a 'highly strung type' Emotion was the breath of his living he could never be earthly. Facts meant little to him. Frequently he did not know whether he had taken his dinner or not. Shelley was always lost in the clouds, and it seemed after a close association with the poet that he was not a man of this world. He was a dreamer, a vague imaginary idealist and the world with all its gadgets and glories seemed extremely annoying and displeasing

to him. "he lived in a world of spirits and abstractions which were as real to him as food and clothing are to us, and conversely, all that is real to us was of no moment to him. He was never reasonable, always he was the victim of some hallucination it follows from this that his whole method of thought was vague but, indeterminate and ethereal as his philosophy was his ideals were clear and real to him and he followed them faithfully. He loathed with uncompromising hatred all material force, all man-made laws, all sordid enthusiasm, all intolerance: militarism gold, earthly power, dogmatic rules of belief or morals- all these stood for evil to him, because they cramped and warped the spiritual liberty of man, which, he affirmed, could be obtained only in a universe controlled by love. He spent his life in the quest of a perfection which he sometimes called freedom, sometimes beauty, sometimes love-to Shelley the three were synonymous; perfect liberty was impossible without perfect love, and perfect beauty was the outcome of these two.'

Shelley, who had a hatred for the evils and sins of the world, sought to demolish the false idols by his sledge hammer blows and it was his effort in poetry to reform the world of its evil and usher in a new utopia of peace and plenty for all. This reformative zeal in Shelley was peculiarly his own and was not shared by other Romantic poets of his age. He was an idealist who built pictures of a world of dreamy idealism in his mind and sought to translate of transmute them into practice of reality. Like all intensely emotional-idealistic people he was always in extremes either of rapture or despair, rapture at the glory of his ideals, and despair at the evil and corruption of the world. Shelley was as Cluton-Brock says, 'a fanatic-poet', who tenaciously slung to his ideals of introducing a world of socialism, wherein the forces of equality will have supreme sway, Shelley wrote and spoke against established convention of every kind, and he kept himself busy in weaving his own visions of a regenerated society.
It is in Shelley alone that the reader will find vagueness and dreaminess, but he will not feel want, for all his emotional feelings are expressed in a musical and beautiful manner. Music melody and beauty coloured all his poems.

Shelley's poetry is a thing to be felt and enjoyed, it cannot actually be lived. Though dealing with the problems of the world, it does not come in close touch with the problems in a practical and reasonable measure. The poet builds up his own visions, and suffers from what Matthew Arnold called from "fatal lack of substantiality." But with all this dreaminess, vagueness and lack of substance, there is a peculiar charm and beauty in Shelley's poetry. "No poet has succeeded so perfectly in welding music and thought- of synchronizing. As it were the vibrations of rhythm and emotion. He changes the rhythm not only from stanza to stanza and line to line, but from word to word, with every slightest variation of feeling."

3.4.3. Shelley's Poetry

Shelley's earliest effort of any note is "Queen Mab" (1813). The poem is clearly immature; it is lengthy, and contains much of Shelley's cruder atheism. It is written in the irregular unrhymed metre that was made popular by Southey.

"Alastor" or "The Spirit of Solitude" (1816) followed. It is a kind of spiritual autobiography, in which the chief character a shadowy projection of Shelley's own moods, travels through a wilderness in quest of the ideal beauty. The poem is long, rather obscure, and formless, and is remembered chiefly for its lyrical passages and striking, typically Shelleyan imagery. It is written in blank verse that shows Shelley's growing

skill as a poet. After this came "Laonand Cythna" (1817), afterward (1818) called "The Revolt of Islam". It has the fault of its immediate predecessor-lack of grip and coherence; but it is richer in descriptive passages, and has many outbursts of rapturous energy.

Then Shelley left for Italy. The first fruits of his new life were apparent in "Prometheus Unbound" (1818-19, published 1820). This wonderful production is a combination of the lyric and the drama. The story is that of Prometheus, who defied the gods and suffered for his presumption. There is a small proportion of narrative in blank verse, but the chief feature of the poem is the series of lyrics that both sustain and embellish the action. As a whole the poem has a sweep, a soar, and as unearthly vitality that sometimes staggers the imagination. It is peopled with spirits and demigods, and its scenes are cast in the inaccessible spaces of sky, mountain, and sea.

In the *Cenci* (1819) Shelley started to write formal drama. In this play he seems deliberately to have set upon himself the restraints that he defied in "Prometheus Unbound". The plot is not of the sky and the sea; it is a grim and sordid family affair; in style it is neither fervent nor ornate, but bleak and austere. Yet behind this reticence of manner there is a deep and smouldering intensity of passion and enormous adequacy of tragic purpose. Many of the poet's admirers look upon it as his masterpiece. But it falls short of the highest tragic level in the lack of subtlety in its character drawing and the inadequacy of its dramatic action. Even so, it stands as one of the best tragedies since Webster.

The poems of this period are extraordinary in their number and quality. Among the longer ones are "Julian" and "Maddalo" (1818) and "The Masque of Anarchy" (1819, published 1832). The latter, inspired by the news of the massacre of Peterloo, expresses Shelley's revolutionary political views, and is very severe on Lord Castlereagh.

"Adonais" (1821) is a lament for the death of Keats modeled on the classical elegy. Though there is a jarring note in the attack on the critics, whom Shelley held to be responsible for the poet's early death, the Spenserian stanza is here used with a splendid resonance and a force which increases as the poem progresses.

With the longer poems went a brilliant cascade of shorter lyrical pieces. To name them is to mention some of the sweetest English lyrics. The constantly quoted "To a Skylark" and "The Cloud" are among them; so are some exquisite songs, such as "The Indian Serenade", "Music, when soft voices die", "On a faded Violet", "To Night", and the longer occasional pieces-for example, "Lines Written Among the Euganean Hills", and the "Letter to Maria Gisborne". Of his many beautiful odes, the most remarkable is "Ode to the West Wind".

3.5. "TO A SKYLARK"

To a Skylark
By Percy Bysshe Shelley
Hail to thee, blithe Spirit!
Bird thou never wert,
That from Heaven, or near it,

Pourest thy full heart
In profuse strains of unpremeditated art.

Higher still and higher
From the earth thou springest
Like a cloud of fire;
The blue deep thou wingest,
And singing still dost soar, and soaring ever singest.

In the golden lightning
Of the sunken sun,
O'er which clouds are bright'ning,
Thou dost float and run;
Like an unbodied joy whose race is just begun.

The pale purple even
Melts around thy flight;
Like a star of Heaven,
In the broad day-light
Thou art unseen, but yet I hear thy shrill delight,

Keen as are the arrows
Of that silver sphere,
Whose intense lamp narrows
In the white dawn clear
Until we hardly see, we feel that it is there.

All the earth and air
With thy voice is loud,
As, when night is bare,
From one lonely cloud
The moon rains out her beams, and Heaven is overflow'd.

What thou art we know not;
What is most like thee?
From rainbow clouds there flow not
Drops so bright to see
As from thy presence showers a rain of melody.

Like a Poet hidden
In the light of thought,
Singing hymns unbidden,
Till the world is wrought
To sympathy with hopes and fears it heeded not:

Like a high-born maiden
In a palace-tower,
Soothing her love-laden

Soul in secret hour
With music sweet as love, which overflows her bower:

Like a glow-worm golden
In a dell of dew,
Scattering unbeholden
Its a{:e}real hue
Among the flowers and grass, which screen it from the view:

Like a rose embower'd
In its own green leaves,
By warm winds deflower'd,
Till the scent it gives
Makes faint with too much sweet those heavy-winged thieves:

Sound of vernal showers
On the twinkling grass,
Rain-awaken'd flowers,
All that ever was
Joyous, and clear, and fresh, thy music doth surpass.

Teach us, Sprite or Bird,
What sweet thoughts are thine:
I have never heard
Praise of love or wine
That panted forth a flood of rapture so divine.

Chorus Hymeneal,
Or triumphal chant,
Match'd with thine would be all
But an empty vaunt,
A thing wherein we feel there is some hidden want.

What objects are the fountains
Of thy happy strain?
What fields, or waves, or mountains?
What shapes of sky or plain?
What love of thine own kind? what ignorance of pain?

With thy clear keen joyance
Languor cannot be:
Shadow of annoyance
Never came near thee:
Thou lovest: but ne'er knew love's sad satiety.

Waking or asleep,
Thou of death must deem
Things more true and deep

Than we mortals dream,
Or how could thy notes flow in such a crystal stream?

We look before and after,
And pine for what is not:
Our sincerest laughter
With some pain is fraught;
Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought.

Yet if we could scorn
Hate, and pride, and fear;
If we were things born
Not to shed a tear,
I know not how thy joy we ever should come near.

Better than all measures
Of delightful sound,
Better than all treasures
That in books are found,
Thy skill to poet were, thou scorner of the ground!

Teach me half the gladness
That thy brain must know,
Such harmonious madness
From my lips would flow
The world should listen then, as I am listening now.

"To a Skylark" is indeed one of the most remarkable lyrics of Shelley. It was written in the spring of 1820 and is ranked with his two with his two other famous lyrics, "Ode to the West Wind" and "The Cloud". "To a Skylark" is representative of Shelley's thought and art. Mrs. Shelley wrote about it as follows:

> In the spring we spent a week or two at Leghborn borrowing the house of some friends who were absent on a journey to England. It was on a beautiful summer evening while wandering among the lanes whose myrtle hedgers were, the bowers of the fireflies that we heard the caroling of the Skylark which inspired one of the most beautiful of Shelley's poems. Thus the poem was the outcome of a personal experience and written at a time when song of the bird was actually heard by the poet. Shelley sees "in this natural world", as Baker points out, "for analogies, by which he wants to assure himself that regeneration follows destruction (as in West Wind), that change does not mean extinction (as in The Cloud), and there is yet hope for the world if it will pay heed to those unacknowledged legislators of the world (as in the Skylark)", the sensitive and imaginative poets like Keats and himself. "The underlying hope of the Odes is either that melancholy world can be exchanged for some bright one of the hereafter: or that the world as it can be converted into the world as it ought to be", i.e., the ideal world of Shelley's dream – the world of equality, fraternity, and liberty, of love and non – violence.

3.5.1. Substance of the Poem

"To a Skylark" is one of the most popular lyrics in English poetry. Here Shelley describes the flight of the Skylark who soars high in the sky always pouring forth a most delightful song. Shelley is impressed by the swiftness of the bird, its sweet music and its carefree nature. In contrast to it, he himself is bound hand and foot, as all humanity is, and therefore is all the time miserable and moaning. The spontaneous action of the bird, its flight and song, are given a very apt expression in this soul enchanting lyric, which is one of the best Shelley ever wrote. Here he has immortalized himself as well as the bird.

3.5.2. Critical Appreciation

A Supreme Lyric

"To a Skylark" is one of the finest lyrics in English poetry. It is a piece of supreme art and embodies the best qualities of Shelley's lyrical genius. Its chief virtue lies in its wonderful melody; lyric fervour and ebullient lyricism, imaginative conceptions, spontaneity of emotional expression and metrical power. The lines of the lyrics bubble out from the poet's heart without any labour or artifice. It is a poem of natural effusion and as such it is regarded as a gem among Shelley's lyrics. As Edmund Gosse says, "It remains unsurpassed among other poems of Shelley."

The Theme of the Poem

In this Ode Shelley addresses the Skylark whom he regards as a spirit of song and joy. It soars high up in the sky with the first streak of dawn and, from her high tower in the sky pours fourth down upon the earth a flood of the sweetest harmony in which there is no lack of perfection. He wants to emphasize this utter joyousness of the bird and the perfection of its song by many a simile which sometime becomes boring and monotonous in spite of their brilliance – a defect in Shelley's poetry. He contrasts the perfect happiness of this bird with the sad state of man in whose joy there is always a tinge of melancholy. Even our wedding songs and triumphant chants are an empty vaunt when contrasted to the bird's crystal harmony. Mankind does not know happiness because such is the order of things in its world of political, religious and social institutions.

How then, bird so happy? The poet believes that the bird is happy because it has realized the true nature of death. Death is not a cause for fear and sorrow, but an entrance into immortality.

The Treatment of Nature

The praises showered on the skylark show the appreciative genius of Shelley for the beautiful objects of Nature. Shelley had a tender heart vibrating with love for nature, birds and clouds. The song of the bird with its melody touched the poetic chord of the great poet, and under-direct inspiration of that song, he began describing the flight of the skylark showering innumerable praises on its music, its happiness, and its unconcerned life with the miserable lot of human being. Many of his images in this poem are selected from Nature. The poet sings of bird which is an object of Nature. The bird is compared with so many natural objects such as a glow-warm, a rose and so on.

The Autobiographical Element in the Poem

The autobiographical element of the poem is equally worthy of note. The poet feels that if he could be half as glad and happy as the bird, he would be able to achieve great success as a poet and impress the world by his poetic production. The last stanza of the poem exhibits Shelley's personal life, and this poem also closes like the Ode to the West Wind on a note of optimism and hope:

Teach me half the gladness
That thy brain must know
Such harmonious madness
From my lips would flow
The world should listen then as I am listening now.

The Note of Pessimism

The poem presents the pessimism of the post. We hear in it the authentic notes of tender, vague pathos which no other poet but Shelley could have so confidently struck. The poet has pathetically presented the lot of human beings in the world. The following stanza has become world famous not only for its haunting melody but also for its tender pathos and touching pessimism:

We look before and after,
And pine for what is not;
Our sincerest laughter
With some pain is fraught;
Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought.

The happy lot of the bird has been pathetically co pared with the unhappy lot of human beings. The rapture of the bird is caught for ever in verse that quivers with emotions, and in a language which is imperishable. According to Words worth, Shelley's 'Skylark' is the expression of the highest emotion to which his genius has attained.

The Richness of Imagery

The poem is extremely rich is imagery. The Skylark has been beautifully compared by the poet to a poet hidden in the light of thought, to a high – born maiden in a palace tower, to a glow-warm golden in a dell of dew, and to a rose embowered in its own green leaves. These similes are very charming and beautiful and help in visualizing the picture of the bird in its wonderful flight. In the beginning the bird is a blithe spirit that pours its full heart from Heaven or near it. It is like a cloud of fire and "singing still dost soar, and soaring ever singest." It is like an unbodied joy or like a star of Heaven unseen in the broad daylight.

3.5.3. GLOSSARY

Hail: welcome
Blitheo: happy
Pourest thy full heart: pours out the feelings which fill your heart
Shrill delight: loud, delightful music
When light is bare: when the night sky is without clouds
Hymns: religious songs sung in praise of God
Wrought: worked up to; influenced

Aerial hue: its pale, 'airy bluish light'
Embowered: hidden ; covered
Empty vaunt: meaningless boast
Languor: laziness; pain
Satiety: state of being satisfied

3.6. "STANZAS WRITTEN IN DEJECTION - DECEMBER 1818, NEAR NAPLES"

The sun is warm, the sky is clear,
The waves are dancing fast and bright,
Blue isles and snowy mountains wear
The purple noon's transparent might,
The breath of the moist earth is light,
Around its unexpanded buds;
Like many a voice of one delight,
The winds, the birds, the ocean floods,
The City's voice itself, is soft like Solitude's.

I see the Deep's untrampled floor
With green and purple seaweeds strown;
I see the waves upon the shore,
Like light dissolved in star-showers, thrown:
I sit upon the sands alone,—
The lightning of the noontide ocean
Is flashing round me, and a tone
Arises from its measured motion,
How sweet! did any heart now share in my emotion.

Alas! I have nor hope nor health,
Nor peace within nor calm around,
Nor that content surpassing wealth
The sage in meditation found,
And walked with inward glory crowned—
Nor fame, nor power, nor love, nor leisure.
Others I see whom these surround—
Smiling they live, and call life pleasure;
To me that cup has been dealt in another measure.

Yet now despair itself is mild,
Even as the winds and waters are;
I could lie down like a tired child,
And weep away the life of care
Which I have borne and yet must bear,
Till death like sleep might steal on me,
And I might feel in the warm air
My cheek grow cold, and hear the sea
Breathe o'er my dying brain its last monotony.

Some might lament that I were cold,
As I, when this sweet day is gone,
Which my lost heart, too soon grown old,
Insults with this untimely moan;
They might lament—for I am one

Whom men love not,—and yet regret,
Unlike this day, which, when the sun
Shall on its stainless glory set,
Will linger, though enjoyed, like joy in memory yet.

This poem was written by Shelley in December 1818, when along with Mrs. Shelley he visited Naples. At that time Shelley was suffering from ill health, which had a very depressing effect on him. It is this extreme mood of melancholy which is given expression to which actually took place under these very circumstances. While rowing on a lake his boat was overturned in a storm, and he was drowned. This yearning for death which provides the only relief from the acute suffering of life is a typical romantic sentiment, which is here very beautifully expressed by Shelley.

3.6.1. Substance of the Poem

"Stanzas Written in Dejection, near Naples" is one of the most remarkable poem in English Poetry. It is reflective of Shelley's personality and character. It brings before us the dejected and sad condition of the poet's heart while he was in Italy, almost in exile from home. Thus it is one of the most melancholic poems of Shelley.

The poem presents a contrast between nature's calm and beautiful aspects, with Shelley's mood of despair and dejection. But Nature is to Shelley, as it had been to Wordsworth, a healer of wounds. It provides relief to the poet's tried heart and he reconciles himself to his fate by taking shelter in the lap of Nature.

This poem was written by Shelley when he was sad, dejected, frustrated, down-trodden, separate from his wife and parents, poor and desolate. The poem presents a similarity between the poet's mood and the natural phenomenon. Madwin narrates a strange story of a beautiful woman who had long passionately loved the fragile poet, and often crossed his path even after she had learned, from Shelley's own lips that his heart was bound up in Mary, and that he could love none other; this fair woman died in Naples, shortly after the man whom she so loved had reached that southern city. The incident preyed upon Shelley's mind, always painfully susceptible to emotional influences. In his profound despondency he composed among other mournful lyrics those exquisite stanzas "written in dejection, near Naples" which every lover of his poetry has read again and again with thrilling sympathy.

The poem was written in December 1818.

3.6.2. Critical Appreciation

"Stanzas Written in Dejection, near Naples" is a typical poem of Shelley, who had a tendency to be overcome by the sentiment of self-pity. As he was harshly treated by his countrymen who forced him to live in exile, he could not forget all his life the grave injustice done to him. Though he was a brave man and was always ready to champion the cause of liberty and brotherhood, and denounce all kinds of tyranny and oppression, yet at times he felt very week and unequal to carry on the burden of life. This mood came to him especially when he was suffering from ill-health, which made everything around him look dark and dismal. In other poems also he has expressed the sentiment of self-pity.

It was under this mood of depression that Shelley felt that all hope was lost. Under its influence, he who was the prophet of the Golden Age for humanity lost all hope for himself, and felt as if he were the most miserable creature on the surface of this earth, enjoying no advantage at all, and being provided with no source of pleasure.

Whereas most of the other poems of Shelley express the social, political and religious beliefs of Shelley, this poem gives us an insight into the personal, inner life of Shelley. Here he is not playing the role of the champion of mankind, supporting great causes, visualizing a grand future for humanity, but he is laying bare is own personal sentiments and emotion. In fact, it is in lyrics like these which provide us a glimpse into the real life of Shelley. In spite of his being a great poet, and social reformer, living in the realm of imagination, he could not forget his personal problems. Especially ill-health, the most depressing of all misfortunes, because one cannot escape from it at all. So in this poem we find Shelley the man, with all his weakness and it is in his mood of helplessness, which is so poignantly expressed, that we sympathize with him the most.

As Shelley's poetry was not properly appreciated during his life-time, he is doubtful regarding the reaction of the people after his death. They may feel sad at his death and say a few sympathetic words, and that is all that he expects from people who did not treat him well during his life time.

3.6.3. Glossary

The waves: refer to the waves that flutter in the Bay of Naples
Blue isles: The island of Capri and other neighbouring islands where rich and fashionable people go for change
Snowy mountains: like Vesuvius
Transparent might: In 1824 edition it was 'transparent light', but 'might' also conveys the same meaning. In Mrs. Shelley's edition, the reading is 'transparent light', but meaning in either case would be the same.
Might: strong
Strown: spread over, covered.
The lightning ocean: The sun lit up the ocean.
Measured motion: rhythmical movement of the sea waves
Death like sleep etc: he would die an easy and painless death, which would come to him unperceived.

3.7. SUMMARY

In this unit you read about the life and poetic style of P.B.Shelley. You saw how Shelley was a Non conformist in every aspect of his life. You also saw how Shelley's poems cover a variety of themes ranging from nature to politics, from personal to revolutionary themes. Shelley discusses the power of both seen and unseen nature throughout his entire canon. This is primarily how critics have come to classify the bard as a "Romantic." Due to Shelley's fervid defense of a godless universe, he often turned to the sheer majestic power of the natural world. In the place of religious doctrine he wanted substantiated evidence of reality. Furthermore, two of Shelley's well acclaimed poems "To a Skylark" and "Stanzas Written in Dejection-December 1818, Near Naples" were also taken up for a detailed study.

Self Assessment Questions

1. How many years did Shelley live?

a. Fifty b. Forty
c. Thirty d. sixty

2. Shelley was born in:

a.1792 b. 1752
c. 1734 d. 1788

3.8. ANSWERS TO SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

To know the answers from Q1 to Q7, read the life of the poet and substance of both poems given in the respective sections.

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3.11. TERMINAL AND MODEL QUESTIONS

1. Write a note on To a Skylark as a lyric.
2. Give the substance of Shelley's Stanzas Written in Dejection near Napeles
3. Write an essay on symbolism in Shelley's poetry.
4. Discuss Shelley as lyric poet.

UNIT 4 P.B. SHELLEY "ADONAIS"

4.1. INTRODUCTION

In the previous unit you have read two famous odes by Shelley. In this unit you will read his an elegy, "Adonais", which he composed on the death of his dear friend Keats. As mentioned earlier, Keats was a dear friend of Shelley who died at a tender age of twenty. Shelley followed suit as he too died at the age of thirty. Keats died of tubercloses but Shelley thought that the bitter and harsh criticism leveled by Wilson Croker in *The Quarterly Review* and by John Gibson Lockhart in *The Blackwood's Magazine* was responsible for his tender death. Through this this elegy Shelley pays rich tribute to Keats. The elegiac element is more pronounced in "Adonais" than in any other elegy ever written in English literature. The admixture of grief and relief at the end is presented in a style that does credit to the poet.

4.2. OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit you will be able to:

- Understand the Age of Romanticism
- Know about the life of Shelley
- Examine Shelley as a poet and learn something about his poetic style
- Critically examine and appreciate his one famous elegy, "Adonais "

4.3. WHAT IS AN ELEGY?

The elegy began as an ancient Greek metrical form and is traditionally written in response to the death of a person or group. Though similar in function, the elegy is distinct from the epitaph, ode, and eulogy: the epitaph is very brief; the ode solely exalts; and the eulogy is most often written in formal prose.

The elements of a traditional elegy mirror three stages of loss. First, there is a lament, where the speaker expresses grief and sorrow, then praise and admiration of the idealized dead, and finally consolation and solace. These three stages can be seen in W. H. Auden's classic "In Memory of W. B. Yeats". Other well-known elegies include "Fugue of Death" by Paul Celan, written for victims of the Holocaust, and "O Captain! My Captain!" by Walt Whitman, written for President Abraham Lincoln.

Many modern elegies have been written not out of a sense of personal grief, but rather a broad feeling of loss and metaphysical sadness. A famous example is the mournful series of ten poems in Duino Elegies, by German poet Rainer Maria Rilke.

Other works that can be considered elegiac in the broader sense are James Merrill's monumental "The Changing Light at Sandover", Robert Lowell's "For the Union Dead," Seamus Heaney's "The Haw Lantern", and the work of Czeslaw Milosz, which often laments the modern cruelties he witnessed in Europe.

4.4. "ADONAIS"

I

I weep for Adonais—he is dead!
Oh, weep for Adonais! though our tears
Thaw not the frost which binds so dear a head!
And thou, sad Hour, selected from all years
To mourn our loss, rouse thy obscure compeers,
And teach them thine own sorrow, say: "With me
Died Adonais; till the Future dares
Forget the Past, his fate and fame shall be
An echo and a light unto eternity!"

II

Where wert thou, mighty Mother, when he lay,
When thy Son lay, pierc'd by the shaft which flies
In darkness? where was lorn Urania
When Adonais died? With veiled eyes,
'Mid listening Echoes, in her Paradise
She sate, while one, with soft enamour'd breath,
Rekindled all the fading melodies,
With which, like flowers that mock the corse beneath,
He had adorn'd and hid the coming bulk of Death.

III

Oh, weep for Adonais—he is dead!
Wake, melancholy Mother, wake and weep!
Yet wherefore? Quench within their burning bed
Thy fiery tears, and let thy loud heart keep
Like his, a mute and uncomplaining sleep;
For he is gone, where all things wise and fair
Descend—oh, dream not that the amorous Deep
Will yet restore him to the vital air;
Death feeds on his mute voice, and laughs at our despair.

IV

Most musical of mourners, weep again!
Lament anew, Urania! He died,
Who was the Sire of an immortal strain,
Blind, old and lonely, when his country's pride,
The priest, the slave and the liberticide,
Trampled and mock'd with many a loathed rite
Of lust and blood; he went, unterrified,
Into the gulf of death; but his clear Sprite
Yet reigns o'er earth; the third among the sons of light.

V

Most musical of mourners, weep anew!
Not all to that bright station dar'd to climb;
And happier they their happiness who knew,
Whose tapers yet burn through that night of time
In which suns perish'd; others more sublime,
Struck by the envious wrath of man or god,
Have sunk, extinct in their refulgent prime;
And some yet live, treading the thorny road,
Which leads, through toil and hate, to Fame's serene abode.

VI

But now, thy youngest, dearest one, has perish'd,
The nursling of thy widowhood, who grew,
Like a pale flower by some sad maiden cherish'd,
And fed with true-love tears, instead of dew;
Most musical of mourners, weep anew!
Thy extreme hope, the loveliest and the last,
The bloom, whose petals nipp'd before they blew
Died on the promise of the fruit, is waste;
The broken lily lies—the storm is overpast.

VII

To that high Capital, where kingly Death
Keeps his pale court in beauty and decay,
He came; and bought, with price of purest breath,
A grave among the eternal.—Come away!
Haste, while the vault of blue Italian day
Is yet his fitting charnel-roof! while still
He lies, as if in dewy sleep he lay;
Awake him not! surely he takes his fill
Of deep and liquid rest, forgetful of all ill.

VIII

He will awake no more, oh, never more!
Within the twilight chamber spreads apace
The shadow of white Death, and at the door
Invisible Corruption waits to trace
His extreme way to her dim dwelling-place;
The eternal Hunger sits, but pity and awe
Soothe her pale rage, nor dares she to deface
So fair a prey, till darkness and the law
Of change shall o'er his sleep the mortal curtain draw.

IX

Oh, weep for Adonais! The quick Dreams,
The passion-winged Ministers of thought,
Who were his flocks, whom near the living streams
Of his young spirit he fed, and whom he taught
The love which was its music, wander not—
Wander no more, from kindling brain to brain,
But droop there, whence they sprung; and mourn their lot
Round the cold heart, where, after their sweet pain,
They ne'er will gather strength, or find a home again.

X

And one with trembling hands clasps his cold head,
And fans him with her moonlight wings, and cries,
"Our love, our hope, our sorrow, is not dead;
See, on the silken fringe of his faint eyes,
Like dew upon a sleeping flower, there lies
A tear some Dream has loosen'd from his brain."
Lost Angel of a ruin'd Paradise!
She knew not 'twas her own; as with no stain
She faded, like a cloud which had outwept its rain.

XI

One from a lucid urn of starry dew
Wash'd his light limbs as if embalming them;
Another clipp'd her profuse locks, and threw
The wreath upon him, like an anadem,
Which frozen tears instead of pearls begem;
Another in her wilful grief would break
Her bow and winged reeds, as if to stem
A greater loss with one which was more weak;
And dull the barbed fire against his frozen cheek.

XII

Another Splendour on his mouth alit,
That mouth, whence it was wont to draw the breath
Which gave it strength to pierce the guarded wit,
And pass into the panting heart beneath
With lightning and with music: the damp death
Quench'd its caress upon his icy lips;
And, as a dying meteor stains a wreath
Of moonlight vapour, which the cold night clips,
It flush'd through his pale limbs, and pass'd to its eclipse.

XIII

And others came . . . Desires and Adorations,
Winged Persuasions and veil'd Destinies,

Splendours, and Glooms, and glimmering Incarnations
Of hopes and fears, and twilight Phantasies;
And Sorrow, with her family of Sighs,
And Pleasure, blind with tears, led by the gleam
Of her own dying smile instead of eyes,
Came in slow pomp; the moving pomp might seem
Like pageantry of mist on an autumnal stream.

XIV

All he had lov'd, and moulded into thought,
From shape, and hue, and odour, and sweet sound,
Lamented Adonais. Morning sought
Her eastern watch-tower, and her hair unbound,
Wet with the tears which should adorn the ground,
Dimm'd the aëreal eyes that kindle day;
Afar the melancholy thunder moan'd,
Pale Ocean in unquiet slumber lay,
And the wild Winds flew round, sobbing in their dismay.

XV

Lost Echo sits amid the voiceless mountains,
And feeds her grief with his remember'd lay,
And will no more reply to winds or fountains,
Or amorous birds perch'd on the young green spray,
Or herdsman's horn, or bell at closing day;
Since she can mimic not his lips, more dear
Than those for whose disdain she pin'd away
Into a shadow of all sounds: a drear
Murmur, between their songs, is all the woodmen hear.

XVI

Grief made the young Spring wild, and she threw down
Her kindling buds, as if she Autumn were,
Or they dead leaves; since her delight is flown,
For whom should she have wak'd the sullen year?
To Phoebus was not Hyacinth so dear
Nor to himself Narcissus, as to both
Thou, Adonais: wan they stand and sere
Amid the faint companions of their youth,
With dew all turn'd to tears; odour, to sighing ruth.

XVII

Thy spirit's sister, the lorn nightingale
Mourns not her mate with such melodious pain;
Not so the eagle, who like thee could scale
Heaven, and could nourish in the sun's domain

Her mighty youth with morning, doth complain,
Soaring and screaming round her empty nest,
As Albion wails for thee: the curse of Cain
Light on his head who pierc'd thy innocent breast,
And scar'd the angel soul that was its earthly guest!

XVIII

Ah, woe is me! Winter is come and gone,
But grief returns with the revolving year;
The airs and streams renew their joyous tone;
The ants, the bees, the swallows reappear;
Fresh leaves and flowers deck the dead Seasons' bier;
The amorous birds now pair in every brake,
And build their mossy homes in field and brere;
And the green lizard, and the golden snake,
Like unimprison'd flames, out of their trance awake.

XIX

Through wood and stream and field and hill and Ocean
A quickening life from the Earth's heart has burst
As it has ever done, with change and motion,
From the great morning of the world when first
God dawn'd on Chaos; in its stream immers'd,
The lamps of Heaven flash with a softer light;
All baser things pant with life's sacred thirst;
Diffuse themselves; and spend in love's delight,
The beauty and the joy of their renewed might.

XX

The leprous corpse, touch'd by this spirit tender,
Exhales itself in flowers of gentle breath;
Like incarnations of the stars, when splendour
Is chang'd to fragrance, they illumine death
And mock the merry worm that wakes beneath;
Nought we know, dies. Shall that alone which knows
Be as a sword consum'd before the sheath
By sightless lightning?—the intense atom glows
A moment, then is quench'd in a most cold repose.

XXI

Alas! that all we lov'd of him should be,
But for our grief, as if it had not been,
And grief itself be mortal! Woe is me!
Whence are we, and why are we? of what scene
The actors or spectators? Great and mean
Meet mass'd in death, who lends what life must borrow.

As long as skies are blue, and fields are green,
Evening must usher night, night urge the morrow,
Month follow month with woe, and year wake year to sorrow.

XXII

He will awake no more, oh, never more!
"Wake thou," cried Misery, "childless Mother, rise
Out of thy sleep, and slake, in thy heart's core,
A wound more fierce than his, with tears and sighs."
And all the Dreams that watch'd Urania's eyes,
And all the Echoes whom their sister's song
Had held in holy silence, cried: "Arise!"
Swift as a Thought by the snake Memory stung,
From her ambrosial rest the fading Splendour sprung.

XXIII

She rose like an autumnal Night, that springs
Out of the East, and follows wild and drear
The golden Day, which, on eternal wings,
Even as a ghost abandoning a bier,
Had left the Earth a corpse. Sorrow and fear
So struck, so rous'd, so rapt Urania;
So sadden'd round her like an atmosphere
Of stormy mist; so swept her on her way
Even to the mournful place where Adonais lay.

XXIV

Out of her secret Paradise she sped,
Through camps and cities rough with stone, and steel,
And human hearts, which to her aery tread
Yielding not, wounded the invisible
Palms of her tender feet where'er they fell:
And barbed tongues, and thoughts more sharp than they,
Rent the soft Form they never could repel,
Whose sacred blood, like the young tears of May,
Pav'd with eternal flowers that undeserving way.

XXV

In the death-chamber for a moment Death,
Sham'd by the presence of that living Might,
Blush'd to annihilation, and the breath
Revisited those lips, and Life's pale light
Flash'd through those limbs, so late her dear delight.
"Leave me not wild and drear and comfortless,
As silent lightning leaves the starless night!
Leave me not!" cried Urania: her distress

Rous'd Death: Death rose and smil'd, and met her vain caress.

XXVI

"Stay yet awhile! speak to me once again;
Kiss me, so long but as a kiss may live;
And in my heartless breast and burning brain
That word, that kiss, shall all thoughts else survive,
With food of saddest memory kept alive,
Now thou art dead, as if it were a part
Of thee, my Adonais! I would give
All that I am to be as thou now art!
But I am chain'd to Time, and cannot thence depart!

XXVII

"O gentle child, beautiful as thou wert,
Why didst thou leave the trodden paths of men
Too soon, and with weak hands though mighty heart
Dare the unpastur'd dragon in his den?
Defenceless as thou wert, oh, where was then
Wisdom the mirror'd shield, or scorn the spear?
Or hadst thou waited the full cycle, when
Thy spirit should have fill'd its crescent sphere,
The monsters of life's waste had fled from thee like deer.

XXVIII

"The herded wolves, bold only to pursue;
The obscene ravens, clamorous o'er the dead;
The vultures to the conqueror's banner true
Who feed where Desolation first has fed,
And whose wings rain contagion; how they fled,
When, like Apollo, from his golden bow
The Pythian of the age one arrow sped
And smil'd! The spoilers tempt no second blow,
They fawn on the proud feet that spurn them lying low.

XXIX

"The sun comes forth, and many reptiles spawn;
He sets, and each ephemeral insect then
Is gather'd into death without a dawn,
And the immortal stars awake again;
So is it in the world of living men:
A godlike mind soars forth, in its delight
Making earth bare and veiling heaven, and when
It sinks, the swarms that dimm'd or shar'd its light

Leave to its kindred lamps the spirit's awful night."

XXX

Thus ceas'd she: and the mountain shepherds came,
Their garlands sere, their magic mantles rent;
The Pilgrim of Eternity, whose fame
Over his living head like Heaven is bent,
An early but enduring monument,
Came, veiling all the lightnings of his song
In sorrow; from her wilds Ierne sent
The sweetest lyrist of her saddest wrong,
And Love taught Grief to fall like music from his tongue.

XXXI

Midst others of less note, came one frail Form,
A phantom among men; companionless
As the last cloud of an expiring storm
Whose thunder is its knell; he, as I guess,
Had gaz'd on Nature's naked loveliness,
Actaeon-like, and now he fled astray
With feeble steps o'er the world's wilderness,
And his own thoughts, along that rugged way,
Pursu'd, like raging hounds, their father and their prey.

XXXII

A pardlike Spirit beautiful and swift—
A Love in desolation mask'd—a Power
Girt round with weakness—it can scarce uplift
The weight of the superincumbent hour;
It is a dying lamp, a falling shower,
A breaking billow; even whilst we speak
Is it not broken? On the withering flower
The killing sun smiles brightly: on a cheek
The life can burn in blood, even while the heart may break.

XXXIII

His head was bound with pansies overblown,
And faded violets, white, and pied, and blue;
And a light spear topp'd with a cypress cone,
Round whose rude shaft dark ivy-tresses grew
Yet dripping with the forest's noonday dew,
Vibrated, as the ever-beating heart
Shook the weak hand that grasp'd it; of that crew
He came the last, neglected and apart;
A herd-abandon'd deer struck by the hunter's dart.

XXXIV

All stood aloof, and at his partial moan
Smil'd through their tears; well knew that gentle band
Who in another's fate now wept his own,
As in the accents of an unknown land
He sung new sorrow; sad Urania scann'd
The Stranger's mien, and murmur'd: "Who art thou?"
He answer'd not, but with a sudden hand
Made bare his branded and ensanguin'd brow,
Which was like Cain's or Christ's—oh! that it should be so!

XXXV

What softer voice is hush'd over the dead?
Athwart what brow is that dark mantle thrown?
What form leans sadly o'er the white death-bed,
In mockery of monumental stone,
The heavy heart heaving without a moan?
If it be He, who, gentlest of the wise,
Taught, sooth'd, lov'd, honour'd the departed one,
Let me not vex, with inharmonious sighs,
The silence of that heart's accepted sacrifice.

XXXVI

Our Adonais has drunk poison—oh!
What deaf and viperous murderer could crown
Life's early cup with such a draught of woe?
The nameless worm would now itself disown:
It felt, yet could escape, the magic tone
Whose prelude held all envy, hate and wrong,
But what was howling in one breast alone,
Silent with expectation of the song,
Whose master's hand is cold, whose silver lyre unstrung.

XXXVII

Live thou, whose infamy is not thy fame!
Live! fear no heavier chastisement from me,
Thou noteless blot on a remember'd name!
But be thyself, and know thyself to be!
And ever at thy season be thou free
To spill the venom when thy fangs o'erflow;
Remorse and Self-contempt shall cling to thee;
Hot Shame shall burn upon thy secret brow,
And like a beaten hound tremble thou shalt—as now.

XXXVIII

Nor let us weep that our delight is fled
Far from these carrion kites that scream below;
He wakes or sleeps with the enduring dead;
Thou canst not soar where he is sitting now.
Dust to the dust! but the pure spirit shall flow
Back to the burning fountain whence it came,
A portion of the Eternal, which must glow
Through time and change, unquenchably the same,
Whilst thy cold embers choke the sordid hearth of shame.

XXXIX

Peace, peace! he is not dead, he doth not sleep,
He hath awaken'd from the dream of life;
'Tis we, who lost in stormy visions, keep
With phantoms an unprofitable strife,
And in mad trance, strike with our spirit's knife
Invulnerable nothings. We decay
Like corpses in a charnel; fear and grief
Convulse us and consume us day by day,
And cold hopes swarm like worms within our living clay.

XL

He has outsoar'd the shadow of our night;
Envy and calumny and hate and pain,
And that unrest which men miscall delight,
Can touch him not and torture not again;
From the contagion of the world's slow stain
He is secure, and now can never mourn
A heart grown cold, a head grown gray in vain;
Nor, when the spirit's self has ceas'd to burn,
With sparkless ashes load an unlamented urn.

XLI

He lives, he wakes—'tis Death is dead, not he;
Mourn not for Adonais. Thou young Dawn,
Turn all thy dew to splendour, for from thee
The spirit thou lamentest is not gone;
Ye caverns and ye forests, cease to moan!
Cease, ye faint flowers and fountains, and thou Air,
Which like a mourning veil thy scarf hadst thrown
O'er the abandon'd Earth, now leave it bare
Even to the joyous stars which smile on its despair!

XLII

He is made one with Nature: there is heard
His voice in all her music, from the moan
Of thunder, to the song of night's sweet bird;
He is a presence to be felt and known
In darkness and in light, from herb and stone,
Spreading itself where'er that Power may move
Which has withdrawn his being to its own;
Which wields the world with never-wearied love,
Sustains it from beneath, and kindles it above.

XLIII

He is a portion of the loveliness
Which once he made more lovely: he doth bear
His part, while the one Spirit's plastic stress
Sweeps through the dull dense world, compelling there
All new successions to the forms they wear;
Torturing th' unwilling dross that checks its flight
To its own likeness, as each mass may bear;
And bursting in its beauty and its might
From trees and beasts and men into the Heaven's light.

XLIV

The splendours of the firmament of time
May be eclips'd, but are extinguish'd not;
Like stars to their appointed height they climb,
And death is a low mist which cannot blot
The brightness it may veil. When lofty thought
Lifts a young heart above its mortal lair,
And love and life contend in it for what
Shall be its earthly doom, the dead live there
And move like winds of light on dark and stormy air.

XLV

The inheritors of unfulfill'd renown
Rose from their thrones, built beyond mortal thought,
Far in the Unapparent. Chatterton
Rose pale, his solemn agony had not
Yet faded from him; Sidney, as he fought
And as he fell and as he liv'd and lov'd
Sublimely mild, a Spirit without spot,
Arose; and Lucan, by his death approv'd:
Oblivion as they rose shrank like a thing reprov'd.

XLVI

And many more, whose names on Earth are dark,
But whose transmitted effluence cannot die
So long as fire outlives the parent spark,
Rose, rob'd in dazzling immortality.
"Thou art become as one of us," they cry,
"It was for thee yon kingless sphere has long
Swung blind in unascended majesty,
Silent alone amid a Heaven of Song.
Assume thy winged throne, thou Vesper of our throng!"

XLVII

Who mourns for Adonais? Oh, come forth,
Fond wretch! and know thyself and him aright.
Clasp with thy panting soul the pendulous Earth;
As from a centre, dart thy spirit's light
Beyond all worlds, until its spacious might
Satiate the void circumference: then shrink
Even to a point within our day and night;
And keep thy heart light lest it make thee sink
When hope has kindled hope, and lur'd thee to the brink.

XLVIII

Or go to Rome, which is the sepulchre,
Oh, not of him, but of our joy: 'tis nought
That ages, empires and religions there
Lie buried in the ravage they have wrought;
For such as he can lend—they borrow not
Glory from those who made the world their prey;
And he is gather'd to the kings of thought
Who wag'd contention with their time's decay,
And of the past are all that cannot pass away.

XLIX

Go thou to Rome—at once the Paradise,
The grave, the city, and the wilderness;
And where its wrecks like shatter'd mountains rise,
And flowering weeds, and fragrant copses dress
The bones of Desolation's nakedness
Pass, till the spirit of the spot shall lead
Thy footsteps to a slope of green access
Where, like an infant's smile, over the dead
A light of laughing flowers along the grass is spread;

L

And gray walls moulder round, on which dull Time
Feeds, like slow fire upon a hoary brand;
And one keen pyramid with wedge sublime,
Pavilioning the dust of him who plann'd
This refuge for his memory, doth stand
Like flame transform'd to marble; and beneath,
A field is spread, on which a newer band
Have pitch'd in Heaven's smile their camp of death,
Welcoming him we lose with scarce extinguish'd breath.

LI

Here pause: these graves are all too young as yet
To have outgrown the sorrow which consign'd
Its charge to each; and if the seal is set,
Here, on one fountain of a mourning mind,
Break it not thou! too surely shalt thou find
Thine own well full, if thou returnest home,
Of tears and gall. From the world's bitter wind
Seek shelter in the shadow of the tomb.
What Adonais is, why fear we to become?

LII

The One remains, the many change and pass;
Heaven's light forever shines, Earth's shadows fly;
Life, like a dome of many-colour'd glass,
Stains the white radiance of Eternity,
Until Death tramples it to fragments.—Die,
If thou wouldst be with that which thou dost seek!
Follow where all is fled!—Rome's azure sky,
Flowers, ruins, statues, music, words, are weak
The glory they transfuse with fitting truth to speak.

LIII

Why linger, why turn back, why shrink, my Heart?
Thy hopes are gone before: from all things here
They have departed; thou shouldst now depart!
A light is pass'd from the revolving year,
And man, and woman; and what still is dear
Attracts to crush, repels to make thee wither.
The soft sky smiles, the low wind whispers near:
'Tis Adonais calls! oh, hasten thither,
No more let Life divide what Death can join together.

LIV

That Light whose smile kindles the Universe,
That Beauty in which all things work and move,

That Benediction which the eclipsing Curse
Of birth can quench not, that sustaining Love
Which through the web of being blindly wove
By man and beast and earth and air and sea,
Burns bright or dim, as each are mirrors of
The fire for which all thirst; now beams on me,
Consuming the last clouds of cold mortality.

LV

The breath whose might I have invok'd in song
Descends on me; my spirit's bark is driven,
Far from the shore, far from the trembling throng
Whose sails were never to the tempest given;
The massy earth and sphered skies are riven!
I am borne darkly, fearfully, afar;
Whilst, burning through the inmost veil of Heaven,
The soul of Adonais, like a star,
Beacons from the abode where the Eternal are.

"Adonais", An Elegy on The Death of John Keats was written and published by P. B. Shelley in 1821. The death of Keats took place at Rome on 23rd February, 1821. From information available to him, Shelley came to believe that the death of Keats was hastened by the savage criticism on his Endymion, which appeared in the Quarterly Review of Edinburgh. The critic, who bitterly criticized John Keats's "Endymion" was Croker, and his article appeared in the Quarterly Review in 1818. The effect of the savage criticism on Keat's mind and heart was dangerous. Soon after the death of Keats, Byron, through the through the following verse, declared that Keats was killed by the savage criticism of The Quarterly Review:

Who killed John Keats?
'I' says The Quarterly,
So cruel and Tartarly,
' ' Twas one of my feats.'

The death of Keats moved Shelley to great anger at the savage criticisms on Keats's work. He was also filled with sorrow, which inspired him to produce the present elegy. In form, it resembles classical elegies, particularly Bion's lament for Adonis. Shelley's elegy is a very long one, consisting of 495 lines. They have been divided into 55 stanzas. Each stanza consists of nine lines and is technically a Spenserian stanza. In other words, each stanza consists of eight five-foot iambic lines, followed by an iambic line of six feet. The rhyme-scheme of the stanza is: a b a b b c b c c.

4.4.1. Substance of the Poem

In a Greek legend, Adonis was a handsome young prince of Cyprus. Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of love, fell in love with him but one day he was fatally wounded by a wild boar and then died. Thereupon Aphrodite was drowned in grief. Zeus, the chief god, asked Proserpine, queen of the lower world, to revive Adonis. She restored him to life on condition that he should spend six months with her and six months with Aphrodite.

Now, if Adonis was a rare handsome youth, Keats, in the eye of Shelley, was a rare young poet. So he borrowed the name "Adonis", changed its spelling to "Adonais", and applied it to Keats. To keep the element of carnal love out of his elegy, he made Urania the goddess of poetry and music, and as such, mother to Keats the poet. Then he adopted the style of pastoral elegy and elevated it to the heights of the grand style.

Shelley opens his elegy with the poetic statement that he weeps over the death of Adonais who was the youngest child of Urania. The unfortunate poet died young. He was rather killed by the arrow of a bitter critic. His body lies unburied in Rome. The poet then pictures the crowd of mourners. Among them there are the poetic Dreams of Adonais. And they lament his death. Then come forward other mourners. They are Desires, Adoration, Hopes, and Fears, of the dead poet. Then aspects and powers of Nature come forward. Chief of them are Morning, thunder, and Winds. And they lament his death. Even the Ocean is restless and turns pale with grief. The sorrow has made Echo voiceless. Spring behaves as if it were autumn, and drops blooming buds as if they were dead leaves.

Misery arouses Urania from trance. And grief-stricken Urania runs to the chamber in which Adonais dead body lies in Rome. Noticing his dead body she laments his death bitterly. She says that he left the traditional path of poetry very early. The cruel critics therefore attacked him easily. Such critics fly in terror in the face of such pard-like poets as Byron. When Urania ends her lament, mountain shepherds weep over his death. The first one is the pilgrim of Eternity (i.e. Lord Byron). He is followed by a lyrist of Ireland (i.e. Thomas Moore). The third mourner is a man of weak form (i.e. Shelley himself). The fourth man is Leigh Hunt and he is silent with grief. Adonais has been killed by the poison of a critic.

Adonais is not dead. He has woken up from the dreams of life. His soul has merged in Nature. The lament thus changes to a declaration of Keat's immortality. His body rests in a grave in Rome. One can realize that the grave is the best protection from the bitter criticism of the cruel world. The universal Soul is eternal. The human soul merges in the universal Soul through Death only. So death is not a thing to be afraid of. Shelley then wishes to die and to be united with his dear friend, Keats. He also feels that the light of the Eternal Light shines over him brightly, and his own soul responds to it.

4.4.2. Critical Appreciation

"Adonais" is an elegy written by Shelley on the death of Keats who had met his tragic end at an age when his genius had not fully blossomed. The bloom whose petals, nipped before they blew died on the promise of the fruit on February 23, 1821 in Italy. Shelley who had taken a keen interest in Keats, as is shown by his letter to Keats dated 27th July 1820, was taken aback when he received information of Keats' death. The news of Keats' death reached Shelley in April of 1821, two months after the poet's death. The heart of Shelley was deeply stirred for a fellow poet who in his opinion "was capable of the greatest things," and he composed Adonais in May of 1821 paying his humble tribute to one of the inheritors of unfulfilled renown.' The elegy was published in the early part of June 1821 and immediately after its published it was hailed by a host of admiring critics and readers, as the finest expression of a poet's sympathy and grief for a fellow poet who had enriched literature by his poetic composition. Shelley was satisfied with his composition and spoke of it in flattering terms to his friends. In the latter written to Mr.

and Mrs. Gisborne, June 5, 1821 he referred to Adonais as. 'a highly wrought piece of art and perhaps better, in point of composition. Than anything I have written." In another letter to Ollier dated June 11.1821 he wrote that he considered Adonais "the least imperfect of my compositions." It was favourite with the poet and he took pride in presenting its beauties and charms to his

Shelley's letter to Keats dated 27th July, tells us about Shelley's own judgment about "Adonais" and has been upheld by all modern critics. Symonds is of the opinion that Adonais as "an elegy is only equaled in our language by Lycidas, and in the point of passionate eloquence is even superior to Milton's youthful lament for his friends." Thompson is of the view that Adonais is the most accomplished work of Shelley. "Were we asked to name the most perfect among his (Shelley's) longer efforts" says Thompson, "We should name the poem in which he lamented Keats. Seldom is the death of a poet mourned in true poetry. Not often is the singer coffined in laurel wood. Among the very few exceptions to such a rule, the greatest is Adonais," Clutton Brock in his admirable study of Shelley offers his eulogistic opinion of Adonais when he says, Adonais seems to me the most perfect poem of any length that Shelley ever wrote, because in it he found the subject most suited to his genius. It combines before or since. It is as perfect in form as in matter, for it starts with a familiar theme, and only gradually and by a natural process takes us into the un-known moving from the ancient pastoral country of poetry to Shelley's won untrodden wilderness and airy heights of throught." Sindey Coivin who has studied Keats' life and works more thoroughly than other critics was satisfied with Shelley's tribute to Keats and spoke of Adonais in his Keats in commendatory words-"As an utterance of abstract pity and indignation, Adonais is unsurpassed in literature: with its hurrying train of beautiful spectral images and the irresistible current and thrilling modulation of its verse, it is perhaps the most perfect and sympathetic effort of Shelley's art: while its strain of transcendental consolation for mortal loss contains the most lucid exposition of his philosophy."

Spenser in "Astrophel" and Milton in "Lycidas" had made successful attempts in pastoral elegy. They were inspired in their art by classical examples of pastoral elegy. Shelley directly took the hint from the Greek masters of elegy rather than from Spenser or Milton, though he has their elegies in mind while composing "Adonais". Shelley based his elegy on the Greek model and was inspired by Bion's Lament of Aphrodite for Adonais and on Bion's friend Moschus's Dirge for Bion (Epitaphim Bionis). The name Adonais is suggested by Bion's "Adonais". The opening lines of Adonais are directly in the style of Bion and the Greek pastoral poet, Theocritus, who composed a Hymn to Bion.

The form of "Adonais" is pastoral, and it can be placed in the rank of pastoral elegies, the chief of them being "Lycidas" and "Thyrsis". It may be said regarding "Adonais" that it is not saturated thoroughly with the pastoral conventions and traditions, and that there are deviations from the tradition of a pastoral elegy. The general tone of the elegy may be pastoral, since it maintains the general usage of introducing shepherds, flocks and the country atmosphere, but in the concluding part of the poem after the thirty eighth stanza, the pastoral imagery and conventions are give up and the elegy becomes a masterpiece of metaphysical and philosophical speculations. Still in order to continue the old tradition of the pastoral elegy of Bion, Moschus, Spenser and Milton, Shelley introduces the pastoral touch in the Ix stanza by speaking of "the quick Dreams" as Keats' flock, "Whom near the living streams of his young spirit he fed". Till the eighth stanza there are no

references to pastoral conventions, and we do not hear of shepherds and the country green.

The structure of the poem is thus not uniform in its pastoral setting "Adonais" can be divided into two parts. Till the 38th stanza, the subject is 'death, sorrow, and past." After the 38th stanza, the form of the poem changes into a philosophic poem, and we have 'immortality, joy, and the rapture of the things that cannot pass away as the subject o the poem. Or, to put it differently, the first part is in close tie with the ancient form of pastoralism and the second, after 38th stanza, become the vehicle of a "highly spiritualised modern thought." The first part of the poem is ancient while the second part is modern in tone. In this respect Adonais and Lycidas, stand on a footing of equality, though Lycidas us more pastoral than Adonais. "Like Milton, he transmuted the ancient pastoral form into a magnificent modern poem. And as the death of Lycidas led Milton up to the triumphant Puritanism which was the highest spiritual force of his time, time, so Shelley emerges from his sorrow into a poem of immortality,- the victory-song of Love, wherein death is swallowed up in life."

Adonais, like "Lycidas" and "Thyrsis" is an elegy of mourning and grief. The poet who writes an elegy, whether personal, impersonal or pastoral, will fail in his mission of he does not succeed in making his lament truly pathetic and touching and indulges only in a foppery of fashionable mourning. The element of grief and mourning should be present in such a manner that it may touch the chords of our hearts and move us to tears.

4.4.3. Glossary

I weep for Adonais-his is dead!: I lament the death of Adodais. By Adonais the poet means Keats.
Head!: Although our tears will not bring our dear Keats back to life.
Mighty Mother: Urania, the goddess of poetry.
Thy Son: Keats as the son of Urania.
High Capital: the city of Rome where Keats died.
The quick Dreams; living poetic fancies.
The voiceless mountains: the mountains are voiceless, because Echo does not utter its sound there.
Ruth: pity.
Blushed to annihilation; i.e. blushed to the extent of nonexistence in Adonais's body.
Portion of the loveliness: part of the Beauty of Nature.
To Rome: to the Protestant cemetery of Rome is not the grave of Keats-has been buried.
The Breath: the breath of the Supreme Spirit.
Darkl: to an unknown land.

4.5. SUMMING UP

In this unit you studied Shelley's very famous elegy "Adonais". Shelley wrote "Adonais" on the death of his dear friend John Keats. The poem is written in Spenserian stanza and is based on the *Lament for Adonais* by the Sisilian-Greek poet, Bion. The poem further attacks Keats' critics and celebrates Keats' immortality. Besides discussing "Adonais" at length, the unit also shed light on Elegy, a poetic lament for one who has died , or atleast a grave or reflective poem.

Self Assessment Questions

1. Shelley composed Adonais in memory of:

a. Coleridge b. Shakekespeare
c. Keats d. Milton

2. "Adonais" is an:

a. Elegy b. Ode
c. Sonnet d. Balled

4.6. ANSWERS TO SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

To know the answers from Q1 to Q5, read the life of Shelley given in this unit.

A6. John Keats

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4.9. TERMINAL AND MODEL QUESTIONS

1. What is theme of the poem "Adonais"?
2. Comment on the note of melancholy in Shelley's Poetry.
3. Write a note on the Nature poetry of Shelley.
4. What type of poet was Shelley? In what way did he differ from other Romantic poets?

UNIT 5 JOHN KEATS

"Ode to a Nightingale" "Ode on Grecian Urn"

5.1. INTRODUCTION

In the previous unit you read about Percy Bysshe Shelley, one of the greatest poets of the Romantic Age. You also analyzed three of his famous poems, two odes, "To a Skylark" and "Stanzas Written in Dejection- December 1818, near Naples" and a deeply moving elegy, "Adonais". In this unit you will be reading about John Keats, who along with Shelley and Byron came to be known as the second generation of Romantic poets. While analyzing this poems of Keats you will find a few similarities between him and Shelley as both saw kindred spirit in each other.

5.2. OBJECTIVE

After going through this unit you will be able to

- understand the age of Romanticism
- know about the life of John Keats
- examine Keats as a poet
- critically examine and appreciate two of his well known poems, "Ode to Nightingale" and "Ode on a Grecian Urn."

5.3. AGE OF KEATS

The Romantic period is a convenient term for describing that period in English literary history dating from 1789, the time of the French Revolution, to about 1830. The first generation of Romantic poets includes Blake, Wordsworth and Coleridge; the second includes Byron, Shelley and Keats. The 'big six', as they are often called, by no means regarded themselves as part of a unified group. 'Romanticism' was only created as a distinct movement and object of study in the later part of the nineteenth century. They were actually much divided in their political, religious and artistic beliefs, and to place Keats by, say, Byron, is to be faced with two very different poets. Nevertheless, a number of general characteristics might be seen as loosely characteristic of Romanticism. These include a valuing of feeling and emotion over reason; an interest in the investigation of the self; a focus on the imagination; a yearning towards something transcendent, beyond the ordinary world; and a rebellion against outmoded poetic and political institutions.

John Keats was a Romantic poet. It is worth starting with such an obvious remark because the word 'Romantic' has suffered a good deal of damage since it first appeared, and we need to go to some lengths in order redefine and understand it. It has come to mean something rather sloppy to most men and something rather vague tantalizing and very agreeable to most women. You may hear almost any kind of unusual courtship referred to as 'romantic' just as almost anybody's death may be called 'tragic'; most 'romantic' of all are, of course, royal courtships and marriages. Now these notions have nothing at all to d with Keats. The word itself comes from a 'romance' a medieval tale, originating often in Provence, which described the dazzling and heroic exploits of chivalry and courtly love—the elaborate ritual of medieval courtship. Keats was to a degree influenced by the first-generation Romantics, particularly Wordsworth. He admired what he saw as Wordsworth's ability to incorporate the miseries of the world

into a transcendent vision, but was often wary of what he called Wordsworth's egotistical sublime'. For Keats, the poet's function was not to impose a vision or interpretation upon the world, as he thought Wordsworth did, but rather to immerse and lose the self in what was perceived.

5.4. JOHN KEATS (1795-1827)

Keats is something of a case-history in the study of literature. Looking at biographies can be a so with Keats and, therefore, in describing his life we must be very clear when it is relevant, and when it is not.

The life of Keats has its special interest in that we can see how a poet examines his, learns it slowly and painfully, and transmutes experience into poetry.

5.4.1. Life of John Keats

Of all the great poets of the early nineteenth century, John Keats was the last born and the first to die. He was the son of Thomas Keats, a West Country head ostler in a livery stable, and was born prematurely on the 29th or 31th of October, 1795, at Finsbury, London. He was the eldest of the five children of his father-four boys, one of whom died in infancy and a girl, the youngest of all. His father, Thomas, was a shrewd, careful man of business, his mother a lively young woman fond of enjoyment. He was brought up amid surrounding by no means calculated to awaken poetic genius. Hereditary influences and family environment seemed unpromising, and it is difficult to explain the birth of a genius in a family of relatives, far or near, none of whom showed any taste for art. Keats must have been a born genius, otherwise it is not easy to explain the birth of a great poet in the family of an ordinary stable-keeper.

5.4.2. Keats' Education

At first, John and his brothers George Keats and Tom Keats were educated at a less expensive private school run by Rev. John Clarke at Enfield near London, where he remained for six years, without showing any signs of special interest in intellectual things. But, being high-spirited, affectionate and skilled in outdoor exercises, he was distinguished more for fighting than for study, and his bright, brave, generous mature, his fits of vehement passions, rapid changes of mood and extreme sensibility made him popular with masters and boys. His school and friend, Charles Cowden Clark, son of Rev. Clarke- the headmaster, said of him-"He was not merely the favourite of all, like a pet prize-fighter, for his terrible courage: but his high-mindedness, his utter unconsciousness of mean motive, his placability, his generosity wrought so general a feeling in his behalf, that I never heard a word of disapproval from anyone, superior or equal, who had known him." This was an indication of his future greatness but not in the realm of literature.

5.4.3. Keats' Interest in Literature

During his last two years at school, Keats had developed a great enthusiasm and love for literature, which remained unabated during his four years of apprenticeship, and he spent all his leisure during this period in reading books of literature and translating Virgil's *Aeneid* into English prose. Clarke's literary companionship at school and afterwards, proved very fruitful. At school, Keats devoured every book that came in his way,

specially relishing stories of the gods and goddesses of ancient Greece. He borrowed books from Clarke, read them and discussed them with him at Enfield. Once Cowden Clarke introduced him to the works of Spenser, "the poets' poet," remains with the poet. He cannot understand whether it was a vision or he was dreaming with his eyes open. That music is awake. The happiness vanishes, beauty disappears. The ode ends on a very unhappy note. The happy note is reflected in his next poem, Ode on a Grecian Urn.

5.5. WHAT IS AN ODE?

Ode (from Ancient Greek: ᾠδή ōidē) is a type of lyrical stanza. A classic ode is structured in three major parts: the strophe, the antistrophe, and the epode. Different forms such as the homostrophic ode and the irregular ode also exist. It is an elaborately structured poem praising or glorifying an event or individual, describing nature intellectually as well as emotionally.

Greek odes were originally poetic pieces accompanied by symphonic orchestras. As time passed on, they gradually became known as personal lyrical compositions whether sung (with or without musical instruments) or merely recited (always with accompaniment). The primary instruments used were the aulos and the lyre (the latter of which was the most revered instrument to the Ancient Greeks). The written ode, as it was practiced by the Romans, returned to the/ L E2 lyrical form of the Lesbian lyricists.

There are three typical forms of odes: the Pindaric, Horatian, and irregular. Pindaric odes follow the form and style of Pindar. Horatian odes follow conventions of Horace; the odes of Horace deliberately imitated the Greek lyricists such as Alcaeus and Anacreon. Odes by Catullus, as well as other poetry of Catullus, was particularly inspired by Sappho. Irregular odes are rhyming, but they do not employ the three-part form of the Pindaric ode nor the two- or four-line stanza of the Horatian ode.

English Ode

A lyrical stanza in praise of, or dedicated to someone or something which captures the poet's interest or serves as an inspiration for the ode.

An ode's lyrics can be on various themes. The earliest odes in the English language, using the word in its strict form, were the Epithalamium and Prothalamium of Edmund Spenser. In the 17th century the most important original odes in English are those of Abraham Cowley odes which had irregular patterns of line lengths and rhyme schemes, though they were iambic. The principle of Cowley's Pindariques was based on a misunderstanding of Pindar's metrical practice but was widely imitated nonetheless, with notable success by John Dryden.

With Pindar's metre being better understood in the 18th century, the fashion for Pindaric odes faded, though there are notable actual Pindaric odes by Thomas Gray, "The Progress of Poesy" and "The Bard".

"The Pindarick" of Cowley was revived around 1800 by William Wordsworth for one of his very finest poems, the Intimations of Immortality ode; irregular odes were also written by Samuel Taylor Coleridge, John Keats, and Percy Bysshe Shelley who wrote odes with regular stanza patterns. Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind", written in fourteen

line terza rima stanzas, is a major poem in the form, but perhaps the greatest odes of the 19th century were Keats's Five Great Odes of 1819 which included "Ode to a Nightingale", "Ode on Melancholy", "Ode on a Grecian Urn", "Ode to Psyche", and "To Autumn". After Keats, there have been comparatively few major odes in English. One major exception is the fourth verse of the poem "For the Fallen by Laurence Binyon" which is often known as "The Ode to the Fallen" or more simply as "The Ode".

W.H. Auden also wrote 'Ode', one of his most popular poems from his earlier career when based in London, in opposition to people's ignorance over the reality of war. In interview Auden once stated that he had intended to title the poem My Silver Age in mockery of the supposedly imperial Golden age, however chose 'Ode' as it seemed to provide a more sensitive exploration of warfare.

"Ode to a Grecian Urn", also functions as an ode to the artistic beauty the narrator is observing.

The English ode's most common rhyme scheme is ABABCDECDE.

Some of the notable practitioners of the ode are: Thomas Gray, John Keats, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, William Wordsworth, Percy Bysshe Shelley,Pablo Neruda, Dorothy Regan Drake, William Shakespeare, Thomas Nasheand John Donne.

5.6. "ODE TO A NIGHTINGALE"

My heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains
My sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk,
Or emptied some dull opiate to the drains
One minute past, and Lethe-wards had sunk:
'Tis not through envy of thy happy lot,
But being too happy in thine happiness,—
That thou, light-winged Dryad of the trees
In some melodious plot
Of beechen green, and shadows numberless,
Singest of summer in full-throated ease.

O, for a draught of vintage! that hath been
Cool'd a long age in the deep-delved earth,
Tasting of Flora and the country green,
Dance, and Provençal song, and sunburnt mirth!
O for a beaker full of the warm South,
Full of the true, the blushful Hippocrene,
With beaded bubbles winking at the brim,
And purple-stained mouth;
That I might drink, and leave the world unseen,
And with thee fade away into the forest dim:

Fade far away, dissolve, and quite forget
What thou among the leaves hast never known,
The weariness, the fever, and the fret

Here, where men sit and hear each other groan;
Where palsy shakes a few, sad, last gray hairs,
Where youth grows pale, and spectre-thin, and dies;
Where but to think is to be full of sorrow
And leaden-eyed despairs,
Where Beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes,
Or new Love pine at them beyond to-morrow.

Away! away! for I will fly to thee,
Not charioted by Bacchus and his pards,
But on the viewless wings of Poesy,
Though the dull brain perplexes and retards:
Already with thee! tender is the night,
And haply the Queen-Moon is on her throne,
Cluster'd around by all her starry Fays;
But here there is no light,
Save what from heaven is with the breezes blown
Through verdurous glooms and winding mossy ways.

I cannot see what flowers are at my feet,
Nor what soft incense hangs upon the boughs,
But, in embalmed darkness, guess each sweet
Wherewith the seasonable month endows
The grass, the thicket, and the fruit-tree wild;
White hawthorn, and the pastoral eglantine;
Fast fading violets cover'd up in leaves;
And mid-May's eldest child,
The coming musk-rose, full of dewy wine,
The murmurous haunt of flies on summer eves.

Darkling I listen; and, for many a time
I have been half in love with easeful Death,
Call'd him soft names in many a mused rhyme,
To take into the air my quiet breath;
Now more than ever seems it rich to die,
To cease upon the midnight with no pain,
While thou art pouring forth thy soul abroad
In such an ecstasy!
Still wouldst thou sing, and I have ears in vain—
To thy high requiem become a sod.

Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird!
No hungry generations tread thee down;
The voice I hear this passing night was heard
In ancient days by emperor and clown:
Perhaps the self-same song that found a path
Through the sad heart of Ruth, when, sick for home,
She stood in tears amid the alien corn;

The same that oft-times hath
Charm'd magic casements, opening on the foam
Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.

Forlorn! the very word is like a bell
To toll me back from thee to my sole self!
Adieu! the fancy cannot cheat so well
As she is fam'd to do, deceiving elf.
Adieu! adieu! thy plaintive anthem fades
Past the near meadows, over the still stream,
Up the hill-side; and now 'tis buried deep
In the next valley-glades:
Was it a vision, or a waking dream?
Fled is that music:—Do I wake or sleep?

The poem suggests a contrast between the mortal state and that world of perfect beauty which the nightingale's song represents. It is this ideal world which Keats wishes to reach, firs, with the aid of wine, then through poetic imagination. For a moment the poet mistrusts the power of fancy, but the next moment he finds himself where he would be listening to the imagined song in the imagined woodland and divining in the darkness by that gift whereby his mind is a match for nature, all the secrets of the season and the night. Gradually, the poet passes on to contrast the transitoriness of human life, meaning the life of the individual, with the permanence of the song-bird's life, meaning the life of the type. Such thoughts lead him off into the age whence he brings back those memorable touches of far-off Bible and legendary romance. Finally, catching up his own last word 'forlorn' with an abrupt change of mood and meaning, the poet returns to daily consciousness.

5.6.1. Substance of the Poem

The poem starts with a happy note. The poet is happy in the happiness of the nightingale as the bird is singing of summer at her full-throated ease. It gives as impression to the poet that the world of the nightingale must be free from the taints of misery and pains. He wants a draught of vintage, some old wine so that he may forget all that the nightingale does not know. A draught of wine cooled for long in deep-delved earth from the southern parts of France will have great strength. It will transport the poet into the valley of flowers, the land of happy life where the peasants and simple folks sing, and dance and enjoy themselves in the bright and genial sunlight. He wants to drink so that he may forget the miserable world of mankind.

Here is a contrast between the actual and the imaginary. The imaginary world of the nightingale is free from, all that the actual is full of. The world of man is full of 'weariness, the fever, and the fret'. Here the people sit and hear each other groan. They tell tales of misfortunes to one another. Disease and death overtake one, even a young man grows pale and dies. Keats presents a graphic picture of the world of men. It is full of pain and suffering. It is place where men sit and hear each other complain against the miseries of life. They suffer untold miseries. People die in their youth. Beautiful women

cannot maintain their beauty, so no one will love them beyond the next day. That is why he wants to leave this world and forget all the pain of life. He would like to have a cup of good old wine; then he changes his idea and now he would go to the forest where the bird sings with the help of his power of imagination. The dull brain perplexes and retards but the poet feels that he is already with the nightingale. Now he is there where the bird sings.

It is a dense forest there. Tender is the night and the moon surrounded by stats shines bright in the sky. There is no light where the bird sings. And yet some light comes to the ground through the leaves and thick trunks of the trees when they are shaken by the breezes. The poet cannot see what flowers grows there but he has got very keen senses and by the smell, just the smell, of the flower he can easily guess what flower must be growing and blooming at a particular tree. He can easily distinguish the sweet fragrance of various flowers growing on the grass, the thicket, the wild fruit tree, white hawthorn and the pastoral eglantine. He can clearly smell the fragrance of the musk-rose which is full of dewy wine; bees hover over it in large numbers during the summer evenings.

The poet goes on listening to the song of the bird in the darkness and feels extremely delighted. For many a times he expressed a desire to die. Now he finds it an appropriate time to breathe his last. Now, suppose the poet dies; the nightingale will still go on singing. He will become a sod, a dead body and the song of the bird will become a mass, a requiem for his soul. The song will continue. Hungry generations of human beings cannot kill the bird; man will come and man will go but the song of the bird will go on forever. The king and the clown, the high and low, all have been listening to this song through the ages. It was this very song that soothed the widow Ruth when she stood in an alien country working with her mother-in-law. It was this very sing that soothed the princess who was imprisoned in some magic castle which stood on the sea- shore in some fairy land forlorn. The very word 'forlorn' bring the poet back to his own solitary self. He finds that he himself is all alone in the world.

It was just an illusion that he heard the song of the bird and felt himself transported to a land free from sorrow and suffering. It was an illusion: now it is gone. One cannot escape the misery of life.

5.6.2. Critical Appreciation

The Ode to a Nightingale is one of the best odes of John Keats, the great Romantic poet of the younger generation. It has all the qualities of the best of poetry. It is a picture of human life with its pleasure and pain, the real and the ideal, and mortality and immortality. It was written at a time when after the death of his younger brother Tom the poet stayed with his friend Charles Brown. The conditions of the life of the poet were painful. The younger brother had recently breathed his last in the lap of the poet himself. His beloved was there and he suffered jealous anguish at her hands. Then, the monetary issues were too much with him and the guardians appointed by his grandmother were very strict. There was a desire to escape the reality of life with so much of sorrow around. He created an imaginary world-the world of the nightingale.

The poem is basically structured around the contrast between the poet, who is earthbound, and the bird, which is free. A related opposition is that between the mortal world, full of sorrow and marked by transience, and the world of the nightingale, marked by joy and immortality. One of the points that has troubled many critics is this claim of

immortality for the nightingale: 'Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird! (line 61). The nightingale is, after all, a natural creature. It has been suggested that Keats is referring not to the individual bird, but to the species. This solution has been strongly criticized, however, as humanity, the 'hungry generations' (line 62), could also be credited with such immortality as a species. An alternative suggestion is that the nightingale addressed in stanza 7 is purely symbolic, is this solution more convincing? Of so, what does the nightingale symbolize? A further interpretation might be that, since the nightingale sings only at night and was traditionally thought of, therefore, as invisible, it, through its 'disembodied' song, transcends the material world (so in that sense is immortal); and here Keats is talking of 'embalmed darkness', an atmosphere of death.

Language is effectively used to create mood. In the opening of the poem, for example, a sense of sluggish weightiness is suggested by the heavy thudding alliterative'd', 'p', and 'm' when Keats describes his own dull ache. Compare this with the effects created in the second half of the stanza by the light assonantal sounds in such words as 'light' and 'Dryad' and the sensuous assonantal sounds of 'beechen', 'green' and 'ease' when Keats turns to the joy of the nightingale. Compare the vitality and the jubilant tempo of stanza 2 with the dull heaviness and monotony in stanza 3. How are these different effects created? Consider, for a start, the use of repetition, with devices like parallelism and anaphora. There is a dense concentration of sense impressions in this ode, and a frequent use of synaesthesia. In stanza 1, for example, the 'plot' where the bird sings is itself 'melodious' and the song contains 'summer': the visual evokes the aural and the aural the visual. In stanza 2, Keats conveys the taste of wine with reference to colour, action, song and sensation. When Keats says, in stanza 5, 'I cannot see what flowers are at my feet, / Nor what soft incense hangs upon the boughs', the suggestion that the incense could be seen emphasizes the density and headiness of the perfume: it is so strong it seems visible, tangible.

5.6.3. Glossary

Tempe: a valley in Thessalys
Arcady: Arcadia, district in Greece, associated with pastoral simplicity and happiness
Attic: from Attica, or Athens
Brede: embroidery or decoration
Unrvish'd: unaffected by the ravages of time.

5.7. ODE ON A GRECIAN URN

Thou still unravish'd bride of quietness,
Thou foster-child of silence and slow time,
Sylvan historian, who canst thus express
A flowery tale more sweetly than our rhyme:
What leaf-fring'd legend haunts about thy shape
Of deities or mortals, or of both,
In Tempe or the dales of Arcady?
What men or gods are these? What maidens loth?
What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape?
What pipes and timbrels? What wild ecstasy?

Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard
Are sweeter; therefore, ye soft pipes, play on;
Not to the sensual ear, but, more endear'd,
Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone:
Fair youth, beneath the trees, thou canst not leave
Thy song, nor ever can those trees be bare;
Bold Lover, never, never canst thou kiss,
Though winning near the goal yet, do not grieve;
She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss,
For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair!

Ah, happy, happy boughs! that cannot shed
Your leaves, nor ever bid the Spring adieu;
And, happy melodist, unwearied,
For ever piping songs for ever new;
More happy love! more happy, happy love!
For ever warm and still to be enjoy'd,
For ever panting, and for ever young;
All breathing human passion far above,
That leaves a heart high-sorrowful and cloy'd,
A burning forehead, and a parching tongue.

Who are these coming to the sacrifice?
To what green altar, O mysterious priest,
Lead'st thou that heifer lowing at the skies,
And all her silken flanks with garlands drest?
What little town by river or sea shore,
Or mountain-built with peaceful citadel,
Is emptied of this folk, this pious morn?
And, little town, thy streets for evermore
Will silent be; and not a soul to tell
Why thou art desolate, can e'er return.

O Attic shape! Fair attitude! with brede
Of marble men and maidens overwrought,
With forest branches and the trodden weed;
Thou, silent form, dost tease us out of thought
As doth eternity: Cold Pastoral!
When old age shall this generation waste,
Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe
Than ours, a friend to man, to whom thou say'st,
"Beauty is truth, truth beauty,—that is all
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know."

Keats loved Greek art, painting and literature so much so that he came to be known as a Greek. The Greek epics of Homer were dear to him and so were the plays of Greek dramatists. He was fond of studying Greek legends and seeing pieces of Greek sculpture

which he found in the British Museum. He saw many vases and urns there. When he wrote this poem in 1819, he did not have any particular urn in his mind. He saw many pieces of marble with different patterns on them. It is his imaginative power which shaped the poem. It seems that there was a particular urn which the poet saw in some museum of collection in. it is the creative imagination of Keats that shaped the Urn and made it a work of beauty – a thing of Beauty and a Joy forever.

Ode on a Grecian Urn was composed in the spring of 1819. No single work of the ancient Greek times can be said to have inspired this poem. Lord Elgin had brought a collection of marble pieces from Athens in 1812 and these pieces were known as 'Elgin Marbles' and were preserved in the British Museum. Keats used to go to see these pieces. They were just fascinating to him and presented some patterns, design, figures and decorations bringing out the beauty of the art of the maker as well as some aspect of the rich Greek life. The imaginative brain of Keats gave a shape and unity to the different pieces and the Urn that comes to us in the poem is an organic whole, unique in its design and beauty since it tells a tale of the ancient Greek life in the most pictorial way. We read the poem and see pictures from Greek life.

5.7.1. Substance of the Poem

Keats addresses the Grecian Urn and calls it a bride of quietness. Then, it is the foster-child of silence and slow time. The Urn becomes a historian of the pastoral life of the ancient people of Greece; it tells a flowery tale in the most visual way. The poet sees different designs and pictures on it and many questions arise in his mind about the men and women painted on it. They are gods and goddesses or just human being? and to which country do they belong? There are maidens and lovers. The lovers are chasing the maids and they are trying to escape. The poet is struck with wonder at the sight of these vital figures of men and women, of pipers and trees. All these things are presented on the Urn and the poet is wonder-struck to see these things.

There is a figure of a piper on the Urn. He is piping songs but these songs are not audible to the ear. One will enjoy these songs more than one enjoys the songs which the ear hears. The piper on the Urn sings songs not to the physical ear but to the soul. The music enters the soul of the person who sees the piper piping songs. The songs of the piper will always be fresh and new to whosoever sees the piper; he will enjoy the sweetest of sounds. The young man will ever chase his beloved; he is just about to kiss her but he cannot kiss and yet he should not worry she will always be fair and the love will always be warm.

The bought of the trees presented there are very lucky. They present a very happy picture as they will be fresh for ever; spring will always be there; no leaf will ever fall. Art has made them eternal. Art has conferred permanence on them. The piper will go on singing for ever; he will never be tried of his piping and singing. The love that is depicted on the Urn is warm and eternal; it is far above the mortal love of mortal human beings. The mortal love causes headache with its satiety: it results in pains and sufferings. The love of the persons on the Urn in warm and fresh and it will remain so for ever.

The artist has presented a scene of animal sacrifice. There is a priest and he is leading a heifer to the altar somewhere in the green forest. It seems to be some festive occasion. The young cow is well-decorated for the sacrifice but she is looking towards heavens and crying for her life. All the residents from some town or village have come to the

procession which moves towards the temple. Nobody can return to the village to tell why the village is desolate. All have been captured by the artist on the Urn and they have become immortal through the efforts of the artist.

The poet appreciates the attitude of the Greek people to life. They loved beautiful things and led a life of love and pleasant ceremonies. The artist captures the panorama of life on the Urn. The lover is there, the beloved is there. There are green trees and the grass that grows on the ground and is trodden by feet. The Urn, the historian of the pastoral life, quietly continues its message through the ages. When this generation goes out, the new one will come; it will have its own sorrows and sufferings: the Urn will be friend to it also. It will give the same message generation after generation: beauty is truth, truth is beauty.

5.7.2. Central Idea

The central idea of the poem is the belief that whereas the brief experience of beauty is fleeting, the embodiment of the same experience in art is a source of joy which is eternal. Human life and happiness may be brief, yet art may enshrine them with an ideal beauty that outlives the years. The figures on the Urn and all they symbolized are gone, but art has given them a lasting durability and so links the ages together. The Grecian Urn is the happiest stroke of invention, the sudden and surprising detachment of beauty from the flow of time and change. In the words of Sidney Colvin, the main theme of the poem is the vital difference between life, which pays for its unique prerogative of reality by satiety and decay, and art, which is forfeiting reality, gains in exchange permanence of beauty, and the power to charm by imagined experience, even richer than the real.

The central idea has also been expressed in the last stanza of the poem – 'Beauty is Truth, Truth Beauty'. According to Keats, Beauty and Truth are not two separate things, but one and the same thing seen from two different aspects; what is beautiful must be true and what is true must be beautiful. Beauty in art or ideal beauty is the external truth.

5.7.3. Critical Appreciation

This poem was inspired by a collection of Greek sculpture which Keats was in the British museum. Partly, perhaps, the inspiration for the poem was derived from a marble urn which belonged to Lord Holland. In giving us the imagery f the carvings on the urn, Keats was not thinking of a single urn but of Greek sculpture in general. Keats had a native sympathy for, and a natural affinity with, the Greek mind. This ode shows the full force of Hellenic influence acting on a temperament essentially romantic.

A striking quality of Keats's entire poetry is fully revealed in this ode. Keats has a genius for drawing vivid and concrete pictures mostly with a sensuous appeal. The whole of this poem is a series of such pictures—passionate men and gods chasing reluctant maidens, the flute-players playing their ecstatic music, the fair youth trying to kiss his beloved, the happy branches of the trees, the worshippers going to a place of worship in order to offer a sacrifice with a mysterious priest to lead them, a little town which will always remain desolate-these are picture which Keats vividly brings before our minds. The passion of men and gods, and the reluctance of maidens to be caught of seized is beautifully depicted in the following two lines:

What men of gods are these? What maidens loth?
What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape?

Here is the picture of a bold lover trying to get a kiss which will never materialize:

Bold Lover, never, never canst thou kiss,
Though winning near the goal-

The ecstasy of the passion of youthful love is depicted in the following lines:

More happy! More happy, happy love!
For ever warm and still to be enjoy'd
For ever panting and for ever young.

An important idea in this ode is that, art is superior to real life in certain respects. The trees depicted on the urn will always enjoy spring. The flute-players shown on the urn will never tire of playing tunes which are ever new. The passion of the lovers depicted on the urn will never decline, and the beauty of the beloved will never fade. Heard melodies are sweet but those unheard are sweeter. The music of the flute-players depicted on the urn has a sweetness which music in real life can never possess.

The central thought of this ode is the unity of truth and Beauty. Beauty and truth, says Keats, are not two separate things. They are one and the same thing seen from two different aspects. What is beautiful must be true, and what is true must be beautiful. There can be no question of beauty being separated from Truth. Every piece of art which is based on truth or reality must be beautiful; and every beautiful work of art must have a hard core of truth in it. Thus Keats seems to reject the school of ornament for ornament's sake on the other. Keats may have no right to frame a law for the artist, but the idea contained in the final stanza of the poem may justly be regarded as his main contribution to speculative though.

This ode represents the maturity and the height of Keats's poetic power. His poetry is essentially imagination. The first three stanzas, especially, have a passionate quality about them. Lines already quoted above in a different context amply show that. This ode is written in a regular stanza of ten lines, consisting of a quatrain and a sestet. Thus it does not follow the pattern of the long unequal stanzas of the Ode to Psyche. Like most of his other poem, this ode shows Keats's genius for coining original, striking, and appropriate phrases. "Sylvan historian", "leaf-fringed legend", "a heart high-sorrowful and cloy'd, "Cold pastoral", and "Fair attitude" are some of the examples: while the statement of a profound fact, an expression which is one of the most often quoted from English poetry.

5.7.4. Glossary

Lethe-wards (Greek myth): Lethe is one of the rivers of Hades, the dead are obliged to drink form it in order that they may forget everything said and done when alive.
Dryad: a tree nymph.
Hippocrene (Greek myth): the fountain of the Muses on Mount Helicon and therefore associated with poetic inspiration, here the term is used to suggest red wine as another source of inspiration.
Bacchus and his Pards: (Roman myth) the god of wine, the Pards are the leopards which draw his chariot.

5.8. RELATED LITERARY TERMS

Negative Capability: Keats coined and used the term Negative capability to discuss the state in which we are "capable of being in uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts without any irritable reaching after fact & reason ...[Being] content with half knowledge" where one trusts in the heart's perceptions.

Sensuous: A critical term characterizing writing that plays on the various senses of the reader. For example, Keat's "Ode to a Nightingale" has various images appealing to the senses of sight, touch, taste, smell and hearing, is a sensuous poem. The term should not be confused with "sensual," which usually denotes overemphasis on the passion of physical love.

Synaesthesia: The description of a sense impression in terms more appropriate to a different sense; the mixing of sense impression. Keats makes particularly effective use of this in stanza of "Ode to a Nightingale".

5.9. SUMMING UP

To appreciate Keats' poetry aright, it is necessary to understand his idea of poetry and its functions. His views regarding poetry were diametrically opposed to those of Wordsworth. According to Wordsworth, instruction is the end of poetry and every great poet must be a teacher. Keats lodged an emphatic protest against this didacticism in poetry. "We hate poetry that has a palpable design on us," he declared. Poetry, according to him, should not serve as a medium for preaching philosophical , religious , social and political ideas. It should not be an instrument for propaganda. Poetry, as a thing of beauty, should be an end of itself. A poet, according to him takes delight in poetic creation and should write poetry for its own sake. And this is what he thinks about poetry. That thinking makes him different from other poets.

Self Assessment Questions

1. John Keats belongs to:

a. 19th century b. 18th century

c. 16th century d. 17th century

2. Which of the following poems was not written by Keats?

a. "Ode to Nightingale" b. " Lamia"

c. "Ode on a Grecian Urn" d. "Cenci"

5.10. ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGESS

To know the answers read the life of Keats and introduction of the both odes.

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5.13. TERMINAL AND MODEL QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the style of John Keats.
2. What is the subject- matter of the poem 'Ode to a Nightangle'?
3. Discuss the subject and theme of the poem 'Ode on a Grecian Urn'.
4. Write a note on attitude of John Keats towards Nature.

UNIT 6 JOHN KEATS

"THE EVE OF SAINT AGNES"

6.1. INTRODUCTION

As the previous unit was on Keats, you must have by now developed an idea about the poet. You read two of his great odes namely, 'Ode to a Nightingale' and 'Ode on a Grecian Urn', which are two very popular odes by Keats. In this unit you will be reading of his one long romantic poem 'Eve of St. Agnes', through which he fulfilled his own desire.In the biographical section on Keats you read that Keats had a love affair with Fanny Browne. Fanny also liked him very much but due to some unavoidable circumstances they could not get each other. Keats took help of this poem to fulfill his earnest desire.

6.2. OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit you will be able to

- understand the Age of Romanticism
- know about the life of John Keats
- examine Keats as a poet and learn something about his poetic style
- critically examine and appreciate his long romantic poem, "Eve of St. Agnes."

6.3. JOHN KEATS, THE POET

Of the qualities that made Keats great and distinguished him from his great contemporaries, the first is the disinterested love of beauty. He grasped the essential oneness of beauty and truth. His creed did not mean beauty of form alone. His ideal was the Greek ideal of beauty inward and outward, the perfect soul of verse as well as the perfect form. And, precisely because he held this ideal, he was free from the wish to preach.

Shelley expressed the opinion that "Keats was Greek." Indeed, Keats was unmistakably a representative of Greek thought, in a sense in which Wordsworth and Coleridge and even Shelley were not. The Greek spirit came to Keats through literature, through sculpture, through an innate tendency, and it is under Hellenic influence as a rule that he gives of his best.

Keats was one of the supreme poets of nature. To Wordsworth Nature is a living with power to influence man for good or ill. Keats neither gives a moral life to Nature, as Wordsworth did, nor attempts to pass beyond her familiar manifestation, as Shelley did. The world of Nature that he paints is rarely a word that we know. But in Keats's Nature poetry, realism or the quest for truth informs every detail. He is the predecessor of the of the Tennysonian school because all his Nature-poetry is based on exact knowledge, and the knowledge of a man deliberately observing and storing up the minutest details of what he sees.

Keats was a great lover of Middle Ages. He responded more than any other poet to the spell of medieval romance. He was not interested in the political or social condition of his age nor did he dream of the Golden Age of man. He was a more or less a poet of escape, an idealist. The Middle Ages have always exercised a special charm on poets by virtue of

their chivalry, romance, knight-errantry, supernatural beliefs, etc. Keats, who was chiefly a poet of imagination without much contact with reality, was naturally fascinated by the charm of the middle Ages. He pays his tribute to the Middle Ages in "The Eve of St. Agnes", "The Eve of St. Mark", "La Belle Dame Sans Mercy", and "Isabella."

Sensuousness is the paramount quality of Keats's poetical genius. Keats is pre-eminently the poet of the senses and their delights. No one has catered to and gratified the five human senses (touch, taste, smell, sight and hearing) to the same extent as Keats. He always selects the objects of his description and imagery with a keen eye on their sensuous appeal. This sensuousness is the principal charm of his poetry. Sometimes this sensuousness deteriorates into sensuality. In other words, Keats often shows a tendency to dwell too much upon the charms of feminine body and refers to the lips, cheeks, and breasts a little more than it necessary.

Keats is one of the greatest word-painters in English poetry. The pictorial quality in his poetical works stands above all its other qualities. Picture follows in his poetical work stands above all its other qualities. Picture follows picture in quick succession in his poems and each picture is remarkable for its vividness and minuteness of detail. While giving us the pictures of inanimate objects, Keats often invests them with life the power to feel, see and think so as to make his pictures more vivid. He tells of dead and senseless things in terms of life, movement and feeling. The concreteness of Keats's images impresses them on our minds. Many of these images were drawn from his own observation of English woods and gardens, sea-side and brook side; and he is one of the most enthusiastic of poets in depicting these scenes.

6.4. "THE EVE OF SAINT AGNES"

St. Agnes' Eve—Ah, bitter chill it was!
The owl, for all his feathers, was a-cold;
The hare limp'd trembling through the frozen grass,
And silent was the flock in woolly fold:
Numb were the Beadsman's fingers, while he told
His rosary, and while his frosted breath,
Like pious incense from a censer old,
Seem'd taking flight for heaven, without a death,
Past the sweet Virgin's picture, while his prayer he saith.

His prayer he saith, this patient, holy man;
Then takes his lamp, and riseth from his knees,
And back returneth, meagre, barefoot, wan,
Along the chapel aisle by slow degrees:
The sculptur'd dead, on each side, seem to freeze,
Emprison'd in black, purgatorial rails:
Knights, ladies, praying in dumb orat'ries,
He passeth by; and his weak spirit fails
To think how they may ache in icy hoods and mails.

Northward he turneth through a little door,

And scarce three steps, ere Music's golden tongue
Flatter'd to tears this aged man and poor;
But no—already had his deathbell rung;
The joys of all his life were said and sung:
His was harsh penance on St. Agnes' Eve:
Another way he went, and soon among
Rough ashes sat he for his soul's reprieve,
And all night kept awake, for sinners' sake to grieve.

That ancient Beadsman heard the prelude soft;
And so it chanc'd, for many a door was wide,
From hurry to and fro. Soon, up aloft,
The silver, snarling trumpets 'gan to chide:
The level chambers, ready with their pride,
Were glowing to receive a thousand guests:
The carved angels, ever eager-eyed,
Star'd, where upon their heads the cornice rests,
With hair blown back, and wings put cross-wise on their breasts.

At length burst in the argent revelry,
With plume, tiara, and all rich array,
Numerous as shadows haunting faerily
The brain, new stuff'd, in youth, with triumphs gay
Of old romance. These let us wish away,
And turn, sole-thoughted, to one Lady there,
Whose heart had brooded, all that wintry day,
On love, and wing'd St. Agnes' saintly care,
As she had heard old dames full many times declare.

They told her how, upon St. Agnes' Eve,
Young virgins might have visions of delight,
And soft adorings from their loves receive
Upon the honey'd middle of the night,
If ceremonies due they did aright;
As, supperless to bed they must retire,
And couch supine their beauties, lily white;
Nor look behind, nor sideways, but require
Of Heaven with upward eyes for all that they desire.

Full of this whim was thoughtful Madeline:
The music, yearning like a God in pain,
She scarcely heard: her maiden eyes divine,
Fix'd on the floor, saw many a sweeping train
Pass by—she heeded not at all: in vain
Came many a tiptoe, amorous cavalier,
And back retir'd; not cool'd by high disdain,
But she saw not: her heart was otherwhere:
She sigh'd for Agnes' dreams, the sweetest of the year.

She danc'd along with vague, regardless eyes,
Anxious her lips, her breathing quick and short:
The hallow'd hour was near at hand: she sighs
Amid the timbrels, and the throng'd resort
Of whisperers in anger, or in sport;
'Mid looks of love, defiance, hate, and scorn,
Hoodwink'd with faery fancy; all amort,
Save to St. Agnes and her lambs unshorn,
And all the bliss to be before to-morrow morn.

So, purposing each moment to retire,
She linger'd still. Meantime, across the moors,
Had come young Porphyro, with heart on fire
For Madeline. Beside the portal doors,
Buttress'd from moonlight, stands he, and implores
All saints to give him sight of Madeline,
But for one moment in the tedious hours,
That he might gaze and worship all unseen;
Perchance speak, kneel, touch, kiss—in sooth such things have been.

He ventures in: let no buzz'd whisper tell:
All eyes be muffled, or a hundred swords
Will storm his heart, Love's fev'rous citadel:
For him, those chambers held barbarian hordes,
Hyena foemen, and hot-blooded lords,
Whose very dogs would execrations howl
Against his lineage: not one breast affords
Him any mercy, in that mansion foul,
Save one old beldame, weak in body and in soul.

Ah, happy chance! the aged creature came,
Shuffling along with ivory-headed wand,
To where he stood, hid from the torch's flame,
Behind a broad half-pillar, far beyond
The sound of merriment and chorus bland:
He startled her; but soon she knew his face,
And grasp'd his fingers in her palsied hand,
Saying, "Mercy, Porphyro! hie thee from this place;
They are all here to-night, the whole blood-thirsty race!

"Get hence! get hence! there's dwarfish Hildebrand;
He had a fever late, and in the fit
He cursed thee and thine, both house and land:
Then there's that old Lord Maurice, not a whit
More tame for his gray hairs—Alas me! flit!
Flit like a ghost away."—"Ah, Gossip dear,
We're safe enough; here in this arm-chair sit,

And tell me how"—"Good Saints! not here, not here;
Follow me, child, or else these stones will be thy bier."

He follow'd through a lowly arched way,
Brushing the cobwebs with his lofty plume,
And as she mutter'd "Well-a—well-a-day!"
He found him in a little moonlight room,
Pale, lattic'd, chill, and silent as a tomb.
"Now tell me where is Madeline," said he,
"O tell me, Angela, by the holy loom
Which none but secret sisterhood may see,
When they St. Agnes' wool are weaving piously."

"St. Agnes! Ah! it is St. Agnes' Eve—
Yet men will murder upon holy days:
Thou must hold water in a witch's sieve,
And be liege-lord of all the Elves and Fays,
To venture so: it fills me with amaze
To see thee, Porphyro!—St. Agnes' Eve!
God's help! my lady fair the conjuror plays
This very night: good angels her deceive!
But let me laugh awhile, I've mickle time to grieve."

Feebly she laugheth in the languid moon,
While Porphyro upon her face doth look,
Like puzzled urchin on an aged crone
Who keepeth clos'd a wond'rous riddle-book,
As spectacled she sits in chimney nook.
But soon his eyes grew brilliant, when she told
His lady's purpose; and he scarce could brook
Tears, at the thought of those enchantments cold,
And Madeline asleep in lap of legends old.

Sudden a thought came like a full-blown rose,
Flushing his brow, and in his pained heart
Made purple riot: then doth he propose
A stratagem, that makes the beldame start:
"A cruel man and impious thou art:
Sweet lady, let her pray, and sleep, and dream
Alone with her good angels, far apart
From wicked men like thee. Go, go!—I deem
Thou canst not surely be the same that thou didst seem."

"I will not harm her, by all saints I swear,"
Quoth Porphyro: "O may I ne'er find grace
When my weak voice shall whisper its last prayer,
If one of her soft ringlets I displace,
Or look with ruffian passion in her face:

Good Angela, believe me by these tears;
Or I will, even in a moment's space,
Awake, with horrid shout, my foemen's ears,
And beard them, though they be more fang'd than wolves and bears."

"Ah! why wilt thou affright a feeble soul?
A poor, weak, palsy-stricken, churchyard thing,
Whose passing-bell may ere the midnight toll;
Whose prayers for thee, each morn and evening,
Were never miss'd."—Thus plaining, doth she bring
A gentler speech from burning Porphyro;
So woful, and of such deep sorrowing,
That Angela gives promise she will do
Whatever he shall wish, betide her weal or woe.

Which was, to lead him, in close secrecy,
Even to Madeline's chamber, and there hide
Him in a closet, of such privacy
That he might see her beauty unespy'd,
And win perhaps that night a peerless bride,
While legion'd faeries pac'd the coverlet,
And pale enchantment held her sleepy-ey'd.
Never on such a night have lovers met,
Since Merlin paid his Demon all the monstrous debt.

"It shall be as thou wishest," said the Dame:
"All cates and dainties shall be stored there
Quickly on this feast-night: by the tambour frame
Her own lute thou wilt see: no time to spare,
For I am slow and feeble, and scarce dare
On such a catering trust my dizzy head.
Wait here, my child, with patience; kneel in prayer
The while: Ah! thou must needs the lady wed,
Or may I never leave my grave among the dead."

So saying, she hobbled off with busy fear.
The lover's endless minutes slowly pass'd;
The dame return'd, and whisper'd in his ear
To follow her; with aged eyes aghast
From fright of dim espial. Safe at last,
Through many a dusky gallery, they gain
The maiden's chamber, silken, hush'd, and chaste;
Where Porphyro took covert, pleas'd amain.
His poor guide hurried back with agues in her brain.

Her falt'ring hand upon the balustrade,
Old Angela was feeling for the stair,
When Madeline, St. Agnes' charmed maid,

Rose, like a mission'd spirit, unaware:
With silver taper's light, and pious care,
She turn'd, and down the aged gossip led
To a safe level matting. Now prepare,
Young Porphyro, for gazing on that bed;
She comes, she comes again, like ring-dove fray'd and fled.

Out went the taper as she hurried in;
Its little smoke, in pallid moonshine, died:
She clos'd the door, she panted, all akin
To spirits of the air, and visions wide:
No uttered syllable, or, woe betide!
But to her heart, her heart was voluble,
Paining with eloquence her balmy side;
As though a tongueless nightingale should swell
Her throat in vain, and die, heart-stifled, in her dell.

A casement high and triple-arch'd there was,
All garlanded with carven imag'ries
Of fruits, and flowers, and bunches of knot-grass,
And diamonded with panes of quaint device,
Innumerable of stains and splendid dyes,
As are the tiger-moth's deep-damask'd wings;
And in the midst, 'mong thousand heraldries,
And twilight saints, and dim emblazonings,
A shielded scutcheon blush'd with blood of queens and kings.

Full on this casement shone the wintry moon,
And threw warm gules on Madeline's fair breast,
As down she knelt for heaven's grace and boon;
Rose-bloom fell on her hands, together prest,
And on her silver cross soft amethyst,
And on her hair a glory, like a saint:
She seem'd a splendid angel, newly drest,
Save wings, for heaven:—Porphyro grew faint:
She knelt, so pure a thing, so free from mortal taint.

Anon his heart revives: her vespers done,
Of all its wreathed pearls her hair she frees;
Unclasps her warmed jewels one by one;
Loosens her fragrant boddice; by degrees
Her rich attire creeps rustling to her knees:
Half-hidden, like a mermaid in sea-weed,
Pensive awhile she dreams awake, and sees,
In fancy, fair St. Agnes in her bed,
But dares not look behind, or all the charm is fled.

Soon, trembling in her soft and chilly nest,

In sort of wakeful swoon, perplex'd she lay,
Until the poppied warmth of sleep oppress'd
Her soothed limbs, and soul fatigued away;
Flown, like a thought, until the morrow-day;
Blissfully haven'd both from joy and pain;
Clasp'd like a missal where swart Paynims pray;
Blinded alike from sunshine and from rain,
As though a rose should shut, and be a bud again.

Stol'n to this paradise, and so entranced,
Porphyro gaz'd upon her empty dress,
And listen'd to her breathing, if it chanced
To wake into a slumberous tenderness;
Which when he heard, that minute did he bless,
And breath'd himself: then from the closet crept,
Noiseless as fear in a wide wilderness,
And over the hush'd carpet, silent, stept,
And 'tween the curtains peep'd, where, lo!—how fast she slept.

Then by the bed-side, where the faded moon
Made a dim, silver twilight, soft he set
A table, and, half anguish'd, threw thereon
A cloth of woven crimson, gold, and jet:—
O for some drowsy Morphean amulet!
The boisterous, midnight, festive clarion,
The kettle-drum, and far-heard clarinet,
Affray his ears, though but in dying tone:—
The hall door shuts again, and all the noise is gone.

And still she slept an azure-lidded sleep,
In blanched linen, smooth, and lavender'd,
While he forth from the closet brought a heap
Of candied apple, quince, and plum, and gourd;
With jellies soother than the creamy curd,
And lucent syrops, tinct with cinnamon;
Manna and dates, in argosy transferr'd
From Fez; and spiced dainties, every one,
From silken Samarcand to cedar'd Lebanon.

These delicates he heap'd with glowing hand
On golden dishes and in baskets bright
Of wreathed silver: sumptuous they stand
In the retired quiet of the night,
Filling the chilly room with perfume light.—
"And now, my love, my seraph fair, awake!
Thou art my heaven, and I thine eremite:
Open thine eyes, for meek St. Agnes' sake,
Or I shall drowse beside thee, so my soul doth ache."

Thus whispering, his warm, unnerved arm
Sank in her pillow. Shaded was her dream
By the dusk curtains:—'twas a midnight charm
Impossible to melt as iced stream:
The lustrous salvers in the moonlight gleam;
Broad golden fringe upon the carpet lies:
It seem'd he never, never could redeem
From such a stedfast spell his lady's eyes;
So mus'd awhile, entoil'd in woofed phantasies.

Awakening up, he took her hollow lute,—
Tumultuous,—and, in chords that tenderest be,
He play'd an ancient ditty, long since mute,
In Provence call'd, "La belle dame sans mercy":
Close to her ear touching the melody;—
Wherewith disturb'd, she utter'd a soft moan:
He ceas'd—she panted quick—and suddenly
Her blue affrayed eyes wide open shone:
Upon his knees he sank, pale as smooth-sculptured stone.

Her eyes were open, but she still beheld,
Now wide awake, the vision of her sleep:
There was a painful change, that nigh expell'd
The blisses of her dream so pure and deep
At which fair Madeline began to weep,
And moan forth witless words with many a sigh;
While still her gaze on Porphyro would keep;
Who knelt, with joined hands and piteous eye,
Fearing to move or speak, she look'd so dreamingly.

"Ah, Porphyro!" said she, "but even now
Thy voice was at sweet tremble in mine ear,
Made tuneable with every sweetest vow;
And those sad eyes were spiritual and clear:
How chang'd thou art! how pallid, chill, and drear!
Give me that voice again, my Porphyro,
Those looks immortal, those complainings dear!
Oh leave me not in this eternal woe,
For if thy diest, my Love, I know not where to go."

Beyond a mortal man impassion'd far
At these voluptuous accents, he arose
Ethereal, flush'd, and like a throbbing star
Seen mid the sapphire heaven's deep repose;
Into her dream he melted, as the rose
Blendeth its odour with the violet,—
Solution sweet: meantime the frost-wind blows

Like Love's alarum pattering the sharp sleet
Against the window-panes; St. Agnes' moon hath set.

'Tis dark: quick pattereth the flaw-blown sleet:
"This is no dream, my bride, my Madeline!"
'Tis dark: the iced gusts still rave and beat:
"No dream, alas! alas! and woe is mine!
Porphyro will leave me here to fade and pine.—
Cruel! what traitor could thee hither bring?
I curse not, for my heart is lost in thine,
Though thou forsakest a deceived thing;—
A dove forlorn and lost with sick unpruned wing."

"My Madeline! sweet dreamer! lovely bride!
Say, may I be for aye thy vassal blest?
Thy beauty's shield, heart-shap'd and vermeil dyed?
Ah, silver shrine, here will I take my rest
After so many hours of toil and quest,
A famish'd pilgrim,—sav'd by miracle.
Though I have found, I will not rob thy nest
Saving of thy sweet self; if thou think'st well
To trust, fair Madeline, to no rude infidel.

"Hark! 'tis an elfin-storm from faery land,
Of haggard seeming, but a boon indeed:
Arise—arise! the morning is at hand;—
The bloated wassaillers will never heed:—
Let us away, my love, with happy speed;
There are no ears to hear, or eyes to see,—
Drown'd all in Rhenish and the sleepy mead:
Awake! arise! my love, and fearless be,
For o'er the southern moors I have a home for thee."

She hurried at his words, beset with fears,
For there were sleeping dragons all around,
At glaring watch, perhaps, with ready spears—
Down the wide stairs a darkling way they found.—
In all the house was heard no human sound.
A chain-droop'd lamp was flickering by each door;
The arras, rich with horseman, hawk, and hound,
Flutter'd in the besieging wind's uproar;
And the long carpets rose along the gusty floor.

They glide, like phantoms, into the wide hall;
Like phantoms, to the iron porch, they glide;
Where lay the Porter, in uneasy sprawl,
With a huge empty flaggon by his side:
The wakeful bloodhound rose, and shook his hide,

But his sagacious eye an inmate owns:
By one, and one, the bolts full easy slide:—
The chains lie silent on the footworn stones;—
The key turns, and the door upon its hinges groans.

And they are gone: aye, ages long ago
These lovers fled away into the storm.
That night the Baron dreamt of many a woe,
And all his warrior-guests, with shade and form
Of witch, and demon, and large coffin-worm,
Were long be-nightmar'd. Angela the old
Died palsy-twitch'd, with meagre face deform;
The Beadsman, after thousand aves told,
For aye unsought for slept among his ashes cold.

"The Eve of St. Agnes" was written in Sussex and probably begun on the Eve itself, namely January 20th, 1819, and was finished the following month. It was revised and published with other poems in 1820. The story is founded upon a traditional custom mentioned in Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*, a favourite book of Keats. A passage from the book may be quoted.

> " 'this their only desire, if it may be done by Art, to see their husbands' picture in a glass ; they'll give anything to know when they shall be married, how many husbands they shall have, by a kind of divination on Christmas Eve, or by fasting on St. Agnes Eve or Night, to know who shall be their first husband."

the future bridegroom was supposed to appear in dream, if the girl prayed to St. Agnes, kept fast and observed vigil at night. The origin of the custom appears to be the vision of St. Agnes and her heavenly bridegroom, the Lamb seen by her friends after her martyrdom. Brand's Popular Antiquities also contains a passage illustrating the legend. To the bare outline of the legend, Keats added romantic elements to make the story interesting and it is very likely that some hints were received by him from Shakespeare also. "In no other poem." Writes Thompson, "are Keats power of description and love of beautiful color joined so successfully with his gift of melody."

6.4.1. Substance of the Poem

It deals with the threadbare theme of love. Porphyro, the adventurous youth, falls in love with the daughter of a hostile house, and realizes that the only way to win his bride is to risk his life and carry her away, if she be willing. On a cold and stormy night, when festivities are going on in Madeline's castle and her father is busy welcoming innumerable knights and ladies in his hall, Porphyro quietly comes there only to have a vision of his lady-love. He is forgetful of the danger to his life, of found among his sworn enemies. His boldness is rewarded with more than a mere sight of his lady. Fortunately he meets an old woman in the household who helps him to conceal himself. He is removed to a dark cell for safety. But then he is helped in this also. Madeline was keeping fast and was praying to see her future husband in a dream by the grace of St. Agnes. While she dreams, he surprises her by his very presence. The vision turns into

reality. He proposes elopement under the cover of the stormy night. Quietly they steal away, and luckily nothing untoward happens.

Some Features of the Poem

- It gives us a vivid picture of medieval life, with its castles, knights, ladies, feuds, fragrance, superstitions, love and romantic adventure.
- The poet appeals very powerfully to the delights of the senses. Gorgeous colors, fragrance, images of sensuous beauty abound everywhere in the poem. The art is essentially pictorial, and mystery and enchantment are mingled with beautiful imagery.
- The characters are not psychological studies, but their externals are described so minutely that we more than see them.
- Emotions are described most delicately. And the contrasted pictures of some characters and of the scenes within and outside the castle heighten the effect of narration. The poem is less a narrative than a series of pictures, glowing and gorgeous. The flame-like glow of light color which surrounds the lovers is symbolically contrasted with the frozen world without.
- In this poem the Spenserian stanza has been used with wonderful effect. Rare melodies and soft harmonies of words are combined with consummate skill its music is matchless.

6.4.2. Critical Appreciation

This poem is a beautiful romance of young and passionate love which is prepared to face the worst dangers and obstacles in order to attain the more cherished and ardently longed desires. The two lovers dream of each other and their dream is realised. Madeline believes in the legend of St. Agnes, according to which on that particular night, of she invokes the patron saint to let her catch a glimpse of her lover Porphyro, her wish will be granted but little does she suspect that her lover will actually appear before her in flesh and blood. This excellent love romance as written by Keats was vaguely shadowed forth by Burton in his Anatony, of Melancholy. From the skeleton- like structure of that account, Keats has created a story of flesh and blood, palpitating, and 'for-ever warm and still to be enjoyed, for-ever panting and for every young'. The Romance of Romeo and Juliet, and the daring Walter Scott's young Lochinwar are some of the ingredients of the poem. The ancient and the medieval belief that a maiden might, on auspicious night, catch a glimpse of her true lover in a dream is highly appropriate to the atmosphere of the poem. The Spenserian stanza in which the poem has been written is a happy choice, for with its dreamy, meditative tone and modulation of voice at the end, and its concluding, lulling, Alexandrine rhyming, the reader is transported into a world of medieval romance and subtle suggestiveness where love must score simply because of its being love. Porphyro, too, is prepared to encounter the worst dangers and does not hesitate in his determination to see his beloved Madeline. The atmosphere of the poem abounds in mystery, romance and even danger. The biting cold, the dancing of the revelers, the howling of the wind, the silence and the gloom of long corridors of the castle, are all suggestive and the poet has deliberately created such an awfully fear-laden atmosphere to re-enforce the warmth and loveliness of the love that exists between the two lovers. It is by contrast that both the elements are accentuated and this achievement of the poet is highly significant.

"The Eve of St Agnes" is in a class apart. It is a finely wrought poem-a piece of lyric delight, remarkable for its striking use of the principle of contrast, its colour and vivid pictorical power, its perfectly rounded felicity of expression, the delicacy and subtlety of the spiritual element and its most marvelous use of Spenserian stanza.

The impulse of the poem is purely lyrical. Its lovely imagery, its magic atmosphere, every superb touch of color and hunting modulation of voice of musical quality- all these are a clear expression of lyrical intensity. Keats chooses the simple theme of the love of an adventurous youth for the daughter of a hostile house and brings it skillfully into association with the old legend bearing on the manner in which a lady may on St. Agnes' Eve win a sight of her lover in a dream. The poem reminds us of the melodious grace of the sweet slipping movement of Spenser. He has added an ease and directness of narration, and with these has combined richness and concentration of poetic meaning and suggestion. The poem expresses the romance and delight of satisfying and victorious love.

Keats' supernaturalism in the poem is rooted in Romanticism, for it is similar in property with the romantic sentiments of strangeness and remoteness, and his presentation of it is as fine and acute as that of Coleridge. Like all true artists, Keats suggests, more than he describes. Very often his effects are wrought out of such flimsy materials as were woven by Coleridge into the enchanting fabric of "Kubla Khan", "Christabel" and "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner".

The management of colour in Keats' poems is always interesting, and it is particularly so in "The Eve of St. Agnes". Of the colour of the spectrum, he uses only the softer blue and violet, while yellow is heightened and enriched into gold. The violence of red is softened into rose, the colour of love; while green the color of youth and love, is, curiously enough, not used at all, silver, gold and black are employed with dramatic effect; silver, to hold the attention of the constant back-ground of cold and moonlight and argent revelry, and gold to give a touch of splendor; while black is employed for purposes of contrast. These colours run as pointing threads in the web of the story. The poem is also notable for its varied and sensual imagery and synaesthetic richness. There is, for example, the imagery of sculpture used to suggest the way feeling is arrested or repressed and then released. There is a linked series of musical themes and images at work in the poem; in light of what has been said about sculpture, what is the significance of the image of the ballroom filled with 'music, yearning like a God in pain' (line56). What use does Keats make of colour imagery what are the effects of the numerous animals, birds and insects in the poem Many images in this poem function to suggest opposition and set up boundaries: the cold out said us set against the warmth within, the noise and revelry of the feasters in the castle against the calm and quiet of Madeline's room, and the snarling trumpets which welcome the guests against the tender chords of the lute.

The poem has also been much admired for its dramatic immediacy. This is partly achieved by the way that tense fluctuates between past and present, one more of the oppositions that the poem sets up. In stanza 22,for example, there is a movement from past to present when the narrator, reflecting a sense of rising excitement, turns from straight description to address the concealed Porphyro, alerting him for gazing on that bed; / She comes, she comes again, like ring-dove fray'd and fled' (lines196-8). Following this, there is a return to the past tense until Madeline starts undressing when, again, we move into the more dramatic present tense in stanza 26. The narrative also

moves into the present when the lovers make their escape, suggesting a sense of haste and urgency. While we have been caught up in the sensual immediacy of Porphyro and Madeline, we are now reminded that this all happened long ago, that we live in quite a different world. The concluding stanza might be seen to puncture the world of make-believe, distancing us from events, but perhaps this distance has always been subtly maintained throughout the poem by the narrator's tone, creating a tension between scepticism and the will to believe, between dream and reality.

6.4.3. Glossary

St Agnes' lambs: on St Agnes's day two lambs were offered at the altar
Mickle: much
Merlin: demon According to Arthurian legend, the wizard Merlin was the son of a demon
Cates: delicacies
tambour frame: embroidery frame shaped like a drum
gules in heraldry: the colour red
clasp'd: pray kept shut as a Christian prayer book would be among the pagans
Morphean: Morpheus is the god of sleep
Eremite: hermit
Provence: district in southern France associated with the troubadours
La belle dame sans mercy: poem by Alain Chartier, an early fifteenth-century French poet; see also Keats's poem of the same title
Flaw: blown wind blown
Vermeil: vermilion
Rhenish: wine from the Rhine country
Arras: tapestry

6.5. RELATED LITERARY TERMS

Medieval Romance: The literary critics of the time were divided in their attitudes toward the new type of epic. The conservatives strongly opposed it because it departed from classical standards. The form was generally popular with readers, however, and when Edmund Spenser came to write *The Faerie Queene*, he modeled it on the romantic epics of Ariosto (Orlando Furioso, 1516) and Tasso (Jerusalem Delivered, 1581). *The Faerie Queene*, epic in its patriotic purpose and in much of its technique, romantic in its chivalric atmosphere and Arthurian setting became an outstanding example in English literature of a romantic epic. Keats' "The Eve of Saint Agnes" also has elements of a Medieval Romance.

Platonism: A complex body of ideas originating in the dialogues of the Greek philosopher Plato. In the context of Keats, most important is the idea that for Platonists earthly beauty hints at a more perfect idea that that for Platonists earthly beauty hints at a more perfect ideal beauty.

Pre-Raphaelite: A group of artists in the mid-Victorian age, including John Millais, Holman Hunt and Dante Gabriel Rossetti, who aimed to return to the truthfulness and simplicity of medieval art. Many of the Pre-Raphaelites admired Keats' work and painted scenes from such poem as "Isabella" and "The Eve of St Agnes".

Sensuous: A critical term characterizing writing that plays on the various senses of the reader. For example, Keat's "The Eve of St.Agnes", with images appealing to the senses of sight, touch, taste, smell and hearing, is a sensuous poem. The term should not be confused with "sensual," which usually denotes overemphasis on the passion of physical love.

6.6. SUMMING UP

In this unit you have read Keats as a Romantic Poet *per excellence*. In a short life span of twenty five years and six months, he served English poetry like a true devotee. Keats wrote a great deal in his short stint on planet earth and his works saw public light only four years before his death. The great beauty of Keats' poetry was his Hellenism and sensuousness, a tendency he overgrew by 1819, his love for medieval chivalry and his love for Nature. In addition to discussing Keats as a poet, the unit also analysed Keats' "The Eve of Saint Agnes", a beautiful romance of young and passionate love which is prepared to face the worst dangers and obstacles in order to attain the more cherished and ardently longed desires.

Self Assessment Questions

1. Who was St. Agnes?
2. Who is the hero of the poem ?
3. Who helped Porphyro in the castle?
4. How many years did Keats live?
5. Who called Keats 'Greek'?

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6.9. TERMINAL AND MODEL QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the characteristically Keatsian qualities in "The Eve of St. Agnes".
2. Write an essay on Keats' quality of imaginative phrasing.
3. Write the summary of "The Eve of St. Agnes" in your own words.
4. What were the sources of "The Eve of St. Agnes"?
5. Discuss pictorial art of John Keats.
6. Write a note on sensuousness of John Keats.

UNIT 7 ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

"THE LADY OF SHALOTT" "TITHONOUS"

7.1. INTRODUCTION

The Victorian Age (1830-1890)

Before understanding and studying Tennyson and his poetry, we have to first of all understand the age in which he lived. The nineteenth century – by which we mean the period between 1800 and 1899 – can be divided into two distinct parts. The first half of the 19th century is known as the Romantic Age roughly 1730-1830. The second half is commonly known as the Victorian Age (1830—1890] It was so named because Queen Victoria was on the throne of England then. After her, it came to be known as the Victorian Age. It was a period of transition or change. Change was coming over the life and times of England. Society was slowly changing itself and there was new life being breathed into the thought process of the times.

Two great revolutions that influenced the age came at the turn of the century---the French Revolution and the Industrial Revolution. The French Revolution of 1788 raised the cry of Liberty, equality and fraternity. The working, lower and middle classes raised their voice against the nobles and the aristocrats. It was fought for equality and brotherhood – all men are brothers. There are no high and low classes. It inspired many poets and writers. Wordsworth was deeply inspired by it though the later bloodshed, when many nobles were hanged in full public view deeply disturbed him and he lost faith in humanity and human values. The French Revolution saw the beginnings of democracy in the sense that the common man came into his own. Till then he had been overlooked. Now the focus was on him and he was beginning to have a say in what was happening around him in society and in politics. This changed the very fabric of society.

The Industrial Revolution was the other great influence on the age. England was slowly changing from an agricultural society to an industrial one. With the coming of machines industry changed. More factories were opened and as a result more people left the country side looking for jobs in the city. But this was not to be; with one machines doing the work of ten men, machines were replacing men. It led to unemployment. The men who came from the country were without jobs leading to a number of related problems – overcrowding, squalor, slums, poverty and dirtiness. . These were the main problems of nineteenth century Victorian England – Unemployment and as a result slums, poverty, dirtiness and frustration.

Democratic principles too came into being. Place, Bentham and others demanded universal suffrage, vote by ballot and women's right to vote. They were demanding equality – equal opportunity in education and jobs.

The other change was in prison reforms. Till now old, young hardened and new criminals were all dumped together. But the tireless work of reformers like Mrs. Fry and others changed the scene. The place was transformed and separating criminals tamed them. Humanitarian reforms were urged by the reformers – hanging in chains was abolished and so was the death sentence for minor crimes. Capital punishment was reserved for murder only. Much had been done and much remained to be done. But the first steps had been taken to humanize and reform society.

Another very important influence was that of science. In 1859 a new influence came into the literary and social life of the day – Natural Science. Charles Darwin published his' Origin of Species' and it started a new era. Poetry and fiction were influenced with the

new spirit of scientific observation and philosophic analysis which can be seen in the works of – George Eliot, Matthew Arnold, Clough, Huxley and Browning. Darwin claimed, through proof, that man's first parents were not Adam and Eve but the Ape. That man had evolved slowly, over the centuries from the Ape. This led to a lot of bitterness and confusion. In fact, confusion is one of the marked characteristic of the Victorian Age. Loss of faith, confusion and melancholy can be seen in the works of Tennyson, Clough and Arnold. Religion and faith said that Adam and Eve were the first parents of man. The Bible said that in the Garden of Paradise, God had placed Adam and Eve and asked them not to touch the fruit of the tree of knowledge, the apple. However, Satan disguised as a serpent entered Paradise and tempted them to eat the fruit. As a result they invited the anger of God who threw them down to Earth and from there started their life on earth, full of pain and suffering, as a result of their Original Sin (eating of the apple against the wishes of God.) Darwin's scientific proof left the people with no choice--- was the story of Bible false? And if it was not true then should they follow the lesson taught by the Bible – that the good are rewarded and the evil punished. If you do wrong, you will be punished as Adam and Eve were when they went against God. As a result people lost faith in religion and God and did not know what to believe in. It led to frustration and melancholy; for belief in God gives strength and humility to man. And with that gone, Man had no one to turn to in times of trouble. Science could not be a substitute for God and religion, for it was cold and could offer no comfort to troubled man; hence the sadness of the age and the bitterness and melancholy.

Victorian England then was a society in the throes of change and all this is reflected in the literature of the age – the rise of democratic ideals and the progress of scientific thought. Democratic ideals led to equal educational opportunities for all and this led to the development of journalism and periodical literature. Many new journals came up and many more people took it up as a livelihood. The progress of science changed man's outlook on life. It aroused in him restlessness and also a questioning spirit. He started questioning things he had accepted till now. Society had become more materialistic and so life too had become more commercialized. Wordsworth laments it in "The world is too much with us "-man does not have time to enjoy himself. He is too busy making money. The restlessness and questioning note can be seen in the literature of the times, in Arthur Clough, in the pessimism of James Thomson, in the wistful melancholy of Arnold—all this was the result of loss of faith. It did not kill poetry but for some time the impulse was subdued. The positive side of science can be seen in the works of Tennyson. With scientific accuracy he gave detailed pictures of nature in all her beauty.

In short, Victorian literature was a faithful representation of the age.

7.2. OBJECTIVES

After going through the unit, you will be able to:

- Understand and appreciate Tennyson's poems better.
- Understand how his background, the Victorian Age, influenced and moulded his genius
- Appreciate Tennyson, the poet and also his artistic genius.
- Arrive at a more balanced estimate of Tennyson as based on modern criticism.

Self Assessment Questions I

1. What was the influence of the two great revolutions on the Victorian Age?
2. What effect did Darwin's 'Origin of Species 'have on the life of the people of the Victorian Age?

7.3. LORD, ALFRED TENNYSON: LIFE AND WORKS

Tennyson was born on 6th August 1809 into on old Lincolnshire family. He was the fourth of twelve children and his two brothers were sent to South grammar school where he was very unhappy. He left in 1820 but despite the fact that they were passing through difficult days, financially, his father saw to it that he had a wide literary education. For some years he was educated at home and life in the country side was lonely. However, these years spent in the Lincolnshire countryside had a great influence on his poetry. He loved the country side and the quiet life there. It was a life of quiet observation rather than that of a young man. The meadows, the hills and open sea held a great charm for him and to understand his poetry we have to understand his love for his countryside and for nature, which is later revealed in the exact and accurate details of his description of nature.

In 1828 he went to Trinity College, Cambridge with his brother, Charles. Frederick had gone to Cambridge before him. It was here that he met Arthur Hallam and it was the beginning of a true friendship between them. His appearance impressed many and his charm won many friends. He was a member of the debating society 'The Apostle's 'but did not take a very active part in it. In 1829 he won the Chancellor's English medal for his poem 'Timbuktu' and in 1831 he left Cambridge without taking a degree and returned to Lincolnshire to continue his quiet country life. By now his father had passed away. He published his first volume of poetry and was content to live the life of a country gentleman. His friendship with Hallam had deepened and Hallam had become engaged to his sister Emily, much against the wishes of the family. His friendship with Hallam was the most precious thing in his life. He was leading a quiet, not very active life and combined with wrong eating habits and drinking, Tennyson was in a sorry state when he received news of Hallam's death. It came as a shock to him. It came at the wrong time. Three of his brothers were suffering from mental illness and, to add to that his volume of poetry had been severely criticized. And yet his very best work is the product of this period. He poured out his grief into his work. In Memoriam – which began as an elegy mourning the death of Hallam, later on took a more philosophical turn, dealing with questions of life, death and the hereafter. Tennyson had always been interested in these topics but till now it was only academically. Now, having passed through grief he wrote with intensity. During this period, he also got friendly with other great writers of the age – Edward Fitzgerald and Thomas Carlyle. Fitzgerald greatly admired his earlier work but Carlyle liked the man and not his poetry.

In 1836, his brother Charles married Louisa Sellwood Horncastle and at their wedding Tennyson fell in love with her sister, Emily. For some years they went around together but her father didn't approve of Tennyson and his addiction to smoking and drinking. He did not like his style of living or his religious views either and forbade their marriage. As a result, Tennyson left the place and lived a wandering life. He lost money because of bad investment but 1850 proved to be a turning point for him .He finally married Emily and

settled into peaceful family life. Emily brought peace and calm into his life and it ran smoothly to the very end. He wrote a lot and whatever he wrote won him a growing audience. Worldly honors were given to him ending with the title of 'Baron' in 1883. On Wordsworth's death, he also accepted the Laureateship. He continued to live a simple life, cut off from the outside world. This put him out of touch with the problems of the day and his later work suffered because of this. He took to writing plays. But it did not suit his nature. A more active frame of mind was needed and Tennyson, with his meditative nature and the quiet country life he lived was most unsuited for playwriting. His old age was quite peaceful and he remained alert and alive to the very end. He died in 1892 and was buried in Westminster Abbey.

Some of his greatest works were "Poems Chiefly Lyrical" (1830) , "Poems" (1833) , "Poems" (1842) , "The Princess" (1847) , "In Memoriam" (1850) , "Maud" (1855) , "Idylls of the King" (1859-1885), "Enoch Arden" (1864), "Queen Mary" (1875) , "Harold" (1876) , "The Cup and the Falcon" (1884) , "Becket" (1884) , "Tiresias and Other Poems" (1885) , "Locksley Hall 60 Years After" (1886) .

When you study a poet and try to understand what made him the poet or writer he is, you have to turn to his surrounding, the age in which he lived; for environment influences a man and moulds his genius. What is striking about Tennyson's work is the influence of science. Everyone was struck by his scientific outlook rather then his poetic imagination. He wrote like a scientist with a gift for poetry. Whatever he wrote had great accuracy of detail, the hallmark of a man of science. He would revise and re-revise a stanza till he got it just right. This scientific perception is the source of his strength as well as weakness. It gave accuracy to his picture of nature, form and balance to his craftsmanship and clarity to what he said. But it also clashed with the poet in him.

Tennyson was not greatly influenced by the Romantic poets. He liked Keats and admired him but that was all. The chief defect of his earlier work was lack of inspiration. There is visual beauty and melody but very little thought. "The Lady of Shalott" and "The Lotus Eaters" in the volume of 1833 were not as brilliant as they were after this final revision in 1842. These volumes were frankly criticized which hurt him and for the next 10 years he published nothing , just revised what he had written earlier .

In 1842 he published two slim volumes which were largely made up of revisions of his earlier work and showed how positively he had taken the earlier criticism. Some of the poems in this volume were– "The Lotus Eaters", "The Lady of Shalott", "Ulysses", " Morte D' Arthur", "Break , Break , Break," "Come Not When I am Dead" etc.

In some respects he never bettered the 1842 volume though he did write as well later – "In Memoriam". Till now his poetry was all visual beauty and lyrical. There is little of the thought of the day. But now in "Locksley Hall" we have a hint of the social problems which had begun to move him. In 1847, he published his longer poem "The Princess" – which dealt with the woman's question – the problem of the day. Women were beginning to be heard and demanding equality. It may not have been perfect but it gave an indication of Tennyson's new interest in the problems of his times.

At the same time he was also working on "The Memorial Poems", revising them. In 1850 he published "In Memoriam" 'which was the result of nearly twenty years of thought and poetic craftsmanship. It is too long for an elegy but is much more than just that. It is Tennyson's statement on his religious philosophy and presents those questions

on religion and science that were to confuse his age. At this time he also wrote the great "Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington". As a writer of patriotic poems, he is the best and this poem is one of the best of its kind. In 1855 came "Maud" – less satisfactory and inferior to "The Princess". But as a love poem it is great. In 1859 he wrote "Idylls of a King" – a great achievement. His blank verse here is finer than that written by the Romantic poets. It has grace, flexibility and tenderness. It does not get monotonous.

Towards his later years he turned to drama. Till now his work had no dramatic tendency, it was descriptive and he had the power of observing things. He had a poetic style which was not suited to drama. Yet he started writing poetic drama and was not very successful. He was too set and fixed in his ways and too old to try out a new field. He was a failure. In his later work, "Death of Oenoni" or "Demeter", you can see the decline of power due to age. His later work does not do him justice.

Looking over his life and work, we cannot help feeling that Tennyson is at his best when painting pictures of nature in his poetry. Clarity, Melody, dignity and lucidity are the hallmarks of his style and no one can beat him on that.

7.4. "THE LADY OF SHALOTT"

PART I

On either side the river lie
Long fields of barley and of rye,
That clothe the wold and meet the sky;
And thro' the field the road runs by
To many-tower'd Camelot;
And up and down the people go,
Gazing where the lilies blow
Round an island there below,
The island of Shalott.

Willows whiten, aspens quiver,
Little breezes dusk and shiver
Thro' the wave that runs for ever
By the island in the river
Flowing down to Camelot.
Four gray walls, and four gray towers,
Overlook a space of flowers,
And the silent isle imbowers
The Lady of Shalott.

By the margin, willow veil'd,
Slide the heavy barges trail'd
By slow horses; and unhail'd
The shallop flitteth silken-sail'd
Skimming down to Camelot:
But who hath seen her wave her hand?

Or at the casement seen her stand?
Or is she known in all the land,
The Lady of Shalott?

Only reapers, reaping early
In among the bearded barley,
Hear a song that echoes cheerly
From the river winding clearly,
Down to tower'd Camelot:
And by the moon the reaper weary,
Piling sheaves in uplands airy,
Listening, whispers " 'Tis the fairy
Lady of Shalott."

PART II

There she weaves by night and day
A magic web with colours gay.
She has heard a whisper say,
A curse is on her if she stay
To look down to Camelot.
She knows not what the curse may be,
And so she weaveth steadily,
And little other care hath she,
The Lady of Shalott.

And moving thro' a mirror clear
That hangs before her all the year,
Shadows of the world appear.
There she sees the highway near
Winding down to Camelot:
There the river eddy whirls,
And there the surly village-churls,
And the red cloaks of market girls,
Pass onward from Shalott.

Sometimes a troop of damsels glad,
An abbot on an ambling pad,
Sometimes a curly shepherd-lad,
Or long-hair'd page in crimson clad,
Goes by to tower'd Camelot;
And sometimes thro' the mirror blue
The knights come riding two and two:
She hath no loyal knight and true,
The Lady of Shalott.

But in her web she still delights
To weave the mirror's magic sights,

For often thro' the silent nights
A funeral, with plumes and lights
And music, went to Camelot:
Or when the moon was overhead,
Came two young lovers lately wed:
"I am half sick of shadows," said
The Lady of Shalott.

PART III

A bow-shot from her bower-eaves,
He rode between the barley-sheaves,
The sun came dazzling thro' the leaves,
And flamed upon the brazen greaves
Of bold Sir Lancelot.
A red-cross knight for ever kneel'd
To a lady in his shield,
That sparkled on the yellow field,
Beside remote Shalott.

The gemmy bridle glitter'd free,
Like to some branch of stars we see
Hung in the golden Galaxy.
The bridle bells rang merrily
As he rode down to Camelot:
And from his blazon'd baldric slung
A mighty silver bugle hung,
And as he rode his armour rung,
Beside remote Shalott.

All in the blue unclouded weather
Thick-jewell'd shone the saddle-leather,
The helmet and the helmet-feather
Burn'd like one burning flame together,
As he rode down to Camelot.
As often thro' the purple night,
Below the starry clusters bright,
Some bearded meteor, trailing light,
Moves over still Shalott.

His broad clear brow in sunlight glow'd;
On burnish'd hooves his war-horse trode;
From underneath his helmet flow'd
His coal-black curls as on he rode,
As he rode down to Camelot.
From the bank and from the river
He flash'd into the crystal mirror,

"Tirra lirra," by the river
Sang Sir Lancelot.

She left the web, she left the loom,
She made three paces thro' the room,
She saw the water-lily bloom,
She saw the helmet and the plume,
She look'd down to Camelot.
Out flew the web and floated wide;
The mirror crack'd from side to side;
"The curse is come upon me," cried
The Lady of Shalott.

PART IV

In the stormy east-wind straining,
The pale yellow woods were waning,
The broad stream in his banks complaining,
Heavily the low sky raining
Over tower'd Camelot;
Down she came and found a boat
Beneath a willow left afloat,
And round about the prow she wrote
The Lady of Shalott.

And down the river's dim expanse
Like some bold seër in a trance,
Seeing all his own mischance—
With a glassy countenance
Did she look to Camelot.
And at the closing of the day
She loosed the chain, and down she lay;
The broad stream bore her far away,
The Lady of Shalott.

Lying, robed in snowy white
That loosely flew to left and right—
The leaves upon her falling light—
Thro' the noises of the night
She floated down to Camelot:
And as the boat-head wound along
The willowy hills and fields among,
They heard her singing her last song,
The Lady of Shalott.

Heard a carol, mournful, holy,
Chanted loudly, chanted lowly,

Till her blood was frozen slowly,
And her eyes were darken'd wholly,
Turn'd to tower'd Camelot.
For ere she reach'd upon the tide
The first house by the water-side,
Singing in her song she died,
The Lady of Shalott.

Under tower and balcony,
By garden-wall and gallery,
A gleaming shape she floated by,
Dead-pale between the houses high,
Silent into Camelot.
Out upon the wharfs they came,
Knight and burgher, lord and dame,
And round the prow they read her name,
The Lady of Shalott.

Who is this? and what is here?
And in the lighted palace near
Died the sound of royal cheer;
And they cross'd themselves for fear,
All the knights at Camelot:
But Lancelot mused a little space;
He said, "She has a lovely face;
God in his mercy lend her grace,
The Lady of Shalott."

"The Lady of Shalott" is a Victorian ballad by Tennyson, first published in his 1833 volume but then revised and worked on, to be finally published in the 1842 volume "Poem". It is based on stories of King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table.

His source was an Italian story of the 13th century. It was a part of a collection. The story was that of a young woman who fell in love with Sir Lancelot, the Knight of King Arthur's Round Table. Sir Lancelot however did not return her love as he was in love with Queen Guinevere. As a result the young woman slowly died, pining for his love. Tennyson changes the story here. The lady sees Lancelot and defies the curse. Lancelot however does not see her and continues on his way to Camelot.

7.4.1. "The Lady of Shalott": A Summary

This poem was first published in a volume of poetry entitled "Poems". It was criticized very savagely because poems such as "The Lady of Shalott" dealt with not reality but with fantastic situations. In 1833 Tennyson's close friend Arthur Hallam passed away and Tennyson was deeply affected by it. For the next ten years he did not publish anything, just revised and polished old work. Of Course new poems too were written but nothing published. In 1842 he published another volume also called 'Poems' and it was very well received. It had a new and revised version of "The Lady of Shalott". This is the poem prescribed in your syllabus.

The poem is divided into four parts and tells the story of the Lady of Shalott who lived in a tower on the island of Shalott which was on a river that flows straight to Camelot. Besides the river was a road which ran in the same direction to Camelot. Camelot was the setting of the Arthurian legends- stories of King Arthur and the Knights of his Round Table. Sir Lancelot was one of the Knights and perhaps the greatest of them.

Part I

In the first part the poet introduces the Lady who lives alone in a tower- four gray walls and four gray towers-in Shalott. Nothing much is said about her just that she lives alone, cut off from humanity. No one has seen her just the reapers in the fields who have heard her sing. This section is mainly descriptive- fields of barley, rye on either side of the river, the road leading to Camelot, the trees- willow and aspens quivering in the wind, heavy and light boats in the river and the lady in the midst of all this beauty, whom no one has seen, just heard.

Part II

We learn that she weaves all day long, a tapestry picture of the landscape that is visible from her window but which she sees in the mirror opposite her. There is a curse on her but she does not know why it is so. All that she knows is that if she looks out of her window, down at Camelot, the curse would fall on her. What the curse is she is yet to know. And so she weaves her web and looks at the world reflected in her mirror. She sees a shadowy world there -the road leading down to Camelot, the village girls going to the market, the curly haired lads and at times the Knights. She is happy to weave but is tired of looking at life only as a reflection

Part III

In the third section, Sir Lancelot is introduced to the reader .One day he rides by, looking bold and handsome with his bridle and saddle, catching the rays of the sun because of the jewels on them. His silver bugle too shines in the sun. He passes by in his shining armour, singing as he rides. He catches her eye and fascinated, she rushes to the window to see him directly and the moment she does so, she knows this curse is on her. Instantly the mirror cracks and the web flies out.

Part IV

In this last section, The Lady of Shalott leaves her sanctuary, knowing the curse has fallen She leaves the tower, finds a boat and writes "The Lady of Shalott" on the side of the boat and then floats down the river to Camelot. As the boat drifts along, she sings and sees the world till now, denied to her. She lays herself down and singing, slowly, freezes as she enters Camelot and the Knights seeing her, make the sign of the cross, for they are full of fear. Sir Lancelot, alone is not afraid to see her face and says that she has a lovely face.

This is the story of The Lady of Shalott. The different interpretations of the story we will deal with in another section. Here we have just set out this simple plot and story.

7.4.2. Analysis of the Poem

When asked to analyze or critically appreciate a poem, you have to examine it closely. You have to look for its strong and weak points. What is the style like? Is it a ballad or

lyric or a sonnet? Does the poet refer to the problems or happenings of the age he lived in? Or is his work completely cut off from its surrounding? All these factors have to be taken into consideration and only then can we come to any kind of conclusion.

7.4.2.1. Introduction

The "Lady of Shalott" is now looked upon as Tennyson's masterpiece. It was first published in the volume of 1832- 'Poems. But it was criticized savagely. It was felt that Tennyson had not focused on reality but on a fantastical situation. It was cut off from reality. For the next ten years, Tennyson did not publish anything. He revised and re-revised his old work. In the mean time his close friend Arthur Hallam died in 1833 and he was struck by a deep abiding grief. It affected his work and he now wrote with intensity. When he published the 1842 volume of

"Poems" which included the revised version of "The Lady of Shalott" it was welcomed by all. This version is the one in your syllabus.

7.4.2.2. Source

The poem bears a resemblance to Malory's Maid of Astolat in "Morte D Arthur". He changed Astolat to similar sounding Shalott. However; Tennyson himself has said that the poem was based on an Italian story of the 13th century. It was a part of a collection. The story was set in the Dark Ages when King Arthur ruled. It was the story of a young lady who fell in love with Sir Lancelot, the brightest and most famous of King Arthur's Knights of the Round Table. He did not return her love and she slowly died, pining for him. The Lady of Shalott too is charmed by Sir Lancelot and is driven to leave her isolated cell to look down at Camelot `which leads to her tragic death. Nowhere in the poem does Tennyson say, she loves Sir Lancelot but it is merely hinted at.

7.4.2.3. Form

It is a ballad divided into four parts with equally long stanzas. The first two parts have four stanzas each. The third part has five stanzas and the fourth part has six stanzas. Each part ends when the description gives way to speech. The 1st part ends with the reapers whispering that the song is sung by the Lady of Shalott.

In the 2nd part the Lady herself says

"I am half sick of shadows".

The 3rd part has the Lady again saying-

"The curse is come upon me"

And the 4th part has Sir Lancelot saying

"She has a Lovely face".

7.4.2.4. Rhythm and Imagery

The rhythm puts a spell on us. The setting is ordinary but there is a spell about it. We are drawn into it. There is a sense of mystery about it. There are a number of images which give depth and meaning to the poem specially when repeated more than once. The trees are almost alive- they seem to dance and quiver in the wind. Another image is that of the river which does not just flow but has a voice. It is calm and serene in the beginning with

fields of barley and rye on either side. But later on strong winds blow causing the trees on its banks to quiver. When the curse falls on her, it has an effect on the river too. Stormy winds blow, the river is no longer calm; it seems almost to be complaining and feeling her distress. The sky turns overcast, it rains and the woods are full of yellow falling leaves. Her distress is felt by nature too.

Camelot is the next image. It refers to King Arthur's castle. The repetition of the word in the 5th line of every stanza makes it almost a far off dream. It is like heaven. She can dream of it but cannot attain it. When she does reach Camelot in the end- it is a happy place but proves fatal for her; for she is dead and enters the city as a corpse. Her entry also brings to an end the partying and cheers in the palace. The Knights come out and seeing her, are full of fear and cross themselves. It is as if the two worlds cannot come together. They are like two worlds clashing.

ISLAND: The Lady of Shalott stays in an island which, in one sense is cut off from the outside world. Hence she lives in isolation. Later on it is spoken as being remote- it is a lonely place and as long as she continues to live there she will be separated from life which is represented by Sir Lancelot and the outside world. For her it is a kind of prison. If she wishes to partake of the world she will have to break out of her prison.

7.4.2.5. Theme

There are various interpretations of the poem. Some of the interpretations are given as under:

1. It depends on how you read it. If you see it as a simple story of the Lady of Shalott and Sir Lancelot - it can be read as a story of unrequited love. She lives in isolation, sees him and falls in love with him. But he has no time for her. Sir Lancelot was known for his affair with Queen Guinevere, the wife of King Arthur. This unrequited love has a tragic result and she passes away slowly dying.

2. It can be seen as a statement on the condition of women in Tennyson's time Women were expected to play a passive role in society. They were supposed to stay at home and look after the family. Going out into a male dominated world was looked down upon .The Lady of Shalott by staying within her four grey walls was following the unwritten laws of Victorian society. By opting to look at Sir Lancelot and the outside world she was going against the rules of Victorian society. Tennyson could be either criticizing her or defending her, depending on your outlook.

3. A third and more interesting interpretation is that it represents the conflict within the artist's mind --should he remain aloof from the world or be a part of the world.

The lady living in isolation in her tower represents the artist living in isolation cut off from the hustle and bustle of daily life. He desires and wishes to play a more important and active part in the social and political life of the times but at the same time, is afraid that a greater social involvement may destroy his inspiration and creative urge; Just as the Lady in the tower wove her web of beauty without looking at the actual outside world. When she does look at it, her web flies out. The creative urge is broken and she dies bereft of the happiness she had at least got out of her creation.

As such it can be seen as a conflict between art and life. The Lady weaving her web and singing her song is the artist in his ivory tower, untouched by the problems of reality. The moment she sets her art aside to look down on actual life, a curse befalls her. She meets her tragic death. The conflict here is between the artist and his desire for social involvement and his fear whether this is possible for someone who is devoted to his art. This is the question put forth in the story of the Lady of Shalott.

4. It has a more personal touch too. Tennyson had always being criticized for being remote from real life. In fact his 1832 volume of poetry was criticized precisely because it was far removed from the actual problems of life and was concerned with fantasy and magic. This poem then expresses his personal problem --should he comment on political happenings or on humanity or should he stick to his fairy tale world. He was afraid his poetic magic may be destroyed were he to step into reality.

Later on in life he did turn to serious topics. Till now, his earlier poems were all lyrical beauty and stunning scenic beauty. There was little of the thought of the day. But in his later poems he did resolve this dilemma in his mind and turned to dealing with the problems of the day-- in Locksley Hall and in the Princess. In Memoriam he dealt with the topic of life, death and God, of religion and science which was confusing his age.

7.4.2.6. The Character of Lady of Shalott

The Lady of Shalott appears in the poem, a shadowy figure at first. Tennyson gives no description. We have no idea how she looks. She seems a shadowy figure, living in isolation passing her days, weaving her web. No one has seen her sing. As she continues to weave, the world goes by outside her window. But then in the 2nd part she says,

"I am half sick of shadows"

and suddenly we begin to feel she is not quite as weak as she appeared to be. She is a strong personality and here we get a glimpse of her independence and strong will which will come later.

A change is coming slowly. When she sees Sir Lancelot in the mirror, she makes her choice and runs to look out of the window. Till now it was the mirror which brought the world to her. She saw a reflection of the world, not the real world and hence could not interact with it. By turning away from this shadowy world, she was moving towards freedom from slavery and imprisonment but this has cost her everything- earlier she sang, now she is quiet because she is dead; first she was warm, now she is frozen. Her transformation ends in her death. She has moved away from slavery to freedom but in this process has had to lose everything. In the end she is a pale statue- cold.

The web she enjoyed weaving is the expression of her creativity and talent. Critics also feel it could stand for her slavery and imprisonment. When she turns away from the web she is turning away from slavery. She decides to choose love and the outside world, even though it means death. Till now she looked at the sights in the mirror and wove the image into her web- she had the talent and creative urge. Hence she could stand for the artist who, through inspiration, created a masterpiece. However an artist reproduces what he sees in life but always from a distance. So also the Lady who weaves her web but always has to maintain a distance from life. When she closes this distance and comes face to face with life, her creative instinct and talent dry up; the web flies out of the window. Tennyson seems to be asking, partaking of actual life can bring an end to the creative

poetic urge. Will the poetic magic be destroyed by taking up realistic, themes? Will poetry dry up in the face of realism?

"The Lady of Shalott", can be seen in many different lights. The most prominent being the conflict between the artist and life. The Lady, and her talent in turning the sights in the mirror into a beautiful web, is the artist. The moment she sets her art aside and looks out at Sir Lancelot, she is dead. The end of her artistic isolation- living alone in the tower- leads to the end of her creativity. The mirror cracks - her only access to the outside world. And the web she has created flies out of the window. Thus by turning to the outside world she loses both her art (web) and also the instrument of her art (mirror) she also loses her life. The greatest and unhappiest curse of all is that she loses everything for a sight of Sir Lancelot and dies unappreciated and unknown to him. When he sees her dead body he passes a casual and trivial remark. How lovely is her face? His response to her passion, for which she lost her art and life-, is trivial and common. In the end she has lost her art and has herself become an object of art - she is a dead pale beauty brought in, in a coffin.

Self Assessment Questions II

1. Give a brief summary of The Lady of Shalott.
2. Discuss the main themes in the poem
3. Draw a character sketch of The Lady of Shalott.
4. Give a critical appreciation of the poem.

7.5. "TITHONUS"

The woods decay, the woods decay and fall,
The vapours weep their burthen to the ground,
Man comes and tills the field and lies beneath,
And after many a summer dies the swan.
Me only cruel immortality
Consumes: I wither slowly in thine arms,
Here at the quiet limit of the world,
A white-hair'd shadow roaming like a dream
The ever-silent spaces of the East,
Far-folded mists, and gleaming halls of morn.

Alas! for this gray shadow, once a man—
So glorious in his beauty and thy choice,
Who madest him thy chosen, that he seem'd
To his great heart none other than a God!
I ask'd thee, 'Give me immortality.'
Then didst thou grant mine asking with a smile,
Like wealthy men, who care not how they give.
But thy strong Hours indignant work'd their wills,
And beat me down and marr'd and wasted me,
And tho' they could not end me, left me maim'd
To dwell in presence of immortal youth,
Immortal age beside immortal youth,
And all I was, in ashes. Can thy love,
Thy beauty, make amends, tho' even now,
Close over us, the silver star, thy guide,
Shines in those tremulous eyes that fill with tears
To hear me? Let me go: take back thy gift:
Why should a man desire in any way
To vary from the kindly race of men
Or pass beyond the goal of ordinance
Where all should pause, as is most meet for all?

A soft air fans the cloud apart; there comes
A glimpse of that dark world where I was born.
Once more the old mysterious glimmer steals
From thy pure brows, and from thy shoulders pure,
And bosom beating with a heart renew'd.
Thy cheek begins to redden thro' the gloom,
Thy sweet eyes brighten slowly close to mine,
Ere yet they blind the stars, and the wild team
Which love thee, yearning for thy yoke, arise,
And shake the darkness from their loosen'd manes,
And beat the twilight into flakes of fire.

Lo! ever thus thou growest beautiful

In silence, then before thine answer given
Departest, and thy tears are on my cheek.

Why wilt thou ever scare me with thy tears,
And make me tremble lest a saying learnt,
In days far-off, on that dark earth, be true?
'The Gods themselves cannot recall their gifts.'

Ay me! ay me! with what another heart
In days far-off, and with what other eyes
I used to watch—if I be he that watch'd—
The lucid outline forming round thee; saw
The dim curls kindle into sunny rings;
Changed with thy mystic change, and felt my blood
Glow with the glow that slowly crimson'd all
Thy presence and thy portals, while I lay,
Mouth, forehead, eyelids, growing dewy-warm
With kisses balmier than half-opening buds
Of April, and could hear the lips that kiss'd
Whispering I knew not what of wild and sweet,
Like that strange song I heard Apollo sing,
While Ilion like a mist rose into towers.

Yet hold me not for ever in thine East:
How can my nature longer mix with thine?
Coldly thy rosy shadows bathe me, cold
Are all thy lights, and cold my wrinkled feet
Upon thy glimmering thresholds, when the steam
Floats up from those dim fields about the homes
Of happy men that have the power to die,
And grassy barrows of the happier dead.
Release me, and restore me to the ground;
Thou seëst all things, thou wilt see my grave:
Thou wilt renew thy beauty morn by morn;
I earth in earth forget these empty courts,
And thee returning on thy silver wheels.

"Tithonus" was written by Tennyson after the death of his dear friend, Hallam. It is a dramatic monologue and is taken from Greek mythology. The story is about Tithonus and the Goddess of Dawn, Aurora who gave him the gift of immortality because of her love for him. But without youth he became older and weaker, as the years passed and yearned for release from eternal life.

It is a beautiful poem, pure and musical in tone and style. It is a fine example of his poetic art.

7.5.1. Tithonus: A Summary

"Tithonus" is a dramatic monologue first written by Tennyson in 1833. When the final version was completed (1859) it was published in 1860 in the Cornhill Magazine edited by W.M Thackeray. It was one of a set of four poems, "Morte d' Arthur", "Ulysses", "Tithonus" and "Tiresias" written after the death of his close friend, Arthur Hallam (in 1833). It was supposed to come after "Ulysses" for, in one sense, it moved ahead. At the end of "Ulysses", he says that fulfillment may bring its own dangers – when man gets all that he desires there is the danger of him feeling disappointed and let down, Tithonus represents this very danger. He has been made immortal – man desires immortality, but is left feeling weary and disappointed. Immortality is not what he expected it to be, especially without eternal youth and beauty and he now only wants the gift of immortality to be withdrawn. He yearns to die like any ordinary man who is born, lives and finally dies.

Arthur Hallam's early death made Tennyson feel that he had youth but not immortality. Tithonus is granted immortality without eternal youth. This was the idea Tennyson took up for his poem of age and mortality. Eternal life without youth is useless and to show this he drew upon Greek mythology – Tithonus who is eternally old because he lives forever an old man.

Tithonus, a figure from Greek mythology, is the speaker in this poem. According to the myth, Tithonus was the brother of the king of Troy. He was handsome and beautiful and loved by Aurora, The goddess of the Dawn. She kidnapped Tithonus and asked Zeus, the king of Olympus (Heaven) to grant him immortality but he soon grew old and sick but could not die. Aurora then changed him into a grasshopper to relieve him of his suffering.

Tennyson changes this story slightly. In the poem it is Aurora not Zeus who grants him immortality. The source of Tithonus suffering , the Goddesses referred to as ' Hours' , are jealous of his immortality and so make him grow old and sick so that he is miserable . He loses his vitality and strength and slowly withers away but does not die; only yearns for an escape route in death.

Stanza I

Tithonus looks around him and sees Nature going about its usual business – the woods grow old , the leaves turn yellow and fall , Man is born , works hard for his living and then when his time comes , he dies , and is buried . Tithonus alone is immortal and so does not die. He is cursed with immortality and so slowly withers away in the arms of the Goddess Aurora who is eternally young. He is now a white haired old man wandering about the earth and living in the East which was the dwelling place of Aurora Goddess of Dawn

Stanza II

Tithonus, who is now a white haired old man, thinks of his young days. In his youth he was handsome and beautiful and as a result the Goddess Aurora had seen him and fallen in love with him. He had then asked Aurora for the gift of immortality and without a thought or hesitation, she had readily granted his wish. Just like rich men who are generous and give away their riches to the poor and needy. They help them out. So also Aurora granted him immortality. But then his immortality aroused the jealousy of the 'Strong Hours' who were the lesser Goddess companions of Aurora. Out of jealousy,

they made Tithonus suffer old age and its related problems -- sickness and infirmity. They could not bring an end to his life but left him old and tired and sick to live beside the eternally young and beautiful Aurora. Tithonus represented immortal age and Aurora stood for immortal youth. If only she could now take back her gift and grant him release through death. Her eyes fill with tears to see him so old and miserable. As against what he wanted in his youth – to be immortal – Tithonus now realizes that why should man want in any way, to be different from other men? Why should he be immortal when every other man, at a certain point in his life, has to be pause or die? Death is a natural end to man's life and he should want no other end or prolonging of his life.

Stanza III

Tithonus then gets a glimpse of the world he was born into. In this stanza, Tennyson gives a beautiful description of dawn as it breaks over the night sky. Dawn is personified as Aurora. He looks up to see Aurora rising from her living area, The East. The darkness of the sky is brightened by the redness which comes before the sun. Her eyes fill with tears as she sees him. The brighter they become the stars in the sky slowly fade out and are lost in the morning sky. As day brightens, the dawn becomes brighter and slowly daybreak is there and she has gone with the tears left on his cheeks. He realizes the meaning of those tears– that gifts once given cannot be taken back, even by the Gods.

Stanza IV

Tithonus remembers his young days when he used to watch the arrival of dawn. His whole body felt alive and young and he turned red as the morning light of the dawn cast a reddish glow over nature and her beings, Tithonus included. As he lay there in the dawn, he could feel his face glowing with the soft kisses she had placed on his brow and eyes lids and could hear the whispered sweet melody in his ears. This sweet music was like the music of Apollo, the Sun God. Apollo's music played on the lyre, built the tower of Ilium or Troy. As he played music, the tower came up. Thus he remembers his young days when he was beautiful and Aurora covered his face with soft kisses.

Stanza V

Tithonus, who is now old and sick, yearns for death. He wants his lover Aurora to release him from her love. She is eternal youth & he is eternal old age. The two do not go together; hence she should release him. The rosy light of the dawn bathes his tired limbs. It no longer fills him with a bright, alert feeling. He is too old and tired now. She renews herself every morning when dawn comes. He remains old and tired. He sees the steam rising up from the fields and the homes of happy men who can die unlike Tithonus who cannot die. The morning light also bathes the graves of the happy dead. And only one thought comes to his mind – if only he could die. His last weary cry is to be released from this old tired and sick body and to be laid down in a grave. Every morning she casts her glow over everything and so will be able to lighten up his grave too. She will be able to renew herself every morning, while he, in his grave, will be able to forget this unhappy present state. She can continue her journey on silver wheels which at present only tortures him.

7.5.2. "Tithonus": An Analysis

Tennyson's "Tithonus" is considered as one of the best dramatic monologues ever written. You have to understand that a dramatic monologue is a monologue which means,

in one sense; it is a speech by one person. There is just one speaker and from what he says we understand that it is addressed to someone else. It is dramatic in nature, in that it has some excitement or action in what he says.

Source: In "Tithonus" the speaker is not the poet but Tithonus who relates his own story. How he was young and handsome and came to be loved by Aurora, the Goddess of Dawn and what happened later on. Tennyson based his story of Tithonus on Greek mythology. According to the myth, Aurora was the Goddess of Dawn who fell in love with young and handsome Tithonus. She carried him away and at her request, Zeus the king of Olympus granted him immortal life. However, she forget to ask him for eternal youth and so though he could not die, with the passage of time, he grew old and sick and weak, so much so that finally Tithonus was forced to ask the Goddess to take back her gift . She could not do so and Tithonus had to live a pitiable life. He was old, could not die and could not love Aurora. He could neither die nor enjoy youth and beauty. Finally, out of pity, Aurora turned him into a grass hopper so that he escapes the miseries of eternal old age.

As a Dramatic Monologue

The Speaker here is Tithonus. He is a pathetic figure who is trying his best to secure a release from the burden of living. Tennyson tries, through his speech to focus attention on his particular circumstances where he can neither die nor regain his youth. It is perhaps one of Tennyson's best works – it is a highly finished poem and has a clear music and beauty of style.

Craftsmanship

Tennyson displayed his style of writing and creating the atmosphere needed for the story of Tithonus. It is an imaginary land and Aurora, the Goddess of Dawn has carried him away. His description of the dawn coming up is remarkable – Aurora slowly awakening, the glimmer in her brow, her freshness and her brightness and the rosy hue which slowly envelopes the world, chasing away the darkness, the stars too fading away. It is a magical description and the spell is on us.

There is pathos in his pictures of Tithonus – a tired old man, weak and sick. He is no longer the bold handsome lover of his youth. He represents eternal old age and his beloved Aurora stands for immortal and eternal youth. She renews herself with fresh energy when dawn breaks out every morning. As such they have nothing to hold them together-- age & youth and Tithonus now wants a release from this relationship.

Blank Verse: It is written in blank verse, unrhymed iambic pentameter. It has seven sections or stanzas of different lengths, each of which forms a unit in itself. He speaks with tenderness for man and understands the yearnings and wishes and desires of man. Man longs for immortality but when he gets it, he realizes that one could go weary of eternal life without youth. Man grows weary of life and yearns for release through death. But despite its theme it is not a dark and depressing poem. Tithonus does not speak bitterly of life or mankind. He still appreciates the beauty of this earth and sky, of the dawn and of Aurora and himself in earlier times. The first version of Tithonus was written 1833 but was not very well received. After the complete final version in 1859 he published it in 1860 in the Cornhill Magazine. The 1833 version contained several

differences from the final version. Immortality was described as 'fatal 'not cruel and many other such changes.

It was meant as a companion poem to "Ulysses". "Ulysses" referred to the dangers that may come with fulfillment. "Tithonus" shows us those dangers. Tithonus achieves what Ulysses longed for and finds himself disappointed. Ulysses wanted to 'sail beyond the sunset 'because he felt "how dull it was to pause i. e. in other words Ulysses perhaps yearned to break the boundaries of men. He did not want to be put off by the pause in man's life. That is he wished to be immortal. Tithonus has become immortal but then he realizes it is not what he expected it to be. Without eternal youth, eternal life is a burden and then he questions why man should want to be any different from other men. Why should not he too die like other ordinary man?

This poem was written after the death of his friend Arthur Hallam. A chance remark by someone that Hallam had youth without immortality, got Tithonus thinking about immortality without youth. That became his theme and to illustrate it he look the story of Tithonus.

Conclusion: Tithonus is a beautiful and highly finished poem. It is a fine example of Tennyson's technical maturity and his creativeness. There is power, passion, simplicity and also sensuousness about it. It is a fine piece of art and deserves all the praise showered on it.

7.6. TENNYSON AS A POET

Tennyson was the leading poet of Victorian England. His place in 19th century Victorian literature is as assured as Chaucer's in 14th century English literature. When we study him as a poet, we have to look into the different aspects of his craft. Here we will study him as a poet of nature, his attitude and treatment of love, his characters, his political and social outlook, his religious outlook and most of all his lyricism.

7.6.1. Poet of Nature

Tennyson gives us some very close and accurate descriptions of nature. In fact the influence of science on his work can best be seen in his nature descriptions. He wrote like a scientist with a gift for poetry. His work had great accuracy of detail, as if he had spent a lot of time examining nature very closely. He was sensitive to the varied aspects of nature. He observes closely and with accuracy the smallest detail and expresses it with delicate poetic feeling. The two are blended together-. accurate observation and the poetic gift. Thus, he says of dawn:

And shake the darkness from their loosened manes
And beat the twilight into flakes of fire

He speaks of how autumn lays "a fiery finger on the leaves"

Of the autumn storm he says:

The last red leaf is whirled away
the rooks are blown about the sky.

Everywhere the observation of the scientist is given the poetic touch – The basic, actual fact is dressed in poetry. Besides, his picture of nature is always the background for some human emotion. It reflects what is going on in the mind of man. If man is happy, nature appears in a happy mood and if sad, he focuses on the gloomy aspects of nature. Nature always is a reflection of man's moods. Wordsworth and Byron look upon Nature as being something outside of man. For Tennyson it is always background for some human emotion. It has no message of its own, just blends in with the mood of man. Thus in Lotus Eaters, he concentrates on showing a dreamy, lazy & languid atmosphere which goes with the lazy feeling of the lotus eaters. In Tithonus he gives us the melancholy, autumnal touch:

The woods decay the woods decay and fall

In 'In Memoriam' sorrow is the inspiration which leads to some very lovely poetry; a calm resignation in the mood of man and also in nature.

Calm is the morn without a sound
Calm as to suit a calmer grief

7.6.2. Tennyson's Treatment of Love

Tennyson's treatment of love is very different from that of Byron, Shelley or Browning. Byron looked upon love as some kind of elemental force that takes on man and his emotions. For Shelley and Browning it was more of a transcendental passion. But for Tennyson love was always a domestic passion. Whenever he talks of love, of girls and boys going out together, he follows it up quickly with the idea of marriage. This love poetry, at times, may seem cold and may not reach any height or depths. No one goes into extreme happiness over love and no one sinks into despair when love is lost. In fact his love poetry has a certain tenderness, graciousness and homeliness about it. It has a charm all its own, tender, warm and glowing with innocence There is nothing sensuous about it.

7.6.3. His Lyricism

Tennyson is a great lyric poet. In his hands, the music of language was changed into melody and harmony. He loved poetry and knew very early that he was destined to be a poet. His poetry is remarkable for its descriptive imagery and sweet melody. Some of his famous lyrics are- Tears idle Tears, Break, Break, Break, Come not when I am dead etc.

Sweetness, clarity melody and decency are the hallmarks of his style. They are the dominant characteristics of his typical style. He is happiest when bringing to his readers the beauty of the visible world.

As we had mentioned earlier, Tennyson observed things closely and then placed them in front of his readers in poetic form. He gave expression to bare facts in poetry, with music and clarity. In fact one criticism against him was that there is a lot of beauty and music in his verse but very little thought. This applies specially to his earlier works. The volume of 1833 was severely attacked because of this. Tennyson did not despair and spent the next 10 years revising his work so that when next he published his poetry, it was widely accepted. In some ways he never bettered the 1842 volume which had gems like – Lotus Eaters, Lady of Shalott, Come not when I am dead etc. Till now his work was all beauty and music, now a change was coming. Thought was slowly entering his poetry.

W.H. Auden has described him as an essentially lyrical poet and his short lyrics- Break, Break, Break and Tears idle Tears- are some of his greatest lyrics. They are spontaneous and full of melody. Later critics have felt that his work was shallow and lacked thought but there can be no denying that as lyrics- melodious, sweet and spontaneous, they have very few equals. He did turn to the problem of the day in his later work But even there critics felt that he was shallow and confused. However, confused and shallow or not, his poetry is superb.

7.6.4. As a Poetic Artist/Craftsman

Some critics are of the opinion that he was a great technician and little else. In fact his 1833 volume of poems was severely criticized. But Tennyson took the criticism positively and spent the next 10 years polishing up his art. In 1842 when he published his poems, they were hailed by all. This volume included his old work- Lady of Shalott, lotus Eaters, Come not when I am dead etc. The earlier versions of these poems were not so polished and finished. But the final version was very well received.

He had the eye of a scientist and revised and re revised his poems till they sparkled. He was a great poetic artist and his poetry had metrical variety. The influence of science gave form and balance to his craftsmanship and also clarity and lucidity to whatever he said.

Many of his poems are written in blank verse- which is unrhymed iambic pentameter. However he tried other meters too. In the Idylls, for the first time he tried blank verse on such a big scale. His blank verse may not be as grand as that of Milton's but it has its own peculiar qualities- it has grace, tenderness, nobility and flexibility. It is not monotonous or boring.

7.6.5. Political and Social Outlook

Even though critics have felt that his poetry is all beauty and melody and no serious thought, this is not so. It was true of his earlier works but later on he turned to the problems of the day- in "Locksley Hall" and "The Princess". His interest in the happenings of his age grew with what was happening around him-democratic ideals were coming up and science was slowly gaining importance. These factors influenced his work and we can see the thought behind his later work.

He wanted change and believed in the democratic ideals coming up but he did not have the revolutionary passion of Shelley who wanted a sudden change- away with the rich and the monarchy - and the establishment of a government of the people. Tennyson believed in an orderly change. Monarchy has to go and democracy should come but gradually without bloodshed. In "Locksley Hall" he gave expression to the social problems of the day. In "The Princess" he dealt with the woman's question- should they have the right to vote? There was a healthy progressive note in this poem, The Victorian age did not give importance to women and wanted to limit them to the home, He gives a balanced idea of woman's place in society – emphasizes that

Woman's cause is Man's
They rise and sink together

Like his age he too believes that marriage and home life is the best outlet for a woman's energies but that does not mean she cannot go out and find her way in the outside world.

Towards the end of his career, he lived a more reclusive life, cut off from the outside world. Hence he was not in touch with the realities of the world. Besides the quiet country life and his temperament made his later utterances on social subjects practically nil. He had nothing to say on the current problem then.

7.6.6. Influence of Science and His Religious Outlook

The scientific advances of the day influenced Tennyson greatly. Science influenced him as a poet-he gave accurate descriptions of nature. However, his accuracy did not extend to his general outlook in life. He did not take up anyone position- either that of science or faith and fight his cause with the logic of science. Science said man's first parents were the apes. Faith and religion said Adam and Eve were man's first parents. But Tennyson did not choose sides. Here he was a typical Victorian and approached the problem from the angle of compromise. He was aware of the religious confusion and also sensitive to scientific thought. He did not deny either. He just said that there is something that watches over man. It may not be God, for science has proved otherwise,, but still man could have faith in something, in the universe watching out for him, a kind of intuition which tells you what to do or not.

In his poem "In Memoriam", he gives speech to his religious philosophy and gives his position on religion and science. It is not so much a philosophy of faith as of hope. Because as he says:

Somehow good will be the final goal of ill.

This feeling of certainty many felt showed how weak Tennyson was and this disgusted many critics. Instead of fighting for what science had to say or what religion and the Bible believed in – he just said that good would come out of evil too. In those days of doubts, this compromise was very popular for when man did not know what to believe in-- Religion or science- The middle path of compromise was best.

Conclusion: Tennyson was a poet of discipline He believed in law and order and a quiet dignified life. And these are the qualities that mark his work too. His poetry is not great in that sense; not inspiring for he does not thrill us or inspire us. It is quiet and peaceful, dignified and serene and graceful. He is the poet of everyday emotions, a great painter of the English country side and the creator of melodious poetry. However much the modern critic may criticize him for shallow thought, no one can take away from him the delicacy and charm of his verse.

7.7. Tennyson as a Representative Poet of the Victorian Age or The Victorian Compromise and Tennyson

Tennyson is regarded as being the representative poet of the Victorian Age. That is he reflected in his work the main happenings of the Victorian Age. He was the voice of the whole people- and expressed their feelings, emotions, problems, and doubts in sweet melody-- his poetry. He stood for their ideals, what they aspired for, the social attitudes and the moral problems of Victorian England and most of all for their spirit of compromise. He is best regarded as being the representative of the people in three main

areas where there was confusion and people opted for compromise. These areas are as follows:

- Politics- Democracy versus Monarchy.
- Science- Religion versus Science.
- Love

7.7.1. Politics

The nineteenthq century was a period of change. Change was coming about in every aspect of life. The French Revolution in 1788 had inspired people and encouraged them to feel that all men are brothers. Liberty, equality and fraternity was the battle cry of the revolution and many poets especially Wordsworth and Shelley were carried away by it.

This led to the demand for a greater representation of the common man, in the day to day governance of the country. Democratic ideals came up and also the question of universal suffrage and voting rights for women. There was change in the air but the common man was confused. He felt he owed his loyalty to the king but at the same time wanted a say in governing the country. And so he approached the problem from the point of view of compromise.

Tennyson is the best example of the spirit of compromise which was to be seen in the 19th century. He too was fired up by talk of democracy and believed in change. He believed –

The old order changeth
Giving place to the new

Change has to come about but it does not have to be sudden. He did not believe in bloody revolutions, and sudden change like Shelley who wanted things to change with the sweep of the hand. Tennyson wanted change but at a slower pace. Gradual orderly development was what he believed in. You cannot do away with class divisions at one go and he was not so sure about giving power to the working class. Through his poetry he tried to bring all ranks of people together under the common band of humanity. He tried to fire them with a love for their country.

Thus here too, through his poetry he helped to express the doubts and fears of the people-- Their confusion between monarchy and democracy and like them he opted for the middle course--Change but at a slower pace. Monarchy has to go and democracy will take its place but this will take time.

7.7.2. Science

Here too he was a true representative of his age. His poetry dealt with the doubts and difficulties of his age especially with regard to Christianity and the traditional ideas people had about man's nature and destiny which were now being questioned by science and progress. Yet through the mastery of his poetic genius, his noble verse and his melodious poetry he managed to give his readers a feeling of calmness and serenity in those troubled times. He himself was beset by doubts. He was aware of new man's place in the universe as revealed by science – it did fill him with fear but he also did give the Victorians a feeling of all being well.

Darwin in his' Origin of Species' declared that man has evolved from the ape and this put science in direct confrontation with religion. The Bible said Adam and Eve are man's

first parents and if you do good you will be rewarded. The Victorians were confused as science and its discoveries were calling in question their very faith. They did not know who to turn to, in difficult times. If the story of the Bible is not true, then what of the moral?

Tennyson did not take sides. Like a typical Victorian, he approached the problem from the angle of compromise. He did not deny either religion or science. He just said that there is something in the world that watches over man. It may not be God, for science has proved otherwise, but still man could have faith that something was watching over him preventing him from doing wrong – you could perhaps call it intuition, today. It was more a philosophy of hope rather than a clear cut viewpoint. The scientist was pleased because he did not completely reject what science said -that man's is evolved from the apes. The belief that there could be something looking over man pleased the religious. In the Princess, he gave expression to this philosophy of his when he said

Somehow good will be the final goal of ill.

This was very popular in the Victorian Age. He did not fight for either science or religion, just declared the compromise between the two- which was exactly what most people were doing in the Victorian Age.

7.7.3. Love

In the Victorian period, love was quite gentle and domesticated. The same is true of Tennyson's depiction of the emotion. Whenever he talks of young people in love, he quickly mentions that they are married or to be married. Love was a domestic sentiment and Tennyson is true to his age. Sex and sexual passion have no place in his work.

He was in favor of women's movement. He seems to be for women and their rights. He goes to the root of the problem when he says:

The women's cause is Man's
They rise and sink together

He sees marriage and domesticated home life as the best outlet for women's energies but he does not restrict them to these alone. In all this he was echoing the thoughts and sentiments of his age

Tennyson then dominated the Victorian scene for half a century. He had the typical Victorian attitude of compromise. With all the changes taking place in politics and science – he holds a middle ground. He is not melancholic like Arnold or too optimistic like Browning in tone and mood of his poems. He tried to give a real clear picture of the problems of Victorian society and then tries to show a positive way out. His path is that of the middle ground and therefore he is called a compromising artist. He does not give in to the coming changes nor is he careless of it. He just finds a way between the old and the new.

His poetry marks a departure from romantic poetry which is subjective. The Romantic poets speak of their own emotions & feelings. Tennyson's poetry is objective in that he speaks for his age. The spirit of his age is mirrored in his poetry. We have the conflict between science and religion, monarchy and democracy, romanticism and classicism. He believes that change is due and will happen. He deals with the topic of the day and hence his poetry is interesting because it shows us the political, intellectual and spiritual life of

the age. He is qualified to be the mouthpiece, the spokesman of the age and his poetry represents the true spirit of the Victorian age.

Self Assessment Questions III

1. Critically appreciate "Tithonus".
2. Write a brief note on Tennyson's Craftsmanship.
3. Write a brief summary of the poem
4. Discuss Tennyson as the representative poet of the Victorian Age.
5. What is the Victorian compromises and Tennyson's stand on it?
6. Discuss Tennyson as a poet of nature
7. What is Tennyson's political outlook?
8. Give an estimate of Tennyson as poet

7.8. SUMMING UP

- In this unit you have studied the following:
- About the Victorian background
- The poem "Lady of Shalott" its annotation and critical appreciation.
- "Tithonus" annotation and appreciation.
- About Tennyson as a poet
- Tennyson as a representative of his age
- A general idea , on the whole about the Victorian age , Tennyson's life , his work and an estimate of Tennyson as a poet.

7.9. ANSWERS TO SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

I

1. Refer to section 7.1.
2. Refer to section 7.1.

II

1. Refer to sub-section 7.4.1.
2. Refer to sub-section 7.4.2.5.
3. Refer to sub-section 7.4.2.6.
4. Refer from sub-section 7.4.2. to sub-section 7.4.2.6.

III

1. Refer to sub-section 7.5.2.
2. Refer from sub-section 7.6.3. to sub-section 7.6.4.
3. Refer to sub-section 7.5.1.
4. Refer from section 7.7. to sub-section 7.7.4.
5. Refer from section 7.7. to sub-section 7.7.4.
6. Refer to sub-section 7.6.1.
7. Refer to sub-section 7.6.5.
8. Refer from section 7.6. to sub-section 7.6.6.

7.10. REFERENCES

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7.11. TERMINAL AND MODEL QUESTIONS

1. Discuss Tennyson as a Victorian poet with a special reference to the Victorian Compromise.
2. Give a critical appreciation of any one of the two :
   "Lady of Shalott"
   "Tithonus"
3. Is Tennyson a lyric poet? Give reasons for your answer.
4. What influence did the background of the 19th century have on the poetry of Tennyson?
5. Tennyson's poetry is all beauty and melody. How far is this true?
6. Discuss Tithonus as a Dramatic Monologue.

UNIT 8 ROBERT BROWNING

"The Last Ride Together" "Rabbi Ben Ezra"

8.1. INTRODUCTION

In this unit we will be taking up Robert Browning an important literary figure of Victorian English Literature. He was a poet in the Victorian Age who was highly regarded in his time. After his death came a period when critics questioned his poetry and in the twentieth century his popularity declined. However, now a more balanced critical judgment has been arrived at and Browning is again regarded as being one of the great English poets of all times.

Browning speaks for the Victorian Age though not as much as Tennyson does. But there is one hitherto ignored aspect of his work. Mid-nineteenth century England had become industrialized and so city based. The focus had changed from the country to the city; from rural to urban. And the literary artists of the time too highlighted this aspect of life. Everyday life had changed and with new factories and mills opening, there was a movement from the country to the city. With so many people living in such close quarters, poverty, violence and sex became a part of everyday life. There were fewer restrictions on their behaviour. In smaller communities like villages from where they came, bad behaviour was not accepted. So people felt the need to conform to the rules of society. Now in the anonymity of city life where you did not know your neighbour, there was no such compulsion to conform to societal behaviour. It did not matter what you did and how you behaved. Big city life thus led to violence and as result insecurity. You never knew where violence was lurking. Also since it was a growing city there were bigger crowds and bigger markets and shops that catered to the crowds. There were so many new things happening all around that man became numb. Writers too felt the need to compete with all these temptations. They had to shock their readers into reading; otherwise they had no time to read. They were busy looking at the goods available. Browning is a nineteenth century poet in that sense. At times he does try to shock his readers with violence and sex which had become a symbol of modern urban dwelling conditions. Some of Browning's poems are disturbing in that sense. In "My Last Duchess" the Duke's man is negotiating a marriage deal for the Duke and he does not hesitate to point out that the Duke's first wife had been murdered by him, for crossing the limits of what the Duke considered to be correct behaviour. She was friendly to all, which he interpreted as flirting. Hence, he got her killed. In "Porphyria's Lover", the lover is jealous of his beloved and so murders her one night so that she remains his forever more.

This moral decay of Victorian society was coupled with a lack of interest in religion which was because of the developments in the field of science. It led to a morally conservative backlash i.e. people reacted to the violence and bad behaviour by going to the other extreme. They encouraged prudery.It was actually an attempt to bring thing and society back to normal, to what it had been earlier. Things had been out of control and now society was trying to get things under control. Thus, everything was scrutinized for moral propriety—the way men and women behaved. It had to be morally correct, prim and proper. This also extended to art and literature and can be seen in Browning's poetry.

Science and the discoveries in science created more problems for religion and tradition.Everything seemed to be in doubt- questions were being raised about religion and the Bible.It was a period of doubt and confusion. All this is reflected in Browning's work as through his dramatic monologues he discusses art and morality and how social powers could be misused .In "My Last Duchess" he is, in one sense ,criticizing the Duke

for taking upon himself the role of guardian of society. He thinks he is right in sitting in judgment on his wife's behaviour. He could be wrong .The Duchess may have simply been a friendly girl.

Browning was then a major poet of his time and an important influence on modern poetry though that was acknowledged much later. In his later years he came to be looked upon as a wise old man and was highly regarded for his knowledge. Modern critics like T.S Eliot did not hold him in high esteem but Ezra Pound paid him a tribute by calling him one of his literary fathers. After World War II, something of his damaged reputation was salvaged when the new generation of critics acknowledged that he had influenced the modern poetic form. He regained his lost position and today he is recognized as a major poet.

8.2. OBJECTIVES

This unit will help you to:

- recognize Browning's standing as a major poet of the Victorian Age
- understand the poetic genius of Browning
- be able to analyse his poems

8.3. ROBERT BROWNING (1812—1889)

HIS LIFE AND WORKS

Browning was born on 7 May 1812 at Camberwell. His father was a clerk in the Bank of England and his mother was of mixed German and Scotch descent-a musician and an artist. Browning inherited his music and artistic tastes from her. He was familiar with the classics from a very young age and was a sharp and highly imaginative child. Early schooling was in private schools but the experience being not very satisfactory he continued his education at home. He was undecided what he wanted to be—a doctor or an actor—but finally decided on becoming a poet. He had written a small volume of poetry in his childhood and thus showed a keen interest in poetry very early in life. Byron, Shelley and Keats influenced his early poetry but the effect soon wore off. At twenty he had published "Pauline" and in 1834 he left for Russia.He made many new friends over there. Macready, the actor was one of them and for his son he wrote "The Pied Piper".In 1838 he went to Italy and its influence remained with him throughout his life. Much of his best work was done in this period. When he returned from Italy he became interested in the poems of Elizabeth Barrett and met her on 21 May 1845 in what was to be the beginnings of the most romantic literary love story. Her unreasonable and selfish father refused to give his permission for their marriage. Elizabeth was an invalid and he refused to also let her go abroad for treatment Browning was then 34 years old and Elizabeth 6 years older. They decided to elope and on12 September 1846 they were secretly married at Marylebone Church and left for Italy thereafter. They led a happy married life there Elizabeth grew happy and fit. In 1849 a son was born to them but their joy was cut short by the sad news of his mother's death. Browning was devastated and dreaded returning to England. They made several trips to England but Italy was their home.

Browning then returned to London and devoted himself to his son's education. His sister had come to live with him and he also continued writing though his poems were not very popular. It grieved him a lot but he continued writing and slowly his popularity grew. As he grew older, his reputation as a poet too grew and he was looked upon as a wise sage. His opinions and his wide knowledge were greatly regarded. His son by now was married and settled in Italy. Browning who had not visited since his wife's death, now made annual visits to the country and on one such visit, he caught a cold and developed bronchitis. He passed away on12 December 1889 and was buried at Westminster Abbey. Thus, ended the life of a great poet and a great literary figure of the nineteenth century.

HIS WORKS:

Browning's development as a poet and a writer can be divided into three periods:

a) The Period of Immaturity (1832—1840)
b) The Period of Maturity (1841—1869)
c) Decline of the Artist (1870—1889)

a) The Period of Immaturity (1832-1840)

The period from 1832-1840 is when Browning had not yet decided how he should write his verse. He was trying out various forms and finally decided on the dramatic lyric. He had a dramatic genius and it found wonderful expression in his poems. He had tried out the monologue, narrative drama and the pure lyric. In the dramatic lyric he combines characteristics of the other forms too.

"Pauline" was written in this period-1833, when he was twenty. It shows the influence of others and reveals those qualities which were to come later in Browning's poetry–the thinker and the artist. In 1835 he wrote "Paracelsus" which showed the influence of Keats but Browning was coming into his own. "Sordello" was his next work-1840. It was a learned poem, full of his knowledge and difficult to understand. All three works up to now did not show Browning at his best. We can just get a glimpse of what he can do.

The 'Dramatic Lyrics', his next work covered the period -1836-1846.Here Browning the poetic genius, the artist is revealed. Till now the moralist and thinker had taken centrestage. Now it is the turn of the artist-"Evelyn Hope", "In a Gondola", "Porphyra's Lover" , "My Last Duchess", "The Pied Piper" these are some of the best works of Browning. We have satire, humour, keen observation, joy in life, passion and thought.

b) The Period of Maturity (1841—1869)

The "Dramatic Lyrics", 1836-1846 of which we spoke in the earlier section can be included in this one too. Here we have Browning at his best. "The Dramatic Romances" (1848) are even better than the lyrics. The works are like the earlier one but here the scope is wider he is more at ease. In 1855 he wrote "Men and Women" which included "Andrea Del Sarto" and "Fra Lippo Lippi".

This is his best period when he wrote his most varied work. The dramatic note is there with both the intellectual and emotional touch. At times the intellectual, the thinker dominates and at other times the emotional. But he is at his best when he blends the two together-thought with passion and emotion, the thinker with the poet.

Some of his works of this period are "Pippa Passes"(1841), "A Soul's Tragedy" (1846),"In a Balcony" (1853). He also wrote "The Ring and The Book" (1868-1869). Later he wrote "Dramatis Personae" in 1864 which was next in line after "Dramatic Lyrics", "Dramatic Romances" and "Men and Women". Here he still takes love as his main theme but the thinker too can be seen. The lyrics here are not so sweet and lacking the beauty and tenderness of his earlier work. But still there is much to attract us. And then came "Rabbi Ben Ezra" and "Abt Vogler". "Rabbi Beb Ezra" is full of wise and tender sayings and gives us Browning's outlook on life.

In "The Ring and The Book" (1869), Browning is both the observer and the critic of life. Till now he was either the thinker or the poet. Here both come together. It is long but here we see the various sides to him-the dramatic, tragic, psychological and analytical. However, it is not lyrical.

c) Decline of the Artist [1870-1889]

After this, the decline sets in. The intellectual side of Browning gets the upper hand. The poetic artist is barely there. He might as well have written in prose. His works include "The Inn Album" (1875), "Pacchiarotto" (1876), "Dramatic Idylls" (1879-80) "Asolando" (1889) etc. Towards the end of his career once again the artist in him awakened. The force and beauty of his earlier work was not there but something of the old magic and charm remained. The intellectual side was in the background and the poet of hopes, loves fears and sorrows was uppermost. It is the old Browning but slightly weak. It was the last work of his life as he passed away soon after. 'Asolando' is the old Browning coming back to life, though weaker for the last time.

Self Assessment Questions I

1. Is the nineteenth century background reflected in any way in Browning's poetry?
2. What explanation can you give for the rise of Victorian prudery?
3. Discuss Browning's work in the light of the three periods of his development: as a poet-immaturity, maturity and decline.

8.4. THE LAST RIDE TOGETHER

I SAID—Then, dearest, since 'tis so,
Since now at length my fate I know,
Since nothing all my love avails,
Since all, my life seem'd meant for, fails,
Since this was written and needs must be—
My whole heart rises up to bless
Your name in pride and thankfulness!
Take back the hope you gave,—I claim
Only a memory of the same,
—And this beside, if you will not blame;
Your leave for one more last ride with me.

My mistress bent that brow of hers,
Those deep dark eyes where pride demurs
When pity would be softening through,
Fix'd me a breathing-while or two
With life or death in the balance: right!
The blood replenish'd me again;
My last thought was at least not vain:
I and my mistress, side by side
Shall be together, breathe and ride,
So, one day more am I deified.
Who knows but the world may end to-night?

Hush! if you saw some western cloud
All billowy-bosom'd, over-bow'd
By many benedictions—sun's
And moon's and evening-star's at once—
And so, you, looking and loving best,
Conscious grew, your passion drew
Cloud, sunset, moonrise, star-shine too,
Down on you, near and yet more near,
Till flesh must fade for heaven was here!—
Thus leant she and linger'd—joy and fear!
Thus lay she a moment on my breast.

Then we began to ride. My soul
Smooth'd itself out, a long-cramp'd scroll
Freshening and fluttering in the wind.
Past hopes already lay behind.
What need to strive with a life awry?
Had I said that, had I done this,
So might I gain, so might I miss.
Might she have loved me? just as well
She might have hated, who can tell!
Where had I been now if the worst befell?
And here we are riding, she and I.

Fail I alone, in words and deeds?
Why, all men strive and who succeeds?
We rode; it seem'd my spirit flew,
Saw other regions, cities new,
As the world rush'd by on either side.
I thought,—All labour, yet no less
Bear up beneath their unsuccess.
Look at the end of work, contrast
The petty done, the undone vast,
This present of theirs with the hopeful past!
I hoped she would love me; here we ride.

What hand and brain went ever pair'd?
What heart alike conceived and dared?
What act proved all its thought had been?
What will but felt the fleshly screen?
We ride and I see her bosom heave.
There's many a crown for who can reach.
Ten lines, a statesman's life in each!
The flag stuck on a heap of bones,
A soldier's doing! what atones?
They scratch his name on the Abbey-stones.
My riding is better, by their leave.

What does it all mean, poet? Well,
Your brains beat into rhythm, you tell
What we felt only; you express'd
You hold things beautiful the best,
And pace them in rhyme so, side by side.
'Tis something, nay 'tis much: but then,
Have you yourself what's best for men?
Are you—poor, sick, old ere your time—
Nearer one whit your own sublime
Than we who never have turn'd a rhyme?
Sing, riding's a joy! For me, I ride.

And you, great sculptor—so, you gave
A score of years to Art, her slave,
And that's your Venus, whence we turn
To yonder girl that fords the burn!
You acquiesce, and shall I repine?
What, man of music, you grown gray
With notes and nothing else to say,
Is this your sole praise from a friend,
'Greatly his opera's strains intend,
Put in music we know how fashions end!'
I gave my youth: but we ride, in fine.

Who knows what's fit for us? Had fate
Proposed bliss here should sublimate
My being—had I sign'd the bond—
Still one must lead some life beyond,
Have a bliss to die with, dim-descried.
This foot once planted on the goal,
This glory-garland round my soul,
Could I descry such? Try and test!
I sink back shuddering from the quest
Earth being so good, would heaven seem best?
Now, heaven and she are beyond this ride.

And yet—she has not spoke so long!
What if heaven be that, fair and strong
At life's best, with our eyes upturn'd
Whither life's flower is first discern'd,
We, fix'd so, ever should so abide?
What if we still ride on, we two
With life for ever old yet new,
Changed not in kind but in degree,
The instant made eternity,—
And heaven just prove that I and she
Ride, ride together, for ever ride?

"The Last Ride Together" is one of Browning's noblest love poems. The beloved rejects him and he accepts the rejection gracefully and with resignation. He only asks for one last ride together, to which she agrees. As they go riding out together, it is bliss for him- a kind of heaven. He forgets the past, the fact that she has said no to him. For him, only the present exists and he lives happily in the present. He is thankful to her and considers this moment and his love superior to art, music or anything else.

8.4.1. Summary

Stanza I

In this stanza, the lover accepts his fate with resignation. She has rejected him and he accepts it gracefully. He thanks her for whatever she has given him and asks her to take back the hope she had given. He will be content with just a memory of their days together. Since this rejection was written in his fate, he has nothing to say. Just one last request of her-that she agrees to go out riding with him this last time.

Stanza II

It deals with the power a woman has over a man. His whole life is hanging in balance-waiting for her reply. She frowns and in her eyes can be seen the struggle between pride and pity for him. Pity wins and she agrees to go riding with him. At this he heaves a sigh of relief and can breathe freely once again. He has no regrets. So what if she has rejected him, at least they are going out together for the last time. Even if the world were to come to an end, he would die happy because he has experienced what he wanted-he had this one last ride together.

Stanza III

Here Browning gives a sensuous description of the beloved as he helps her mount the horse. He compares her to a 'billowy-bosomed' western cloud that has the blessings of the sun, moon and stars all at once. Her beauty and passion are such that it draws the sun-set, moon-rise and star-shine on her. As he helps her mount the horse, she comes close to him and it is a moment of intense joy for him.

Stanza IV

They start riding together. His soul which was all cramped up and full of tension now is free. Tension has been swept away the moment she agreed to go out riding. The past is

behind him and he lives in the present, enjoying every moment. Where was the need to struggle, since his life was already not going the way he expected it to go? He expected her to return his love which she rejected. Hence there was no point in going over the past and reliving it. Had he behaved in some other manner she may or may not have loved him. There was also the possibility of her hating him. Now she was at least riding with him and therefore he should forget the past. His love at least ended on a happy note with their last ride together.

Stanza V

The lover says he is not the only person in the world to have failed in what he said or did. All men work hard to achieve their goal, but how many of them succeed in getting what they want. He is happy in her company and reflects that he is not alone in failing to reach his goal. Failure does not stop men from hoping for success. For Browning aspiration counts---it does not matter if you are unsuccessful. What matters is how hard you work to get what you want. Thus the lover may not have won his beloved but at least they are taking one last ride together.

Stanza VI

He compares many different kinds of success and contrasts it with love. Love, in every instance is greater .Thus he says, where is the man whose hands have finished a work exactly as he imagined it. In every case, action is always less than thought .Man thinks and dreams big but when he tries to change that into art, something falls short. It is never as good as he had thought. Again, he says, a politician, at his death, may get ten lines in the paper praising him; a soldier who dies for his country is honoured by it. But what good can that honour be to a man who is already dead. Love is far superior to all this. He loved the lady, she rejected him but at least he has this to give him happiness---a last ride together.

Stanza VII

Again the poet gives beautiful expression to the emotion felt by man but love wins over art; for experience matters more than setting it in rhyme and making it permanent in poetry. Experience is what counts and the poet is so busy writing poetry that he has no time to experience the emotion he is singing about in his works .Thus the lover is happy with his beloved. He is experiencing love in real life while the poet is merely singing about love in his poem. Thus life wins over art.

Stanza VIII

He turns to the sculptor and the musician. The sculptor has wasted 20 years learning his art and still a living and breathing girl is much better than his statue of a girl. The musician too has grown old composing music but there is nothing to show for it. Public taste is fickle and the songs that are so popular today will be forgotten tomorrow. If the lover has given his youth to love, at least he has this to show for it—they are riding together.

Stanza IX

Here he puts forward his belief in life after death. Something should be kept to look forward to after death. If fate had intended him to be happy here, she would have accepted him and he would have experienced, here on earth a kind of heavenly bliss.

Being so happy here, he would not look ahead to death and life after death. Heaven would not seem so attractive.Now, since he has not won her love here, he looks forward to the possibility of winning her love in after life.

Stanza X

The last ride, then, does not end here—for he looks forward to it in heaven. It is the last ride made eternal in Heaven. That is what life after death is all about---the best moments on earth prolonged. Heaven, for him is like this last ride together which gives him so much happiness. It is only much more intense in Heaven.

Browning's lover is a noble man unlike Tennyson's lover in 'Locksley Hall 'who is bitter about his beloved. Browning's lover has no bitterness. He accepts his fate and looks forward to consolation in the other world where he and the lady will be riding together forever.

8.4.3. Analysis

The Last Ride Together is one of Browning's noblest love poems. The speaker who is rejected by the lady accepts his rejection with resignation and holds no hard feelings towards her. He is not angry or bitter about it and just requests her for one last favour which she accepts. He is very different from Tennyson's lover in 'Locksley Hall' who rails against the beloved for refusing him. Browning's lover is noble and high minded and thanks her for the time they have had till then. He accepts his fate gracefully.

As a Love Poem

Browning paints a very attractive picture of a noble lover. He is a thorough gentleman. Inspite of the fact that she has rejected him; he still holds her in good stead and remembers only the good times they have had together. The experience has not left him bitter and he does not have anything bad to say of her. He is thankful to her for having come into his life and is content with just a memory of the same. He is glad she has agreed to the last ride and for him, that is all that matters. He has no regrets even if the world were to end the next day.

Glorification of Failure

The poem is a glorification of failure. Browning puts forward the view that whatever happens in one's life, it is fated to happen. If she has refused him it is because it is written in his fate and so one must accept it gracefully. There is no need for anger; just be thankful for what life has to give you and move on in life. There is no point in wondering what would have happened if he had behaved differently. The result could have been different and she could have either hated him or accepted him. At present she has, at least agreed to his last request. Yesterday she rejected him, today they are riding together. Thus there is no knowing what may happen tomorrow, therefore live in the present. Also, failure in this world means there is something to look forward to in afterlife.

Optimism

It is also a brilliant example of Browning's optimism. The lover is not depressed by his rejection. He is thankful for what she has given him and for the last ride. He lives in the present and compares his state today to what it was a day before. Today he is out riding

with her. Therefore life has a number of possibilities and you never know what may happen next; so take life as it comes.

His Philosophy

Browning believed that the end does not really matter. What matters is the way you strive and struggle to achieve your goal. Not all men get what they desire. Aspiration counts. You should have set goals and strive to achieve them. The rest is in the hands of God. It does not matter that you did not achieve what you set out to achieve. The struggle is all that counts. The lover may have been rejected by the beloved but it does not matter. He tried his best to win her. His rejection will only make him look forward to life after death where he may win her love. Achievement always falls short of aspiration but it is that which makes life worth living.

Theme

Browning points out the futility of various kinds of success and contrasts them with love. Love is always superior. Real life, real emotion and real feelings are superior to a mere copy of the same. A living breathing girl is so much more attractive than a statue of a young girl .So also music. Popular taste is fickle and what is liked today may not be liked tomorrow. But love is far above all this and whatever happens afterwards, he at least has his memory of their time together. The soldier gives up his life for his country and is honoured for it. The politician, at his death is remembered and honoured, But what good is any of this to them, once they are dead? The lover riding with his beloved is in a much better position. Browning declares the superiority of love over any kind of art. We have here the complete surrender to love in which the lover is nothing without the beloved.

His View of the Universe and Life and Death

Browning believed in life after death and that this life was just a preparation for life after death. If man achieved all that he desired here in this world, then what was left for the hereafter. And who would yearn for Heaven. After his rejection, the lover looks to Heaven as being an extension of their last ride together. It has made him very happy and he imagines that Heaven would be like this happiness, only much more. Heaven, for him is an intensification of the best moments on earth. He now looks forward to life after death when he will get what he did not achieve on earth. Here she refused him. In life after death, she will accept him and Heaven for them will be like this last ride together. Thus the last ride does not end here. It is made eternal in Heaven where life will be a long ride with the beloved. Thus Browning believed that man is given failure on earth so that he can look forward to fulfillment in Heaven. Something is to be kept for it so that we can look forward to Heaven.

Style and Obscurity

Generally speaking, Browning is criticized for his style. Critics believed that he was deliberately obscure which led to confusion, for readers were not very sure what he was trying to say .But the fact was that he was not deliberately obscure. It was his style and technique. He compressed a lot of meaning in short sentences e.g. "Ten lines, a statesman's life in each"

Browning is difficult and the superficial difficulties make it difficult to understand him. "The Last Ride Together" is a relatively easy poem to understand but it has stray examples of obscurity. However that does not take away our enjoyment of the poem.

The poem is a great achievement. Browning has created an ideal lover who bears no bitterness or harshness towards his beloved. There is no torment here only happy memories. She has rejected him; so what; there is the present with the last ride together and also there is tomorrow. Who knows what will happen tomorrow? Also there is hope of life after death and consolation in the other world. It is the noblest love poem ever and is full of optimism. It is a masterly piece of work for all years to come

Self Assessment Questions II

1. Give a summary of "The Last Ride Together".
2. Critically appreciate the poem "The Last Ride Together".
3. Discuss "The Last Ride Together" as a noble love poem.
4. What is Browning's philosophy as seen in "The Last Ride Together"?

8.5. "RABBI BEN EZRA"

Grow old along with me!
The best is yet to be,
The last of life, for which the first was made:
Our times are in His hand
Who saith "A whole I planned,
Youth shows but half; trust God: see all, nor be afraid!"

Not that, amassing flowers,
Youth sighed "Which rose make ours,
Which lily leave and then as best recall?"
Not that, admiring stars,
It yearned "Nor Jove, nor Mars;
Mine be some figured flame which blends, transcends them all!"

Not for such hopes and fears
Annulling youth's brief years,
Do I remonstrate: folly wide the mark!
Rather I prize the doubt
Low kinds exist without,
Finished and finite clods, untroubled by a spark.

Poor vaunt of life indeed,
Were man but formed to feed
On joy, to solely seek and find and feast:
Such feasting ended, then
As sure an end to men;
Irks care the crop-full bird? Frets doubt the maw-crammed beast?

Rejoice we are allied
To That which doth provide
And not partake, effect and not receive!
A spark disturbs our clod;
Nearer we hold of God
Who gives, than of His tribes that take, I must believe.

Then, welcome each rebuff
That turns earth's smoothness rough,
Each sting that bids nor sit nor stand but go!
Be our joys three-parts pain!
Strive, and hold cheap the strain;
Learn, nor account the pang; dare, never grudge the throe!

For thence,—a paradox
Which comforts while it mocks,—
Shall life succeed in that it seems to fail:
What I aspired to be,
And was not, comforts me:
A brute I might have been, but would not sink i' the scale.

What is he but a brute
Whose flesh has soul to suit,
Whose spirit works lest arms and legs want play?
To man, propose this test—
Thy body at its best,
How far can that project thy soul on its lone way?

Yet gifts should prove their use:
I own the Past profuse
Of power each side, perfection every turn:
Eyes, ears took in their dole,
Brain treasured up the whole;
Should not the heart beat once "How good to live and learn?"

Not once beat "Praise be Thine!
I see the whole design,
I, who saw power, see now love perfect too:
Perfect I call Thy plan:
Thanks that I was a man!
Maker, remake, complete,—I trust what Thou shalt do!"

For pleasant is this flesh;
Our soul, in its rose-mesh
Pulled ever to the earth, still yearns for rest;
Would we some prize might hold
To match those manifold
Possessions of the brute,—gain most, as we did best!

Let us not always say,
"Spite of this flesh to-day
I strove, made head, gained ground upon the whole!"
As the bird wings and sings,
Let us cry "All good things
Are ours, nor soul helps flesh more, now, than flesh helps soul!"

Therefore I summon age
To grant youth's heritage,
Life's struggle having so far reached its term:
Thence shall I pass, approved
A man, for aye removed
From the developed brute; a god though in the germ.

And I shall thereupon
Take rest, ere I be gone
Once more on my adventure brave and new:
Fearless and unperplexed,
When I wage battle next,
What weapons to select, what armour to indue.

Youth ended, I shall try
My gain or loss thereby;
Leave the fire ashes, what survives is gold:
And I shall weigh the same,
Give life its praise or blame:
Young, all lay in dispute; I shall know, being old.

For note, when evening shuts,
A certain moment cuts
The deed off, calls the glory from the grey:
A whisper from the west
Shoots—"Add this to the rest,
Take it and try its worth: here dies another day."

So, still within this life,
Though lifted o'er its strife,
Let me discern, compare, pronounce at last,
This rage was right i' the main,
That acquiescence vain:
The Future I may face now I have proved the Past."

For more is not reserved
To man, with soul just nerved
To act to-morrow what he learns to-day:
Here, work enough to watch
The Master work, and catch

Hints of the proper craft, tricks of the tool's true play.

As it was better, youth
Should strive, through acts uncouth,
Toward making, than repose on aught found made:
So, better, age, exempt
From strife, should know, than tempt
Further. Thou waitedst age: wait death nor be afraid!

Enough now, if the Right
And Good and Infinite
Be named here, as thou callest thy hand thine own
With knowledge absolute,
Subject to no dispute
From fools that crowded youth, nor let thee feel alone.

Be there, for once and all,
Severed great minds from small,
Announced to each his station in the Past!
Was I, the world arraigned,
Were they, my soul disdained,
Right? Let age speak the truth and give us peace at last!

Now, who shall arbitrate?
Ten men love what I hate,
Shun what I follow, slight what I receive;
Ten, who in ears and eyes
Match me: we all surmise,
They this thing, and I that: whom shall my soul believe?

Not on the vulgar mass
Called "work," must sentence pass,
Things done, that took the eye and had the price;
O'er which, from level stand,
The low world laid its hand,
Found straightway to its mind, could value in a trice:
But all, the world's coarse thumb
And finger failed to plumb,
So passed in making up the main account;
All instincts immature,
All purposes unsure,
That weighed not as his work, yet swelled the man's amount:

Thoughts hardly to be packed
Into a narrow act,
Fancies that broke through language and escaped;
All I could never be,
All, men ignored in me,

This, I was worth to God, whose wheel the pitcher shaped.

Ay, note that Potter's wheel,
That metaphor! and feel
Why time spins fast, why passive lies our clay,—
Thou, to whom fools propound,
When the wine makes its round,
"Since life fleets, all is change; the Past gone, seize to-day!"

Fool! All that is, at all,
Lasts ever, past recall;
Earth changes, but thy soul and God stand sure:
What entered into thee,
That was, is, and shall be:
Time's wheel runs back or stops: Potter and clay endure.

He fixed thee mid this dance
Of plastic circumstance,
This Present, thou, forsooth, wouldst fain arrest:
Machinery just meant
To give thy soul its bent,
Try thee and turn thee forth, sufficiently impressed.

What though the earlier grooves,
Which ran the laughing loves
Around thy base, no longer pause and press?
What though, about thy rim,
Skull-things in order grim
Grow out, in graver mood, obey the sterner stress?

Look not thou down but up!
To uses of a cup,
The festal board, lamp's flash and trumpet's peal,
The new wine's foaming flow,
The Master's lips a-glow!
Thou, heaven's consummate cup, what need'st thou with earth's wheel?

But I need, now as then,
Thee, God, who mouldest men;
And since, not even while the whirl was worst,
Did I,—to the wheel of life
With shapes and colours rife,
Bound dizzily,—mistake my end, to slake Thy thirst:

So, take and use Thy work:
Amend what flaws may lurk,
What strain o' the stuff, what warpings past the aim!
My times be in Thy hand!

Perfect the cup as planned!
Let age approve of youth, and death complete the same!

8.5.1. Summary

"Rabbi Ben Ezra" was first published in 1864. It has 192 lines and is the clearest expression of Browning's optimistic philosophy of life. "Rabbi Ben Ezra" is the narrator here. He was a real twelfth century Jewish scholar.What he says here is that in youth, man gathers experience; in age he uses this experience to control his nature and behaviour. Through man's struggle in youth, through his mistakes, he comes to a spiritual understanding of God, the Universe and man's place in the whole scheme of things. What counts in reality is not what he has achieved but what his intention is. His aspirations count and also how much effort he has put in to achieve his goal. He may not be successful in the worldly sense but if the effort, the striving is genuine, then that is all that matters. It is the glorification of failure.

He takes the symbol of the potter. Just as the potter shapes the pot on the wheel, so also God moulds man. He shapes his character by putting him in difficult situations and then sees how he copes. Whatever imperfection there is in the world, it is there because God has made it so to make man work hard .Thus behind man's imperfection is the perfection of God. Man has only to understand it. He is the pitcher shaped on the wheel by God and now the pitcher is ready for use - for a future beyond life.

Stanzas I-V

The poem was published in the volume 'Dramatis Personae' in 1864.It gives us his philosophy of life. Old age is the best period of life for which youth, the first period of life, has been made. Man's life is a whole-youth and old age together. It is not youth alone with its passion and energy; nor old age with its spirituality, but a blend of the two together. Man is distinct from the beast. He has intelligence which separates him from the animals' .But if he wastes his life by simply running after pleasure what is there to boast about. What separates him from animals that only care for food? Once they have eaten as much as they can, they have no other care in the world. Man is not like that.

Stanzas VI-X

Man is not like animals that worry only about food. He is nearer God because of his intelligence, his mind. Therefore have a goal in life and try to achieve it. Each rebuff or failure should be welcome because it should make us work harder. Joy is made up of three parts pain –the striving, the hard labour we put in to achieve our goals. Then comes the paradox. Does life succeed when it fails? Aspiration counts much more than achievement. If you have a goal you should work hard to achieve it. You may fail to do so but that should only make you work more. Man's character is moulded by failure. Success makes life easy and man complacent. Failure brings out the strength and courage of man and shows how he is when things are against him. Man is no better than an animal if his soul too is brutish and if he only tries to satisfy his physical cravings. Youth has its own uses. The experience man gains in his youth is stored up in the brain to be made use of in old age He can learn from experience and it helps him to come to a spiritual understanding of life and God and man. He understands that the whole of man's life is a part of God's plan and man should surrender to God and his plan. Man is being made by

God and therefore whatever happens in this world it is because of him—evil, failure, imperfection. God has put all this in the world to mould man and make his character strong. This is Browning's glorification of failure—that failure helps man achieve perfection because it makes him work harder.

Stanzas XI-XV

Both body and soul are equally important and body without soul makes man a brute. We should not say that we have gone ahead in spite of the body. Both together make the whole of man-- body and soul, youth and old age-- one cannot do without the other. Therefore age should acknowledge the contribution of youth-experience. It is this experience which has formed his character and made him whole. Old age is also a period of rest before the soul goes on with a new adventure. Man is complete, made according to God's plan and before being put to use (after death) old age is the time of rest. Browning hints at his belief in life after death.

Stanzas XVI-XX

When the moment of death comes the soul leaves the body. The soul has been formed by man's experience and now it is ready for its flight. In the formation of man we can see the hand of God and get an idea of how he works. In youth he makes mistakes and learns from them and in old age he uses it to control his nature. Wisdom comes with age and he should not be tempted by worldly pleasures. It is also the time when experience, wisdom and a sense of peace tell man that there is no need to be afraid of death .Age waits for death calmly.

Stanzas XXI- XXV

With age comes wisdom and we realize that everything is according to God's plan. In youth, the body works hard and in age, the soul feeds the body. Who will give judgement on man? The world believes that man's success is based on his achievement in this world. Browninng says this is not so. Success does not depend on achievement but on aspiration, on intent. His goals, thoughts, aims, wishes and dreams and how hard he worked to achieve them, is what matters. Thus according to worldly standards, he may be a failure but in actuality he is a success. The effort he has made to win his goals, matters. In God's eyes these things matter and according to his standard, man is perfect and well formed.

Stanzas XXVI-XXXII

The worldly man believes since life is temporary and will pass soon, man should make the most of life. He should enjoy life while he can. Soon he will grow old and weak and die. Therefore enjoy life while you can. What he does not realize is that the body changes, grows old and dies, the earth and the seasons too pass but the soul remains eternal. It is immortal. God and the soul alone survive—the potter and the clay. All else is temporary and will pass from this earth one day. The soul and God alone last. Failure is just a means of purifying and strengthening man's soul. Just as gold is purified by fire so also man's soul is made perfect by difficulties and failures.

God is the potter and man is the clay. The potter is shaping the clay on the wheel which is the world. The experiences of youth have made lines on the pitcher or the pot. They have been formed and are hardened but near the rim are new lines formed by age which are strong and can bear any amount of stress. Man has been formed by youth and age and is

now ready for use by the Gods. It is a time of festivity and the cup is filled with wine to be drunk by the Gods. Man is the cup made for Heaven and now has nothing to do with the earth which helped form it.

As Browning says the cup is perfectly made. Man is ready—perfect according to God's plan. He is a blend of youth and age and meant for higher things. Age should not disapprove of youth. It should acknowledge the contribution of youth—the experience of youth which leads to the wisdom of age. Everything is in the hands of God and man humbly awaits death with peace and calm, knowing full well that death is not the end. The body returns to dust and the soul rises free and perfect, ready for its new adventure-immortality.

8.5.2. Analysis

"Rabbi Ben Ezra" is Browning's clearest attempt to explain his philosophy or his outlook on life, this Universe, God and man's relation to all this. It is, in one sense a dramatic monologue because only one man speaks. The speaker is Rabbi Ben Ezra or Abraham Ibn Ezra, a twelfth century Jewish scholar who was an actual person. Whom he speaks to is not made clear. He just puts forth his idea of God, man and the universe. He is the spokesman for Browning. Of course Browning generally says that his poems are objective and do not express any of his opinions. But some views are repeated so often that we can take them as being Browning's own views.

The poem is a glorification of old age and has been written from the standpoint of age-Old age is the best period of life and men should look forward to it because it brings with it wisdom, knowledge, dignity and a certain resignation and acceptance of life. Youth is a period of doubt and rebellion. Living for mere pleasure is foolish. In youth man thinks pleasure is everything and tries to drown himself in it. He does not realize that youth is a preparation for old age which is the best period of life. The experience we gather in our youth changes to wisdom in old age because it is through mistakes that we learn. The knowledge that there is a God and man is but a part of God's plan comes much later. Man should surrender himself to God and then he will realize that God has planned man as a whole—youth and old age, body and soul. Just as youth lays the foundation for age so also the body is no less important than the soul. The two go together. The poem is also a glorification of failure. He underlines the fact that it is aspiration and not achievement that counts. He may not have achieved much according to the standards of the world, but in reality, his hopes and wishes and goals and the effort he makes to achieve them is what is of importance to Browning. Failure should not discourage us; in fact it is better than success because success makes us take things easy. We no longer work as hard because we have got what we want. But failure makes us work that much harder, so it is good.

Through the metaphor of the potter and the pitcher, Browning explains God's plan for man. God is the potter who is shaping the clay (man) on the wheel of life. He is shaping man by giving him pain and suffering and failure. All this is meant to strengthen his character so that he emerges a strong man. This is also his explanation for the imperfection we see around us. The world is imperfect because God has made it so to try man. Thus behind imperfect man and the imperfect world is perfect God who has a plan.

Man has only to submit to the plan to know his place in the scheme of things. Once the pitcher is shaped, it is ready for use by the Gods. The soul has been purified by suffering and now it is ready for its journey which comes after death. The body is dust and will

wither with age but the soul rises supreme on its journey to God. Thus what Browning says is that we must give ourselves up to God. With passivity and submission, man should go along with God's plan. This knowledge comes with age and thus youth and age are equally important. Everything is in the hands of God and man should humbly await death with peace and calm, knowing full well that death is not the end of things and God has made him for higher things.

The poem shows us Browning's belief and faith in God and also his optimism. He has an explanation for everything-failure, imperfection, evil. He sees the hand of God in everything and it is for the good of man. It only makes man perfect for it strengthens his character. So if man fails it does not matter. He will work harder to reach his goal.

The poem also shows his belief in immortality. This life is not a whole. It is a preparation for things to come and age is a resting point before the soul's journey. He believed in the eternity of life and hence felt that man should not be afraid of death. The poem has a positive feel about it and is an excellent example of Browning's outlook on life.

Browning accepts the whole of life-youth and age, pain and joy, body and spirit He believes that it is only through all this that growth and development comes- the growth is towards making man the image of God. God has made man in his image and it is up to man to work towards it.

8.6. BROWNING AS A POET

Browning has now come to be regarded as one of the greatest literary figures of the Victorian period. During the early part of his career, he was comparatively unknown but as time passed he came to be appreciated by all. His dramatic monologue and his novel in verse 'The Ring and The Book' have given him his place in literary history. A charge very often leveled against him is that of obscurity. He is difficult to read and understand and it was thought that he was being deliberately obscure. This is not so. If he is difficult it is because of his learning, his style and his technique.

He is not always difficult. His short poems are easy. It is only the superficial difficulties that make him hard to understand. He tries to reproduce the broken and irregular rhythm of speech. This makes him difficult. He does not bother about grammar and compresses what he has to say in as few lines as possible. Then his subjects too are hard. We have to be familiar with them before being able to understand them. Browning had read a lot and had vast knowledge. He dips into his vast learning for remote subjects, not realizing that we may not be familiar with them. Thus "Sordello", "Andrea Del Sarto" –all are difficult subjects. He was not purposely obscure. He just did not realize he was being so. Then his view point too is unexpected and unfamiliar. It takes time getting used to it. He uses irony and satire without actually doing so on the surface. Thus he speaks of the Duke who, indirectly, warns his to be second wife to behave with propriety or else meet with a similar fate as his first wife who was murdered by him. Browning has given a satirical portrait of the Duke –a proud, jealous and possessive lover

Browning then is obscure because he likes to express himself in a particular way. The manner is natural to him. It is abrupt, sketchy, allusive and full of gaps. He alludes to things we know nothing about. It needs time and patience to read and understand him. In

the modern age, critics have once begun to admire him for his many qualities. They see in his use of the dramatic monologue something which has inspired and influenced many modern poets. Modern poetry now acknowledges its debt to him and regards him as one of the all time greats.

8.6.1. Browning as a Love Poet

There are two different sides to Browning as a poet- one is the love poet and the other is the intellectual-the thinker and philosopher. Critics have always been of the opinion that when his poetic side was dominant, he was the greatest poet. But when the intellectual side took over, the philosopher in him was pre- dominant, and then there was much to criticize in his poetry. Of course, at times there was a happy blend of the poet and philosopher e.g. "Rabbi Ben Ezra".

We shall take up here, Browning the love poet. When the poetic strain in him was predominant, he wrote the greatest and finest love poetry in the world. "Dramatic Lyrics" of 1842 is a wonderful collection of some of the most characteristic love poems.

Treatment of Love

In Browning's love poetry we find a blend of intensity, beauty, grace, passion and a certain mystic quality too e.g. "Evelyn Hope". He frankly deals with both the physical and spiritual aspect of love. In that respect, he is different from other Victorian poets. Tennyson avoided any mention of physical love .Even when he speaks of lovers he hastens to add that they have been lately wed. Browning on the other hand does not disregard the physical aspect of love. For him, physical passion is essential for a happy married life and it can only lead to the spiritual union of the two lovers. He is concerned with the development of the human personality as a whole which includes both the physical and spiritual side

His treatment of the lady too is different from other poets. For him the beloved is not attractive because she is perfect and beautiful. He finds her desirable in spite of or because of her imperfections. Her very imperfections are attractive to him. They make her dearer to him. Thus he says-

> And your mouth—there was never to my mind
> Such a funny mouth

It may sound unromantic but is deeply tender and touching. Her faults and imperfections do not make any less his love for her. He loves her because of them

His Realism

There is a vein of realism in his love poetry. He does not use ideal imagery as love poets generally do. Instead he uses the common-place and since he is an urban poet, his imagery is drawn from the city and the streets. Thus he talks about gardens, medicine bottles, streets, pianos, fashionable fur coats etc. What he talks about are those common things which we come across in our daily life and which, for him, may be associated with his beloved. Because of their connection with the beloved, common day-to-day ordinary things acquire a new meaning.

Intellectualization of love

He is very concerned with the intellectual side of love. He intellectualizes the emotion and sees it in relation to questions of life and conduct. Thus in The Last Ride Together the lover analyses their passion and goes into details of his own success and failure in love and consoles himself with the thought that success is rare in life and failure should make him work harder. He is more concerned with the result of love rather than love itself. Of course there are poems where he sings of love alone.

Power of Love

In his best love poems he sings of the power of love which has it in it to lift the lover to a higher, nobler level and can also make him sink to a lower level. In 'By the Fire Side', love gives him new strength; In 'The Last Ride Together'—the lover reaches heights of nobility with his quiet, graceful acceptance of her rejection. Love makes man perfect and without it his life is incomplete and imperfect.

Personal Love Poetry

Some of Browning's poems are deeply personal and express his feelings for his wife—Elizabeth Barrett Browning. "By The Fireside" is one of the finest poems of married love in the English language. He describes how he and his wife sit by the fireside and he reflects on their life. It is a warm picture of happy, peaceful and satisfied married life. "One Word More" is another poem celebrating married love, while "Prospice" is a poem written after his wife's death and ends on an optimistic note with the poet declaring that he is sure of meeting her in life after death. It is wistful and tender and very touching.

Impersonal Love Poetry

In his impersonal love poetry, he deals with love situations and gives the reactions of men and women. He deals with love in all its variety and shows the many moods of love. In the "Last Ride Together", the lover accepts her rejection of his love without a murmur. He is dignified and noble.Porphyria's Lover shows the jealous lover. In "Evelyn Hope" we have the middle aged lover and a young girl. But the man does not say anything as long as she is alive. When she dies young, he goes to see her and places a flower in her hands, hoping for her forgiveness when she wakes up. [after death] In "Statue and the Bust", the lovers do nothing till they are too old. They do not have the courage to elope and keep postponing it. In Browning's eyes any action is better than no action In "The Flight of the Duchess", the lady runs away with her lover and thus attains freedom and happiness. In "My Last Duchess" he gives the Duke, who, out of jealousy, murders his first wife .The fact was that having known happy love he had a keen insight into the emotion and thus knew what man is losing when he is rejected or when love is not perfect. In conclusion we can only say that his picture of love is love as seen through the eyes of a man for whom love was all important. He always put it ahead of everything else in life and recognized it as something which could help in strengthening the soul. He knew the power of love and depicted it beautifully.

8.6.2. Browning's Philosophy

When we speak of Browning's philosophy what we mean is his outlook on life. He does not have any deep ideas of God and the Universe. All that we mean is his definite and firm views on life nature and man's relation to God. He was not a very profound thinker

but his view of life was formed very early in his career and remained the same. He does not go against the conventional idea of God and Christianity. But his attitude towards all this was cheerful and optimistic He was not depressed by what he saw of life. Even Darwin's Theory of Evolution [that man has evolved from the ape gradually] did not cause him to lose faith in God and man. His approach was that of an optimist. He saw good in everything and had an explanation for the evil in the world.

As an Optimist

He is an optimist but not blindly so. He does not ignore the pain, suffering and evil that is present in life. He just has a very good explanation for the presence of evil in man's life. His optimism is based on the realities of life. He is aware of evil and realizes that there is much to feel hopeless about but still maintains a cheerful attitude, for he gets hope from the very imperfections of life. He sees the hand of God behind the imperfections of this world. God has a plan and evil and imperfection are a part of it

Attitude to Failure

This world and man are both imperfect but he sees God's hand behind this. He has an explanation for all that is wrong in this world. Failure and imperfection are there so that man works harder to achieve his goal. Success makes man complacent for once you have what you want in life, you no longer feel the need to work hard. But when you fail the need to work hard is there. Therefore failure and perfection are part of God's scheme to make man perfect. Through pain and suffering man's character is being formed.

Presence of Evil

The same is true of evil. He regards evil as something which gives man strength and makes his character firm. When man fights against evil, it is through a realization that this is not right and must be crushed. Thus it strengthens character and is all part of the experience man has to go through in his youth. Evil is there for the simple reason that man can set it right and in doing so acquire moral strength.

Aspiration and Struggle

For Browning, aspiration is what matters. What man actually achieves is not important. What counts are the hopes, desires and aspirations that he has. The struggle is all that matters. Life is constantly progressing to higher levels---first there was the ape, and then from him evolved man .In the future, higher and better things can come. Man has therefore to aspire to become better. Perfection is the ideal but this perfection can never be wholly attained. Therefore achievements do not matter. Aspirations do. And therefore failure is welcome because it means he has tried to get better. Browning gives importance to the struggle and effort man makes to achieve his goal.

Immortality of the Soul

He believed in the immortality of the soul. The soul is perfected on this earth, in life. Through pain and suffering, man's soul is formed and once it is ready, there is always life after death. This life is a preparation for the next life. All that we experience in life helps us in our spiritual journey and therefore evil and failure are welcome as they prepare us for the life to come. The body is dust and will die soon but the soul is immortal and has other lives which will come after death. Hence success in this life is worthless. Success in that world is what counts. An ideal which is won here is worthless because the body is

limited to this world and therefore its success here is immaterial. The soul goes on its journey after death and success there is of consequence. Therefore man has forever-his soul is immortal and this life is just a preparation for the next. He believed that old age is a resting period before the soul goes on its journey after death.

Thus he believes in God and his plan. It is for man to surrender to God. Whatever he does is for the best so therefore we should place ourselves in his hands with passivity and submission. God has planned man's life as a whole –youth and age, body and soul. Both are equally important. This knowledge comes through experience and once man accepts and surrenders to God, he will no longer fear death but will wait for it with peace and calm knowing full well that there is life after death

8.6.3. Browning as a Writer of Dramatic Monologue

Browning's genius was essentially dramatic. He was able to bring together the best of drama and poetry into his verse. However, his plays were failures because they did not have proper action or plots. What makes a play interesting is a proper story line and conflict. In Browning's plays the action is internal, in the study of the soul and in psycho-analysis. However, in the dramatic monologue, he found his form and it established him as a major poet of his times. He did not create the form, just perfected it. He compressed and concentrated intense emotion in a few lines. Hence the shorter it is the more effective. Some of his most popular dramatic monologues are "My Last Duchess", "Porphyria's Lover", "Andréa Del Sarto", "Bishop Blougram's Apology" and others. Through his Dramatic Monologues Browning gives us a catalogue of human motives and the men and women he paints are not self portraits. He uses the form to study character and he gives us a variety of characters taken from all walks of life.—artists, scholars, dukes, beggars, saints, murderers, cheats and cowards. They belong to all ages and he shows us the way their mind works However, his own personal point of view slips in at times and we get his views on God, the universe, man, immortality etc Browning thus was one of the greats and he made the dramatic monologue his very own and excelled in it.

Self Assessment Questions III

1. Give a critical appreciation of Rabbi Ben Ezra.
2. How does he glorify failure?
3. What is Browning's outlook of life based on Rabbi Ben Ezra?
4. Explain the potter and pitcher metaphor.

8.7. SUMMING UP

In this unit you read about Robert Browning, the man and the poet. You also read two of his famous poems, "The Last Ride Together" and "Rabbi Ben Ezra". Through a reading of these two poems you developed an understanding to his poetic genius and his skillful use of Dramatic Monologues. Through a reading of both these poems you also got an understanding of Browing's philosophy and his optimism.

8.8. ANSWERS TO SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

I

1. Refer to the section 8.1.
2. Refer to the section 8.1.
3. Refer to the section 8.3.

II

1. Refer to the section 8.4.1.
2. Refer to the section 8.4.2.
3. Refer to the section 8.4.2.
4. Refer to the section 8.4.2.
5. Refer to the section 8.4.2.

III

1. Refer to the section 8.5.2.
2. Refer to the section 8.5.2.
3. Refer to the section 8.5.2.
4. Refer to the section 8.5.2.

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8.10. TERMINAL AND MODEL QUESTIONS

1. Write a note on Browning's Obscurity.
2. Discuss Browning as a poet of love.
3. Give an estimate of Browning as a poet.
4. What is Browning's outlook on life?

UNIT 9 MATTHEW ARNOLD

"THE SCHOLAR GYPSY"

9.1. INTRODUCTION

The third great poet of the Victorian Age, after Tennyson and Browning, which you have in your course, is Matthew Arnold. He was a typical Victorian poet. As we had said in the earlier introduction to Tennyson, the background of the age had a great effect on the literature of the period. The changes taking place moulded the poetry of the times. Tennyson was known as the representative poet of the Victorian age; Browning too showed the influence of his age though not in a negative way. He was an optimist and felt that whatever evil or bad or wrong there was in the world, was there so that man could set it right and in doing so, could also strengthen his moral character. Matthew Arnold, like Tennyson, showed traces of his age in his poetry. He was a British poet and critic who worked as an inspector of schools and is known today for his poetry and criticism. As he, himself said, "Tennyson may have had greater poetic sentiment and Browning more intellectual vigour but Arnold had a fusion of the two." In other words he combined in himself the poetic sentiment of Tennyson with the intellectual vigour of Browning. As such his place in Victorian literature is assured.

Today, he is remembered chiefly for his critical essays but he began his career as a poet, winning early recognition. He was a thoughtful and intellectual poet who often dealt with the problem of isolation which was common in nineteenth century England. The loss of faith and belief led to a lot of frustration and pessimism. This is his subject matter in many of his poems. In "Dover Beach" he links these two-the problem of isolation, the feeling that man is alone and has no one to turn to in his time of need, with the loss of faith in the nineteenth century. It is because he has lost faith in religion as a result of the developments in science that man feels he is alone in the universe. He needs to have faith in something or else he will end up frustrated. Thus in "Dover Beach", he says that man's faith in Christianity needs to be renewed and then things will get better in the world. He had his own doubts but he tried to establish the truth of Christianity. Religious faith has to be renewed and the literature of the times should not ignore the moral needs of the age. His approach was gentlemanly and courteous and his style was subtle.

He was a great influence on modern poets and critics too. His *Essays in Criticism* are appreciated even today. His criticism influenced every major English critic- T.S. Eliot and Lionel Trilling included. His poetry too influenced the modern poets. He spoke of his deepest innermost feelings with complete frankness. The feeling of loneliness and melancholy which was so common in Victorian England found wonderful expression in his poetry. Poets like W.B. Yeats, Sylvia Plath, Sharon Olds and James Wright paid tribute to his influence and they too reflected the atmosphere of their age. Arnold was indeed a remarkable figure of the nineteenth century and like Tennyson and Browning holds an important place in the literature of the times. His poetry vividly reflects the changing social, literary, economic and religious conditions of his age.

9.2. OBJECTIVES

After going through the unit you will be able to understand the following:

- how Arnold's age influenced his poetry
- to appreciate Arnold's poetic genius

- to analyze and understand the poem "The Scholar Gypsy"
- to understand Arnold's attitude towards Nature

9.3. MATTHEW ARNOLD: HIS LIFE AND WORKS

Matthew Arnold was born on 24th December 1822.He was the eldest son of Dr. Thomas Arnold and Mary Penrose. They had ten children and Matthew was the second child. He had poetic aspirations right from the beginning and shared his hopes with his eldest sister, Jane. His father later on became the Headmaster of Rugby, the famous public school. He was one of the most important Victorians who always at the centre of religious and political discussions and he greatly influenced his son, both morally and intellectually. Arnold went to school in Winchester and Rugby in 1837 where he won prizes for essay writing and later for English poetry. In 1841 he went to Baliol College Oxford and won the Newdigate Prize. He also graduated in the same year but disappointed his family by getting a second class honours degree.

After graduating, he took up a teaching job at Rugby school for some time, taking a break from his studies for a short period. In 1845 he was given the Fellowship at Oriel College, Oxford and he continued his studies there with John Keble and Henry Newman and enjoyed himself reading and travelling to Ireland, Wales and France. In 1847 he was made private secretary to Lord Lansdowne. In 1851, at the age of 28 years, Arnold married Francis Lucy Wightman who was the daughter of the Justice of the Queen's Bench. He now took up the position of Inspector of schools, a position he held for thirty five years. He led a happily married life and had six children of whom three survived.

In 1849 he published his first volume- "The Strayed Reveller and Other Poems". "Empedocles on Etna" was published in 1852 and the second volume of poetry in 1855; "Merope" in 1859 and "The New Poems" in 1867. In 1853 he started writing prose. His critical prose was collected in 1865 and published under the title *Essays in Criticism*; followed by *Lectures on the Study of Celtic Literature* (1867), *Culture and Anarchy* (1869), *Last Essays on Church and Religion* (1877) *Mixed Essays* (1879) and *Irish Essays* (1882). In 1857 he was elected Professor of Poetry at Oxford and received a pension of £250 a year in 1883. He died very suddenly of heart failure in 1888 when running to take a train that would have taken him to Liverpool to see his daughter who was coming from the U.S.

You have to understand that he was a man of the world entirely free of worldliness and a man of letters without a trace of pedantry. In other words he was a deeply knowledgeable man but did not make a show of his knowledge or learning. He was deeply read but presented an image of lightness. He did not seem serious but wrote very seriously on heavy topics. His writing clashed with the image he presented to the world. His critical views which had a high seriousness and the melancholic note in his poetry clashed with the urbane and frivolous manner he put on .He is considered to be the link between Romanticism and Moderism. His use of symbolism in "Dover Beach" gives us a nightmarish world from which all faith has been withdrawn. It was typically romantic while his pessimistic outlook was modern. His writings are marked with sincerity and purpose and have a distinctive style His prose has beauty, is thoughtful, reflective and restrained. He felt that poetry should be a criticism of life and express a philosophy. He believed that true happiness comes from within and we should seek within ourselves for

good while outwardly accepting the turmoil and disturbances of the world. We should not believe in eternal happiness and should have more realistic and moderate hopes and desires rather than live in a dream of something that may never be achieved. He found peace in nature as against the change and disturbance of the outside world.

Matthew Arnold, then was a quiet and gracious man. He was refined, educated and a scholar but never made a show of his learning. He started as a poet but later switched to prose and is, today known for it. However his poetry too is beautiful and has a wistful and melancholic air about it. It reflects the frustration and pain felt by the nineteenth century people.

9.4. "THE SCHOLAR GYPSY"

Go, for they call you, shepherd, from the hill;
Go, shepherd, and untie the wattled cotes!
No longer leave thy wistful flock unfed,
Nor let thy bawling fellows rack their throats,
Nor the cropp'd herbage shoot another head.
But when the fields are still,
And the tired men and dogs all gone to rest,
And only the white sheep are sometimes seen
Cross and recross the strips of moon-blanch'd green.
Come, shepherd, and again begin the quest!

Here, where the reaper was at work of late—
In this high field's dark corner, where he leaves
His coat, his basket, and his earthen cruse,
And in the sun all morning binds the sheaves,
Then here, at noon, comes back his stores to use—
Here will I sit and wait,
While to my ear from uplands far away
The bleating of the folded flocks is borne,
With distant cries of reapers in the corn—
All the live murmur of a summer's day.

Screen'd is this nook o'er the high, half-reap'd field,
And here till sun-down, shepherd! will I be.
Through the thick corn the scarlet poppies peep,
And round green roots and yellowing stalks I see
Pale pink convolvulus in tendrils creep;
And air-swept lindens yield
Their scent, and rustle down their perfumed showers
Of bloom on the bent grass where I am laid,
And bower me from the August sun with shade;
And the eye travels down to Oxford's towers.

And near me on the grass lies Glanvil's book—

Come, let me read the oft-read tale again!
The story of the Oxford scholar poor,
Of pregnant parts and quick inventive brain,
Who, tired of knocking at preferment's door,
One summer-morn forsook
His friends, and went to learn the gipsy-lore,
And roam'd the world with that wild brotherhood,
And came, as most men deem'd, to little good,
But came to Oxford and his friends no more.

But once, years after, in the country-lanes,
Two scholars, whom at college erst he knew,
Met him, and of his way of life enquired;
Whereat he answer'd, that the gipsy-crew,
His mates, had arts to rule as they desired
The workings of men's brains,
And they can bind them to what thoughts they will.
"And I," he said, "the secret of their art,
When fully learn'd, will to the world impart;
But it needs heaven-sent moments for this skill."

This said, he left them, and return'd no more.—
But rumours hung about the country-side,
That the lost Scholar long was seen to stray,
Seen by rare glimpses, pensive and tongue-tied,
In hat of antique shape, and cloak of grey,
The same the gipsies wore.
Shepherds had met him on the Hurst in spring;
At some lone alehouse in the Berkshire moors,
On the warm ingle-bench, the smock-frock'd boors
Had found him seated at their entering,

But, 'mid their drink and clatter, he would fly.
And I myself seem half to know thy looks,
And put the shepherds, wanderer! on thy trace;
And boys who in lone wheatfields scare the rooks
I ask if thou hast pass'd their quiet place;
Or in my boat I lie
Moor'd to the cool bank in the summer-heats,
'Mid wide grass meadows which the sunshine fills,
And watch the warm, green-muffled Cumner hills,
And wonder if thou haunt'st their shy retreats.

For most, I know, thou lov'st retired ground!
Thee at the ferry Oxford riders blithe,
Returning home on summer-nights, have met
Crossing the stripling Thames at Bab-lock-hithe,
Trailing in the cool stream thy fingers wet,

As the punt's rope chops round;
And leaning backward in a pensive dream,
And fostering in thy lap a heap of flowers
Pluck'd in shy fields and distant Wychwood bowers,
And thine eyes resting on the moonlit stream.

And then they land, and thou art seen no more!—
Maidens, who from the distant hamlets come
To dance around the Fyfield elm in May,
Oft through the darkening fields have seen thee roam,
Or cross a stile into the public way.
Oft thou hast given them store
Of flowers—the frail-leaf'd, white anemony,
Dark bluebells drench'd with dews of summer eves,
And purple orchises with spotted leaves—
But none hath words she can report of thee.

And, above Godstow Bridge, when hay-time's here
In June, and many a scythe in sunshine flames,
Men who through those wide fields of breezy grass
Where black-wing'd swallows haunt the glittering Thames,
To bathe in the abandon'd lasher pass,
Have often pass'd thee near
Sitting upon the river bank o'ergrown;
Mark'd thine outlandish garb, thy figure spare,
Thy dark vague eyes, and soft abstracted air—
But, when they came from bathing, thou wast gone!

At some lone homestead in the Cumner hills,
Where at her open door the housewife darns,
Thou hast been seen, or hanging on a gate
To watch the threshers in the mossy barns.
Children, who early range these slopes and late
For cresses from the rills,
Have known thee eyeing, all an April-day,
The springing pasture and the feeding kine;
And mark'd thee, when the stars come out and shine,
Through the long dewy grass move slow away.

In autumn, on the skirts of Bagley Wood—
Where most the gipsies by the turf-edged way
Pitch their smoked tents, and every bush you see
With scarlet patches tagg'd and shreds of grey,
Above the forest-ground called Thessaly—
The blackbird, picking food,
Sees thee, nor stops his meal, nor fears at all;
So often has he known thee past him stray,
Rapt, twirling in thy hand a wither'd spray,

And waiting for the spark from heaven to fall.

And once, in winter, on the causeway chill
Where home through flooded fields foot-travellers go,
Have I not pass'd thee on the wooden bridge,
Wrapt in thy cloak and battling with the snow,
Thy face tow'rd Hinksey and its wintry ridge?
And thou has climb'd the hill,
And gain'd the white brow of the Cumner range;
Turn'd once to watch, while thick the snowflakes fall,
The line of festal light in Christ-Church hall—
Then sought thy straw in some sequester'd grange.

But what—I dream! Two hundred years are flown
Since first thy story ran through Oxford halls,
And the grave Glanvil did the tale inscribe
That thou wert wander'd from the studious walls
To learn strange arts, and join a gipsy-tribe;
And thou from earth art gone
Long since, and in some quiet churchyard laid—
Some country-nook, where o'er thy unknown grave
Tall grasses and white flowering nettles wave,
Under a dark, red-fruited yew-tree's shade.

—No, no, thou hast not felt the lapse of hours!
For what wears out the life of mortal men?
'Tis that from change to change their being rolls;
'Tis that repeated shocks, again, again,
Exhaust the energy of strongest souls
And numb the elastic powers.
Till having used our nerves with bliss and teen,
And tired upon a thousand schemes our wit,
To the just-pausing Genius we remit
Our worn-out life, and are—what we have been.

Thou hast not lived, why should'st thou perish, so?
Thou hadst one aim, one business, one desire;
Else wert thou long since number'd with the dead!
Else hadst thou spent, like other men, thy fire!
The generations of thy peers are fled,
And we ourselves shall go;
But thou possessest an immortal lot,
And we imagine thee exempt from age
And living as thou liv'st on Glanvil's page,
Because thou hadst—what we, alas! have not.

For early didst thou leave the world, with powers
Fresh, undiverted to the world without,

Firm to their mark, not spent on other things;
Free from the sick fatigue, the languid doubt,
Which much to have tried, in much been baffled, brings.
O life unlike to ours!
Who fluctuate idly without term or scope,
Of whom each strives, nor knows for what he strives,
And each half lives a hundred different lives;
Who wait like thee, but not, like thee, in hope.

Thou waitest for the spark from heaven! and we,
Light half-believers of our casual creeds,
Who never deeply felt, nor clearly will'd,
Whose insight never has borne fruit in deeds,
Whose vague resolves never have been fulfill'd;
For whom each year we see
Breeds new beginnings, disappointments new;
Who hesitate and falter life away,
And lose to-morrow the ground won to-day—
Ah! do not we, wanderer! await it too?

Yes, we await it!—but it still delays,
And then we suffer! and amongst us one,
Who most has suffer'd, takes dejectedly
His seat upon the intellectual throne;
And all his store of sad experience he
Lays bare of wretched days;
Tells us his misery's birth and growth and signs,
And how the dying spark of hope was fed,
And how the breast was soothed, and how the head,
And all his hourly varied anodynes.

This for our wisest! and we others pine,
And wish the long unhappy dream would end,
And waive all claim to bliss, and try to bear;
With close-lipp'd patience for our only friend,
Sad patience, too near neighbour to despair—
But none has hope like thine!
Thou through the fields and through the woods dost stray,
Roaming the country-side, a truant boy,
Nursing thy project in unclouded joy,
And every doubt long blown by time away.

O born in days when wits were fresh and clear,
And life ran gaily as the sparkling Thames;
Before this strange disease of modern life,
With its sick hurry, its divided aims,
Its heads o'ertax'd, its palsied hearts, was rife—
Fly hence, our contact fear!

Still fly, plunge deeper in the bowering wood!
Averse, as Dido did with gesture stern
From her false friend's approach in Hades turn,
Wave us away, and keep thy solitude!

Still nursing the unconquerable hope,
Still clutching the inviolable shade,
With a free, onward impulse brushing through,
By night, the silver'd branches of the glade—
Far on the forest-skirts, where none pursue,
On some mild pastoral slope
Emerge, and resting on the moonlit pales
Freshen thy flowers as in former years
With dew, or listen with enchanted ears,
From the dark tingles, to the nightingales!

But fly our paths, our feverish contact fly!
For strong the infection of our mental strife,
Which, though it gives no bliss, yet spoils for rest;
And we should win thee from thy own fair life,
Like us distracted, and like us unblest.
Soon, soon thy cheer would die,
Thy hopes grow timorous, and unfix'd thy powers,
And thy clear aims be cross and shifting made;
And then thy glad perennial youth would fade,
Fade and grow old at last, and die like ours.

Then fly our greetings, fly our speech and smiles!
—As some grave Tyrian trader, from the sea,
Descried at sunrise an emerging prow
Lifting the cool-hair'd creepers stealthily,
The fringes of a southward-facing brow
Among the Ægæan Isles;
And saw the merry Grecian coaster come,
Freighted with amber grapes, and Chian wine,
Green, bursting figs, and tunnies steep'd in brine—
And knew the intruders on his ancient home,

The young light-hearted masters of the waves—
And snatch'd his rudder, and shook out more sail;
And day and night held on indignantly
O'er the blue Midland waters with the gale,
Betwixt the Syrtes and soft Sicily,
To where the Atlantic raves
Outside the western straits; and unbent sails
There, where down cloudy cliffs, through sheets of foam,
Shy traffickers, the dark Iberians come;
And on the beach undid his corded bales.

"The Scholar Gypsy" was published in 1853 and was based on a seventeenth century Oxford story found in Joseph Glanvill's "The Vanity of Dogmatizing" (1661). It is Matthew Arnold's best and perhaps the most popular work. It tells the story of a poor Oxford scholar who left Oxford to join the gypsies. He became so friendly with them that they told him all their secrets. Later on he was recognized amidst the gypsies by two of his former fellow students. He told them that when he would leave them, he would give an account of their secrets to the world. In 1929, Nicolson identified the original Oxford scholar as Flemish alchemist Francis Mercury Van Helmont.

9.4.1. A Summary

Stanzas I & II

Arnold begins "The Scholar Gipsy" in a pastoral mode, invoking a shepherd and describing the beauties of a rural scene, with Oxford in the distance. The speaker asks his fellow shepherds to take the flock and not leave them unattended. While the others take the sheep for grazing, the poet will sit in one corner where the reapers have begun their work. They have begun harvesting the crop and once cut, they bind the sheaves [cut grain tied together] and in the afternoon return to store the harvested crop. Here in this corner he will sit and wait for the others and while he waits, he will be able to hear the distant sounds of the sheep bleating and the murmurs of the reapers as they cut the corn-the work of a summer's day.

Stanzas III & IV

He will be sheltered from the summer sun in this corner and will remain there till sunset. This is followed by a description of the pastoral scene. He can see the fields of corn and the poppies and can see the green roots and the yellow stalks. The breeze carries their sweet smell far and also causes the petals to fall down like a shower or all over the place where he sits. The flowers, the crops and the trees form a kind of bower—a covered place which shelters him from the August sun. And from this sheltered and restful place he can see the tower of Oxford .Glanvill's book is beside him and he recounts the story. The story is about an Oxford scholar who, one fine day, just left his studies and went to live with the gypsies, to know their secrets. He roamed around the world with them but did not return to Oxford again.

Stanzas V & VI

Many years later, two of his former college friends met him and asked him what he was doing. Then he told them of his gypsy life and their art and secrets which he wanted to learn. Once he knew their secrets, he would return to normal life and let the world know of their secrets. Since that day, he returned no more to the life he knew but there were many rumours of how he was seen wandering about in the countryside. He was seen dressed as a gypsy; quiet and thoughtful in manner and away from the hustle and bustle of city life. He was seen in different places –in Hurst and in Berkshire moors.

Stanzas VII & VIII

The poet here says that he, himself has seen him often enough in the countryside; boys scaring the birds in the fields had seen him and also in the grassy meadows filled with sunshine in the Cumner Hills. People returning from Oxford had seen him crossing river Thames in a ferry (a small boat), trailing his fingers in the river water or leaning back in a

thoughtful way, with a bunch of flowers in his lap which he had plucked in the bowers of Wychwood.

Stanzas IX & X

Then again he was not seen for some time. Girls from far off villages, who danced around the elm tree in May, had seen him in the darkened fields at night or crossing the common road, and very often he had given them flowers he had collected from the fields-the anemones and bluebells, drenched with the dew of summer evenings; and also purple flowers with spotted leaves. But he spoke to none of them .He was always pensive and thoughtful. He was also seen above Godstow Bridge in hay time in June. Men who worked the field when the breeze blew and the swallow hovered above the waters of the Thames, which glittered in the sun; saw him sitting on the river banks. They noticed his dress and look—his dress was wild, his figure thin and his eyes vague and dark. He had a vague and dreamy look about him. He vanished from there soon enough because by the time they returned after bathing after a day's hard work, he was no longer there.

Stanzas XI & XII

The housewife darning something outside her house in the Cumner Hills too had seen him. He was hanging over the gate, watching the threshers working the corn. Even children who looked for cresses (water plants) in the stream, morning and evening, had seen him wander around in the April mornings and also at night when the stars are out in the skies. They had seen him walk through the dewy grass. In Bagley Wood where the gypsies camped for some time and in the forest of Thessaly, he was seen. The black bird looking for food had seen him and was not afraid of him because he was a common sight, lost in his own thoughts, wandering through the forest with a dry stick in his hand, twirling it.

Stanzas XIII & XIV

In winter on the highway, when it was very cold and foot travellers were going through the flooded fields, the poet says he had seen the scholar gypsy on the wooden bridge, wrapt in his cloak and fighting against the cold and snow. He had climbed the Cumner Hill and turned to watch the lights of the Church while the snowflakes were falling. But maybe all this is a dream as two hundred years have passed since he left Oxford and Glanvill told his tale of flight from Oxford to the gypsy way of life. Hence he must long be dead and buried in some quiet corner in the countryside with his grave covered by tall grass and thorns under a shady yew tree.

Stanzas XV & XVI

Since he is long gone, he has not felt the passing years which make ordinary men grow old.The scholar gypsy is beyond the wear and tear of modern life. In the hustle and bustle of modern life, man is far too busy trying to survive. He passes from shock to shock trying to make the best of life. Man is tired of life and yearns for the peace the scholar gypsy had known. The scholar gypsy knows nothing of the problems of modern life as he has renounced such a life by giving up Oxford and retiring to a quiet life with the gypsies. And therefore he is not subject to ageing or to death. Had he continued with his student life, he would have had to face the problems of life and would have been long since dead. But the scholar gypsy has escaped ageing and death by giving up such a life. Other men

die but he is beyond death. He is immortal and beyond age because he had avoided the tension of city life and opted for peace and retirement.

Stanzas XVII & XVIII

Arnold points out the contrast between the life of the scholar gypsy and that of modern man. The scholar gypsy had retired from active life and therefore he had not wasted his powers on unnecessary things. Therefore he did not know fatigue and doubt which other men did-the reference here is to the changes that had taken place in the nineteenth century. England had become more city based and industrialized and people had lost faith in religion as a result of Darwin's theory of evolution which said that man is descended from the ape. The scholar gypsy knew nothing of this. Hence he had no doubts. When modern man tried to get on in life, he struggled blindly not knowing where he will end. Therefore he is tired and full of doubts because he has to struggle against all odds. Nothing is clear to him. He seems to be waiting endlessly without hope unlike the scholar gypsy who lives his life with hope and a clear aim. Both are waiting- "The Scholar Gypsy" with hope is waiting for the 'Spark from Heaven'

While modern man is waiting for he knows not what. Modern man is so vague and confused in his thinking that he does not know what he wants. Hence he is constantly striving for success but his goals are not clear. He keeps changing his goals and makes new beginnings which bring about new disappointments because nothing is seen to the end. He gives up his goal in the middle and then sets out on a different path altogether. Thus he wastes away his life, for his goal keeps changing and what progress he makes one day is given up for something else. Both are thus waiting, but one with hope and the other with no clear goal in sight. He does not even know whether he will achieve his goal. All this makes for tension which is a part of modern life.

Stanzas XIX & XX

All men are waiting and all suffer and it is only one among the many who manages to somehow get a little of what he wants. And then he lays bare his soul--of how he suffered and strived; his sad experiences, his misery and his growth and how the little he gained has eased his hurt and pain a bit. The others only long for the misery to end. They have given up all hopes of happiness and try to bear patiently what life has served them. But none of this can be compared to the hopes and desires of the scholar gypsy. He did not give up hope through all kinds of trying situations till all doubts were blown away.

Stanzas XXI & XXII

The scholar gypsy lived in an age when life was pure and uncomplicated and free and clear like the waters of sparkling Thames. It was a time before the strange disease called 'modern life' took over. He gives an apt description of modern life—with it's hustle and bustle and it's goals which keep changing; where hearts and heads are overburdened by tension, worry and ambition which weakens him. From such a world it is better that the scholar gypsy fly away and plunge deep into the forest which shelters man and keeps him away from the glare of the sun. So also the scholar gypsy should seek the shelter of the woods and his solitude away from modern life. Away from the tension, pressure and worry of modern life, the scholar gypsy can continue with his hope. Through the forest and mild meadows, the flowers and the moonlit landscape, he can rest and go forward as he wishes.

Stanzas XXIII & XXIV

If he were to come into the modern age, he would no longer be the scholar gypsy we know, for his happiness would long be gone and so also the peace and quiet of his life. He would be distracted and confused like all men in the modern world. His goals would no longer be clear and as they kept changing, his hopes would flicker and die and as a result his youth and smiling exterior would soon fade, giving place to age and death. Modern life would have claimed him. Therefore it is better that he run away from all this just as the Tyrian trader did.

Stanza XV

In this last stanza he speaks of the scholar gypsy renouncing the outside world just as the Tyrian merchant did. The seaman did not like the corrupt way of life in Greece so he left for Iberia. He was seen slowly and quietly slipping away from Greece to Iberia because he wanted to escape the corruption in Greece and start a new life in Iberia. And so he sailed away. He took the boat and sailed day and night till he reached Iberia and stopped there and settled down to a life of quiet peace and satisfaction. So also the scholar gypsy left Oxford to live the quiet life of the gypsies. He uses the epic simile here –the scholar gypsy too should flee the modern way of life just as the Tyrian merchant had fled Greece. What the exact meaning is we are not sure. There are different interpretations. Some critics feel it means Eastern spiritual wisdom should be transferred to heal the spiritually sick west. The main point is that you need the right qualities and frame of mind to tide over the problems of loss of faith. May be the Victorians will find peace once they have a strong sense of purpose and devotion to that purpose.

9.4.2. Analysis of the Poem

"The Scholar Gypsy" is a poem written by Matthew Arnold and first published by Longmans in the 1853 volume of Poems. It is a poem written in the pastoral tradition by which we mean it is a poem which has a rural countryside background.The lead characters appear before us as shepherds and shepherdesses. The poem has many descriptions of the beautiful countryside and romantic dream visions, elegiac arguments and finally an epic simile. It is about a spiritual crisis faced by his age as a result of loss of faith. The changes that took place in the nineteenth century resulted in an atmosphere of uncertainty and questions were raised about the meaning and significance of life. There was also a feeling that man was all alone and it gave rise to feelings of loneliness and nostalgia. Arnold gives expression to all these feelings.

Source

It is based on a seventeenth century Oxford story found in Joseph Glanvill's work "The Vanity of Dogmatizing". It is about a poor Oxford student who left his studies to join a band of gypsies. He roamed the countryside with them and became so friendly that they told him their secrets. Sometime later he met two of his old class mates who recognized him and he told them he would return once he came to know the secrets of the gypsies. He would then let the world know of the secrets. In 1929, Nicolson identified the scholar as a Flemish alchemist Francis Mercury Helmont.

The poem begins with the poet-speaker disguised as a shepherd asking his fellow shepherds to take the sheep for grazing while he rested in a secluded and sheltered corner. He then goes on to describe the beauties of a rural village scene -meadows and grassy

plains, a host of flowers, cool breeze blowing and over all this the August sun. Oxford is in the background throughout. He also gives a gist of the Oxford scholar's history and says even now people have seen him wandering about the countryside. He himself has seen him once. He imagines him as a shadowy figure that can be seen in the Oxford countryside waiting for the spark from Heaven to fall. A little later he says it is not possible for the scholar to be alive even after two centuries but then shakes off the thought. The scholar could not have died because he had renounced the world and opted for the simple uncomplicated life of the gypsies and hence could live forever. He asks the scholar to avoid the strange disease of modern life with its hurry and tension, in case he too catches it and dies. He gives the example of the Tyrian merchant who fled Greece and settled in Iberia in search of peace.

Theme

Matthew Arnold, here is giving expression to his feelings of loss for a way of life. It is a record of a sick society and way of life - the disease called modern life. The tension and pressure of modern life was most unappealing to him. What he liked was the quiet serenity and peaceful atmosphere of village life. And this is what he is mourning here. With England becoming more industrialized, the agricultural way of life was slowly becoming a thing of the past. People from the countryside were migrating to the city in search of jobs and this was leading to slums, dirtiness and violence. The peace and calm of the countryside was giving way to the violence, pressure and tension of city life. And Arnold mourns this.

His attitude towards the gypsy is that of an adult towards a child. He appreciates and envies the child's innocence but realizes there is no going back for him once he is an adult. Every man has to grow up and lose that innocence and face the realities of life. Thus the gypsy stands for a way of life that is lost and all that Arnold was saying was that man has to grow up and society has to evolve and hence the innocence will be lost. He is only evaluating what has been lost as a result of progress- - the spiritual and emotional loss-and what adjustment man will have to make to the changed times, if he has to survive. The old days will not return; England has become more industrialized and man will have to move with the changed times. He should just have something to fall back on; a spiritual and emotional anchor or else he will be lost.

Arnold, himself called his poem an elegy, a poem of mourning. But it is more than that. It has landscape descriptions, narrations, dream visions in pastoral surroundings and other elegiac features. All this he united into a perfect whole. He was mourning the passing away of a way of life, presented in pastoral form. In form, it is a whole. He brings together two opposed worlds-the idyllic world of the scholar gypsy and the sick world of the poet speaker. The tension comes from bringing the two together as they are completely opposed to each other. In the opening section, he gives us the quiet, peaceful world of the scholar gypsy. It serves as backdrop to what follows. This world is far away from the active and busy world where man is always on the go. The poet speaker is left alone so that he can read the story of the scholar gypsy and here he introduces the theme of quest. It is a quest or search for a spiritual order that would make life more meaningful and purposeful.

In the next section the real argument of the poem is introduced which is his meditation on the spiritual crisis. The scholar gypsy is brought before us –a man who is thoughtful and

pensive and does not talk much. Then comes the descriptions of the scholar's wanderings in the neighbourhood of Oxford and in a dream vision we follow him through all the seasons of the year. He is seen by the village girls, the shepherds and the children and it is more of a pastoral scene. Arnold is here bringing the two worlds together, the pastoral and the romantic but the dream is broken with the thought that the scholar gypsy lived almost two centuries back and hence must be dead by now. This section has great charm and beauty for he describes the Oxford countryside and we can feel Arnold's love for the area and also his nostalgia for his Oxford days. The poem was meant to put down in words and so make permanent his remembrances of their (Arnold and Clough's) trip to the Cumner Hills before he forgot them. But it was also a record of the quiet charm of the rural world which was slowly becoming a thing of the past. It had innocence, simplicity and quiet charm as against the tension and pressure of the modern world. It is not escapist .Arnold is just setting the scene for the contrast of the two worlds. Critics feel that by saying the scholar gypsy must be dead; he is rejecting the scholar gypsy and all that he stood for- i.e. the quiet rural world, peaceful and serene. But it is only for a moment; soon the scholar gypsy is back and now we see him in contrast to modern man. The poet's world is sick and the men are incapable of strong decisive action and keep changing their goals and strive for they know not what. The scholar gypsy in contrast is healthy and vigorous and has one goal and one desire. He has hope and therefore is immortal and cannot die. Earlier he was passive and waiting for the spark from heaven. Now he is active and healthy and not affected by time and place. The poet also realizes that his world is different from that of the scholar gypsy and he cannot display the same devotion and steadfastness of purpose as the scholar gypsy. His world is different and lest it infect the scholar gypsy too, he asks him to flee it. In one sense he rejects him and now the scholar gypsy stands for those necessary qualities which man must try to have but is impossible to possess in the modern world. The language is stark and abstract as compared to the beautiful imaginative language of the earlier section which dealt with the pastoral landscape. This is the modern section and the language goes with the theme. Modern life is stark and barren and so is the language. Through it we get a sense of the poet's feeling of helplessness and anguish regarding it. Arnold is not as successful here as T.S.Eliot in "The Waste Land" who put forward the spiritual barrenness of the modern world very well.

Finally comes the long epic simile which is the most poetic in the whole range of his poetry. It is not clear what it actually means but critics are of the opinion that it suggests a coming together of two traditions—the eastern and the western. There is a hint that eastern spiritual wisdom will be good for the sick west. There is no real solution to the problem of loss of faith just a moral and psychological one. You will have to find the right temper and frame of mind to endure the difficulty. The moment will pass but man has to be strong and steadfast to see this through. This is all that he can say. It ends with the hope that just as the Tyrian merchant found peace in Iberia; so also the Victorians will be able to find a way out of the spiritual problem. The poem ends on a note of objective calm. For the time being the tension and problem has been temporarily solved. A more permanent solution will come with the passage of time.

Self Assessment Questions

1. How did the nineteenth century background influence the poetry of Matthew Arnold?

2. Give a brief summary of "The Scholar Gypsy".
3. Discuss the poem "The Scholar Gypsy" as a pastoral elegy.
4. What is theme of the poem?
5. Critically appreciate the poem "The Scholar Gypsy".

9.5. MATTHEW ARNOLD AS A POET

Arnold is a reflective and thoughtful intellectual poet of the Victorian Age. His literary output may not be as much as that of Tennyson or Browning yet he was much more faithful in expressing the intellectual and spiritual distress of the late nineteenth century. He gives expression to the changing social, literary, economic and religious conditions of the day. He belongs to the age of doubt and despair and so his poetry lacks in passion and excessive sentiments. But his simple and lucid highly polished style makes him a praiseworthy poet. Critics however accuse him of being too cold and lacking in emotion which is not true. He feels strongly on matters of life, love and death but he expresses his feelings with restraint. He is counted among the greats of the Victorian period and we will study here the various sides to his genius as a poet.

9.5.1. Arnold's Classicism and Romanticism

Arnold is a classicist. He believed in the rules of classicism.-classical restraint, proportion, harmony, clarity, lucidity and simplicity. A poet should say whatever he wants to say as clearly and simply as possible without any exaggeration and showing great restraint. The Greek writers followed this in their works and Arnold does the same. He is Greek in his insistence on thought and in the way he writes. The Greeks did not believe in exuberance, richness and mere decorative poetry. Arnold is the same. The hallmarks of his poetry are restraint simplicity and lucidity. There is gravity and dignity of thought, a grip on his subject and austerity in his treatment in his works. All this gives his poetry an intellectual feel. He is actually a thinker and a philosopher and in his meditative poems he gives us his criticism of life. The Hellenic [Greek] influence is there and the traits most prominently Greek are restraint not excessive joy, very few words to describe things, formality, clarity and no spontaneity. Whatever he has to say, he says in as few words as possible and to the point. His language is as simple and clear as is needed. Words are not used for mere decoration. They are used to put across his thought. He treats his subject with seriousness and it was this that led to the charge being brought against him of his poetry being cold and lacking in emotion.

But still he could not do away completely with the romantic influence on him. He was greatly influenced by Keats and we can see this in his descriptions of nature. Many of his poems have the romantic spirit—"The Strayed Reveller", "Empedocles on Etna" etc. There was an inner romanticism in his poetry which he tried to suppress but could not do so. His pensiveness, thoughtfulness and his wistfulness all have a touch of romanticism.

9.5.2. The Melancholy Note in his Poems

Arnold is regarded as an elegiac poet and the most prominent features of his poetry are a note of seriousness and an elegiac reflective melancholy note. The elegy was a poem of mourning and by calling him an elegiac poet we are drawing attention to the fact that the melancholy strain was predominant in his poetry. In other words there is a note of

sadness in his poems. It was partly due to the age in which he lived. The loss of faith around him disturbed him deeply and awakened in him a deep sense of melancholy. He reflects over the pain and misery in life and can see no way out except for a belief in something. Faith alone can see man through these difficult days. And hence in "Dover Beach" and "The Scholar Gypsy" he speaks of the sea of faith which has receded but needs to come back again. He has a sense of the powerlessness of man and his despair arises from that. He hears an eternal note of sadness in the melancholy long drawn out roar of the waves near Dover Beach; and in "The Scholar Gypsy" and "Thyrsis" he mourns not only individuals but also a whole way of life which has passed away and the modern life with its sick hurry and divided aims which has come in its place. Both poems are pastoral elegies and there is a note of wistful melancholy in them.

Arnold then is the greatest elegiac poet of the Victorian age and his genius too is elegiac. In the elegy he found an outlet for his native melancholy. It is not as if no other poet wrote elegies but Arnold had a note of sadness or melancholy running through him and it was his ruling passion. Milton, Gray, Shelley and Tennyson- all of them wrote elegies but not as often as Arnold did. His elegies are many and they are his best works. His elegies are like those of Gray and are marked with a general grief. Even the personal elegies are marked with a general grief. "Thyrsis" mourns the death of his friend, Clough; "Rugby Chapel" is written at the death of his father, Dr.Arnold, Headmaster of Rugby; "A Southern Night" is for his brother and Westminster Abbey on the death of Dean Stanley. They start off mourning personal sorrow but then he widens his view and deals with human destiny as Gray did in "Elegy Written in the Country Churchyard". Arnold thus wrote the formal elegy expressing his mournful mood. "Thyrsis" and "The Scholar Gypsy" are his two true elegies for the others are more reflective. Here though he does reflect over the problems facing his age, he is essentially mourning what has passed away- the calm and peaceful way of life and also what has taken its place, the hurry, pressure and tension of modern life. His melancholy mood and temper best suited his poetry which grieved over the life he could not accept the modern way of life –and the life he liked but could not make his own-the old way of life. Arnold presented a very outwardly worldly exterior but his poetry is far away from this world. It is serious and sensitive and has the melancholy note about it. It actually expresses what he felt deep down in his soul and it is this that is dominant in his poetry His melancholy sprang from the thought that man is stuck in a hopeless place in his age—to believe or not to believe—and the resultant frustration is due to this loss of faith. The social and religious changes brought about by science and development needed a fresh adjustment of values and till that was done, man would continue to suffer and endure pain.

9.5.3. As a Poet of Nature

Wordsworth's influence on Matthew Arnold can be seen in his attitude to Nature. He taught him to love nature and he had a deep love for her but it was very different from that of Wordsworth. Both were different in their attitude to nature. Wordsworth found company in Nature and it more than made up for man's society. When he was disillusioned by the French Revolution it was to Nature that he turned and found in her solace and calm. She taught him to once again love his fellow human beings. He believed that nature exercised great influence over man and it could be good or evil. Arnold did not think so. For him Nature had no influence or hold over man. Nor did he find in her a spirit of joy or cheerfulness. He found peace rather than joy in her. It also intensified his

feelings of melancholy by its lonely spectacles- the mountains, the sea and the vast open places which only served to remind him how little and insignificant man was in front of Nature. He found in her the same loneliness that he found in human society but he also found peace and calm in her. He contrasted the permanence of Nature with the impermanence of man. Human life is temporary and man will be gone tomorrow for he has a limited time on earth but Nature is here for all time to come. He dwells on this theme in Dover Beach, when he says the same sounds of shells and pebbles on the beach must have been heard in days long gone.

His descriptions of nature are more accurate and precise than those of Wordsworth or Tennyson. He had the eye of a scientist when describing nature. He thus gives beautiful pictures of flowers and meadows, hills and mountains, lakes and rivers—all located and portrayed with great precision. At times his landscapes have a symbolic importance. In "Thyrsis", a single elm is a symbol of changeless truth; in "Sohrab and Rustam", Oxus stands for endless life and the landscape in "The Scholar Gypsy" stands for the calmness of nature in contrast to the hustle and bustle of city life. Arnold loved nature but in her quieter and more subdued moods; he preferred her silence. He liked her softer and gentler pictures, but above everything else he worshipped in nature her steadfastness and calm, teaching man the lesson of self-dependence.

9.5.4. Arnold's Poetry as a Criticism of Life

Another important factor about Arnold is that his poetry is a criticism of life and many critics have found it to be so. His mood is always reflective and critical in verse as well as in prose. By which we mean that he looks at life and comments on it. In his poetry, he criticizes the poets, the people and the conditions of his times. In "The Scholar Gypsy" and "Thyrsis", he passes judgment on the life of his age, the life of his country and on the lives of individual men. He examines the great literary figures like Goethe, Byron, Wordsworth and Shelley; Byron is "the fount of fiery life", Shelley is "the beautiful and ineffectual angel, beating in the void" his wings and Wordsworth's healing power is much appreciated.

Apart from criticizing individual poets, his poetry also focuses attention on the growing craze for materialism in his age. He battles against worldliness and materialism within us and in the world. In the present poem which is prescribed in your course, he gives us a criticism of modern life where man is trying to get ahead in life. The sick hurry, ambition, tension, pressure and restlessness of modern life is such that Arnold only wishes to retire from all this and find peace elsewhere. Arnold finds that everything is there in life—money, business, acceptance by society, name and fame but still man is not happy. Health and happiness have fled because there is so much tension in getting ahead in life that man cannot enjoy his success. It is a mad race for wealth, name and fame and he does not have the time to enjoy what he has won. Therefore Arnold yearns for the life of the past as symbolized by the river Thames and also by the scholar gypsy. For him it stands for the untroubled life of the past. He wants peace and quiet and a restful life. London with its noise and wealth and poverty stands for the ugly life of Victorian England.

And this is what he criticized and reflected in his poetry. He called it the strange disease namely modern life .Man was so busy running after money and success that he does not realize the emptiness within him. With no God to turn to and no faith to believe in, he

was in a sorry state. This was the state of affairs in Victorian England and he gives voice to this. As he says in his letter to his mother-his poems represent the main movement of the mind of the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

9.5.5. Diction and Style

Arnold's style is unique in English Literature. It is simple, lucid, precise, elegant and restrained. He was considered more of a critic than a poet and as such his poetry cannot be expected to be from the heart. Since it is critical it appeals more to the head than the heart. He was not a born poet like Shelley whom he called an 'ineffectual angel'. He wrote poetry because it was a good medium for expressing his views on life and its problems. As such his poetry lacks spontaneity, passion. music and rapture, all of which go to make great poetry. His poetry instead is reflective, stoic, serious and austere which does not entitle him to be placed among the greats like Keats, Shelley and Byron.

Many critics dismissed Arnold as colourless and a mere academic because he was a poet without the lyrical touch and rapture so necessary for great poetry. He is to be counted as an intellectual and reflective poet. The fact was that Arnold was a quiet, reserved, calm man and as such his poetry too is calm, restrained, serene, stoic and reflective. It mirrors the man he actually was not the face he presented to the world.

The main characteristics of his poetic style are lucidity, clarity, suavity, serenity, wistful melancholy and stoic wisdom. He is not passionate or emotional in his manner. He is clear about what he has to say and says it as clearly and in as few words as possible. He has a persuasive charm and is courteous. Whatever he has to say is said with gentleness and straight forwardly. He follows the classical virtues of restraint, harmony and clarity. He does not give us exaggerated descriptions and there is balance and wisdom in what he has to say. In both 'The Scholar Gypsy' and 'Thyrsis' he is at his best and has Oxford and Thames as his inspiration. The charm of Oxford and Thames (river) blend together with his suavity (charm and confidence) and wistfulness (longing, here for the old way of life) which is the resignation of a melancholy soul. He is melancholy or sad because a whole way of life has passed away and this makes him wistful-makes him long for the old days .He wishes the old way of life would come back but at the same time he is aware that the past is long gone and will never come back. But still he misses the old days and yearns for them. Inspite of this longing there is no sentimental pessimism, no complaining and no excessive grief. He is serene but troubled, wistful and suave. He is a stoic-suffers pain and suffering without openly showing his pain. Stoicism and melancholy, wistfulness and suavity then are the main features of his poetic style. His simple, lucid and highly polished style makes him a poet worthy of our praise.

However this gentle and suave style hid a strong and virile hand. He had great intellectual courage and calm self confidence. He had strong opinions on politics, religion and art and was not afraid of stating them. And he was never disturbed by the attack of those criticizing him. You should know that in his work, Arnold was very different from the picture he presented to the world. He appeared light, frivolous and a man of the world but it was in his work that he revealed his real self. He was analytical, introspective, not swayed by emotion and deeply disturbed by his times and also influenced by the changes. He lived in an atmosphere of doubt and fear and this passed into his work. That is why he is wistful and melancholy. He makes less his pain by writing elegies and sonnets. He believes faith alone can heal man and this leads to his wistful and melancholy note-a

dreamy sadness which is typical of him. But he is not really pessimistic. Arnold has serenity. He sees the disturbing atmosphere, the lack of fait- it makes him melancholy and sad but it also gives him the strength to quietly suffer all this. He has the serenity of a brave spirit. There is a gentle wistfulness and a pathetic resignation in his work –the feeling that since this has to happen, man has to bear it. He is restful but not really at rest and serene but not tranquil like Wordsworth. Matthew Arnold then is a figure of importance in nineteenth century England He was considered more a critic than a poet and even in verse he is always a critic of life. He is a poet who appeals to the head rather than the heart. His poetry does not have spontaneity, passion or music but it is reflective, stoic and full of wistful melancholy. He is an intellectual poet rather than a poet who appeals to the masses and he is worthy of our praise.

Self Assessment Questions II

1. Give the salient features of Matthew Arnold as a poet.
2. Discuss Arnold as an elegiac poet.
3. Discuss Arnold as a poet of Nature.
4. Write a short note on Arnold's classicism and Hellenism.
5. Write a note on Arnold's style.
6. Discuss the note of melancholy in Arnold's poetry.
7. Discuss Arnold's poetry as a criticism of life.

9.6. SUMMING UP

- In this unit you have studied the following:
- How Arnold's age influenced his poetry and how his poetry is a criticism of life.
- Matthew Arnold as a poet.
- Analyzed and understood 'The Scholar Gypsy'.
- Understood his attitude towards Nature.

9.7. ANSWERS TO SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

I

1. Refer to section 9.1.
2. Refer to sections 9.4. and sub-section 9.4.1.
3. Refer to sub-section 9.4.2.
4. Refer to sub-section 9.4.2.
5. Refer to sub-section 9.4.2.

II

1. Refer to 9.5.
2. Refer to 9.5.2.
3. Refer to 9.5.3.
4. Refer to 9.5.1.
5. Refer to 9.5.5.
6. Refer to 9.5.2.
7. Refer to 9.5.4

9.8. REFERENCES

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9.9. TERMINAL AND MODEL QUESTIONS

1. Discuss Matthew Arnold as a poet and critic.
2. Give a critical analysis of "The Scholar Gypsy".
3. Discuss the elegiac note in Arnold's poetry.
4. What do you have to say about Arnold as a poet of Nature? How is he different from Wordsworth?
5. Write a brief note on any two of the following:
    - Arnold's Diction and Style
    - The Classical Note in Arnold's Poems
    - Arnold's Place in Victorian Literature
    - Arnold' poetry as a Criticism of Life

UNIT 10 W. B. YEATS

"SAILING TO BYZANTIUM" "A PRAYER FOR MY DAUGHTER" "WHEN YOU ARE OLD"

10.1. INTRODUCTION

The unit in the context intends to acquaint you with the complex rubric of modern poetry in general and with one of the most quizzically complex and enriched poets of his age, W.B.Yeats, who is inextricably woven into the complex texture of Romanticism, Victorianism, and Modernism. You will be reading three of his poems which may ameliorate your understanding on Yeats engagement with aestheticism, love, politics, and mythology.

10.2. OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit you will be able to:

- understand the making of W.B.Yeats, the poet and the man
- contextualize W.B.Yeats in the complex reality of Romanticism, Victorianism, and Modernism
- attain the hermeneutics of his three most cited poems, "Sailing to Byzantium" "A Prayer for my Daughter" and "When You are Old"

10.3. WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS: AN INTRODUCTION

> We make out of the quarrel with others, rhetoric,
> but of the quarrel with ourselves, poetry.
>
> Yeats: 'Anima Hominis', 1917

> I had three interests: interest in a form of literature, in a form of philosophy, and a belief in nationality […]. Now all three are, I think, one, or rather all three are a discrete expression of a single conviction.
>
> Yeats: 'If I were Four-and-Twenty', 1919

William Butler Yeats, son of John Butler Yeats (1839-1922), and Susan Mary nee Pollexfen (1841-1900), who brought William closer to Irish Nationalism and Irish folk tales. John Yeats abandoned his lawyer's career to become a painter where he had struggled to meet is end; whereas, William's mother, Pollexfen, had belonged to a prosperous Protestant traders family of Devonshire. A close reading of William's biographical details reflect upon the fact that his family has moved between London and Ireland which has provided W.B.Yeats with an opportunity to experience the contrast between drab terraced houses of metropolis and the rural landscape of Ireland near the mountain of Ben Bulben. He met numerous Irish relatives and acquaintances who claimed to have had mystical experiences which attracted him and hence he moved towards mysticism and occultism: this became his life-long preoccupation. Once, he records, "the mystical life is the centre of all that I do" which further brings him to join the Theosophical society, founded by Madame Helena Blavatsky. This makes him familiar with the ideas that the world is a conflict of opposites, that the soul undergoes a cycle of reincarnation, and that each soul is a part of a universal soul or great mind. Gradually, this becomes a major motif of his poetic corpus. Some of his mystical ideas have eventually been collected in the volume called *A Vision*.

A common symposium of poets, writers, and philosophers at Bedford Park acquaints him to George Bernard Shaw, W. E. Henley, Oscar Wilde, Ernest Rhys, Lionel Johnson, Ernest Dowson, Arthur Symons, James O' Grady and William Ferguson. John O'Leary has impressed on him the importance of an Irish national literature. Yeats' poetic corpus displays a wide range of influences, personal, cultural, political and historical; and the commitment to Ireland has helped him to coordinate with them. Gradually, he becomes a leading figure in the Irish cultural revival. He is the founding member of establishing Irish Literary Society in London and of National Literary Society in Dublin. His nationalism has been triggered by his love of country's folk traditions, legends, and verses and he expresses them in his "Fairy and Folk Tales of the Irish Peasantry" (1888), "Irish Fairy Tales" (1892), "A Book of Irish Verse" (1895) and John Sherman (1891), a novel where he declares that "I have an ambition to be taken as an Irish novelist not as an English or cosmopolitan one". He joined the Irish Republican Brotherhood in order to propagate the basic philosophy of Irish culture and nationalism. In doing the same he also gets himself involved in Irish literary Theatre in Dublin in 1904 which has become Abbey Theatre in which he performed one of the controversial nationalistic play titled *Cathleen ne Houlihn* where Maud Gonne has performed the role of beautiful Irish patriot. It has often said that W. B. Yeats has made intermittent proposals to her for marriage; however, in response to it she constantly rejects those proposals. Maud Gonne reports that "you are making beautiful poetry out of what you call your unhappiness and you are happy in that". The beautiful poetry includes "No Second Troy" in which the poet regrets Maud's incendiary rhetoric but deems it part of her nature: she is a second Helen, a beautiful destroyer.

Yeats' is unquestionably a prominent figure of Irish Nationalism in which he ropes up several writers to write something which may be defending and disseminating Irish culture. J. M. Synge is one of such figures who work in consonance with W. B. Yeats and produces *The Playboy of the Western World* which invites a great ire of the people of Ireland similarly the play of Sean O Casey's entitled The Plough and the Stars annoys republicans. W. B. Yeats reproaches and denounces such rowdy audience. However, with the passage of time, W. B. Yeats achieves his international reputation by 1903. He comes in contact with Ezra Pound, Rabindranath Tagore and some major modernists. He is not only known in the world of philosophy and intellectualism but equally well placed in the political arena of Ireland. It is because of his political influence he has also been given knighthood which he denounces. Apart from his political engagement, Yeats has also been actively engaged in producing his literary corpus in the form of a very famous text titled *A Vision* (1925). It is an attempt to systematize his mystical believe in history and the individual. It elaborates the notion that the complexity of history should be perceived as a matter of gyres or cones, one historical era engendering a contrasting era. Though eccentric and sometimes baffling, the material variously complements the imagery of the poems. Further, he also composes several poems under the title called Tower. Indeed one of his greatest achievements has been the creation of poetic texture which is characterized by an Ireland of myth, legends, facts and topography. And thus to read his poems is to explore an expensive and richly symbolic landscape. W. B. Yeats, with all deftness intermingles myth with politics.

Yeats' interests are not only confined within poetry and poetics and the explication of Truth through them but they also cover the domain of drama and dramatics. His lifelong interest in the theatre is manifested in his early writings; his very first publications, in the

spring of 1885, when he was just twenty, which consists of several lyrics and a verse play, *The Island of Status*. He loved this play precisely because it creates and embodies all contraries and paradoxes which are reflected through the harmonious coexistence of opposing principles, voices, or moods. His earliest works are not found to be Irish in its themes but after his auspicious meeting with O'Leary he joins the Young Ireland Society. Gradually he joinedsome other societies and contemporary clubs which brought Yeats into contact with a circle of nationalist intellectuals and he also started reading some viable Irish literature. The year 1885 also recorded his interest in spiritualism and the occult which in consequence encouraged him to join Dublin Hermetic Society and just after a year he met charismatic MohiniChatterjee, whose Eastern mystical philosophy was much in vogue in Theosophist circle. In the late 1880s he met Maud Gonne for the first time, and conceived one of the most famous unrequited passions in literary history. By 1890 he played a very significant role in starting the Rhymers' Club, a bohemian literary society with a significant homosexual subculture and a set of aesthetic ideas that participated in Decadence and Symbolism.

Yeats' early works contains almost all elements like nationalism, the occult, love, and contemporary avant-garde poetry which can conspicuously be exemplified through his rose poems of *The Rose* (1893) and *The Wind Among the Reeds* (1899). The Rose is imagined variously as a symbol of eternal beauty, a bringer of apocalypse, an actual beloved, the priestess of an occult shrine, a figure for Ireland, a force for peace, and an incitement to war. For the poet-speaker, the complex and shifting symbolism of the Rose often helps him to stricter relationships between conflicting imperatives. His poetic compositions of this period are more dreamlike and ornate than his late poems, but they are best approached without condescension; many of them are just as intellectually rigorous, complex, and concerned with conflict as his later works. Irish myth and folklore also constitute his early poetic oeuvres which also meditate on the incompatibility of the natural and supernatural world. He often appears to be highly sceptical but sometimes he seems to be immensely desperate for revelations. In addition his early reviews and essays represent him as a forceful proponent and theorist of the Irish Literary Revival. Further, some of his poems suggest a symbolic geography that map relationships among the human, natural, and supernatural or mythic worlds, something the poem do in other ways as well. They also display a geographical imagination that is profoundly local, rather than national, but that is harnessed in the service of a nationalist re-possession of territory. Other poems use figures out of Irish myth like Oisin, Fergus, and Cuchulain. The early Yeats' Ireland is alternately a homely, rural landscape populated by rustics, and an idealized, otherworldly place. In both cases Yeats associates it with childhood, and with extreme age. "Into the Twilight" claims that "your mother Eire is always young", but this is the eternal youth of the ageless, ancient Ireland that Yeats consistently identified as the source of Irish culture and tradition.

After the publication of *The Wind Among the Reeds* in 1899, Yeats brings out *In the Seven Woodsin* 1903 with one of his major poems entitled "The Lake of Isle of Innisfree" which is cardinally instructive and it also invokes the soothing sights and sounds of the natural world-birds, bees, vegetation-in order to escape from, or compensate for, the traumas of modern urban life. Futher, his "Adam's Curse" strikes a similar prose about Yeats' romantic ideals, by holding to the value of "the old high way of love" while at the same time suggesting that this way has become exhausted, and now seems "an idle trade enough", the word "trade" implies the disturbing link between that ideal and the fallen,

materialistic world Yeats increasingly deplores. "September 1913" also deplores the crass and excessive dominance of materialism. His next poetic collection titled *The Wild Swans at Coole* came out in 1919 which expressed the possibility of the panorama of futility and anarchy and the history of chaos and nihilism. His poems of this collection namely "The Second Coming" and "A Prayer for my Daughter" articulate fear about a world apparently descending into chaos; " Easter 1916" both are also meditations on various kinds of transition: historical, political, and personal whereas his " A Prayer" celebrates his personal peace and stability that Yeats finds in marriage and fatherhood. Further, his Michael Robartes and the Dancer comes out in 1921which continues to deal deeper into the same political, social, spiritual, and occult problems of the contemporary world. The Tower that is published in 1928, is one of his *magnum opus* where he exploits the tower's symbolic potential with enormous skill and success and for him the tower is a symbol of elevation and isolation, genuine learning and false wisdom, strength and weakness. It is a vantage point from which the Yeats of this period contemplates his favourite themes, such as ageing, memory, morality, and continuity. These themes operate on both public and private registers. In the beginning of "The Tower" the tower is the place of decay, as the speaker confronts old age, and considers giving up poetry for philosophy. By the end of the poem, however, the tower has become a symbol for the speaker's self-assertion, his attempt to fix his legacy, his wilful rejection of philosophy in favour of poetry, and his determination to come to terms with morality. Thus the tower stands for both the "wreck of body" and the speaker's attempt to overcome that wreck through acts of will and imagination. Yeats' next major poetic volume, *The Winding Stair and Other Poems* (1933), also capitalizes on the symbolic potential of the tower, often, as it title suggests, examining the tower from the convoluted space within it. " A Dialogue of Self and Soul", negotiates with the similar question that the " The Tower" has dealt with: should the ageing poet give up anger, desire, and imagination- the things out of which he makes poetry- and embrace philosophical and religious states of mind as more fitting?.Finally, towards the end of his life and probably before his death he composes "The Black Tower" which represents the same dialectic and antinomies which he has explored at length in his other poetic collections. At last he feels that he cannot make final sense of his life, control his own death, or determine how he will be remembered. "The Man and the Echo" offers a counterpoint to "Under Ben Bulben", and returns to the Yeatsian mode of questioning, only to conclude that no firm conclusions about death and after life are possible. The last poem of the volume called Last Poems, published in 1939, insists upon the primacy of desire: "But O that I were young again/ And held her in my arms".

This must have given you an overview of Yeats' social, political, occult, and cultural milieu. You must also have understood the political climate in which he composed his poems and how they are explicitly shaped by that climate. It may have also introduced you with the poetic compositions of W.B.Yeats and some basic themes of his poetic compositions.

Let us think about the following questions and try to answer them:

Self-Assessment Question I

1. How does W.B.Yeats deal with some basic issues of nationalism, Irish myth and culture?
2. How has the poetic sensibility of W.B.Yeats been shaped?
3. Why does W.B.Yeats gradually move towards the world of spiritualism?

4. Name three of Yeats' poetic compositions.

Now, before we examine the assigned poems of our course, let us view W. B. Yeats' literary works in a glimpse and then we will straddle through the texture and rubric of his poetic compositions.

W. B. Yeats wrote poems, plays, and prose in almost equal proportions. Of his prose works the most significant are: *The Celtic Twilight* (1983), *Ideas of Good and Evil* (1903), *Per America SilentiaLunae* (1918), *The Trembling of the Veil*(1926). The first of these is a collection of stores and sketches illustrating the mysticism of the Irish, their belief in ghosts, spirits and fairies etcetera. The *'Celtic Twilight'* has since become a general term for the whole of the Irish literary revival of the 90s and early twentieth century. The collected edition of his plays has 26 plays of which the best are: *The Countless Cathleen* (1910), *The Land of Heart's Desire* (1894), *Deordre* (1907), *The Green Helmet* (1910), *The Hour Glass* (1935), and *A Full Moon in March* (1935).

The collected edition of Yeats' poems is divided into two sections namely lyrical and narrative. The narrative and dramatic section is about one- fourth of the entire collection and contains six tales: *The Wanderings of Oisin* (1889), *The Old Age of Queen Maeve* (1903), *Baile and Aillinn* (1903), *The Shadowy Waters* (1906), *The Two Kings* (1914), *and The Gift of Harun Al-Rashid* (1932). The lyrical section consists of twelve collections with the following titles: *Crossways*(1889), *The Rose* (1893), *The Wind Among the Reeds* (1899), *The Seven Woods* (1903), *The Green Helmet and Other Poems* (1910), *Responsibilities* (1914), *The Wild Swan at Coole* (1919), *Michael Robartes and the Dancer* (1921), *The Tower* (1928), *The Winding Stairs and Other Poems* (1929), *A Full Moon in March* (1935), and *Last Poems* (1940) .

Answer the following questions which may help you to check your understanding of the literary creations of W. B. Yeats.

Self-Assessment Questions II

1. Name the significant works of W.B.Yeats with their publication date.
2. Write the name of some remarkable plays by W.B.Yeats.
3. Which are the two major forms of Yeats' poetic composition?

Romanticism as a literary movement adheres and proliferates to the basic principles of Enlightenment which underscores the importance of rationality in bringing the democratic and secular culture by dispelling the darkness of dogmatism and orthodoxy. It indeed welcomes the endeavour of carving the specified place for each individual and it further establishes the phenomenon of subjectivity and individuality. This exemplifies the fact that Romanticism is a literary and an emancipatory movement which liberates the people from a monological, insular, authoritative, and absolute power but it also longs for a Germanic organicism. Thus Romanticism as a literary movement is dialectical in nature as it on the one hand proffers liberation and democracy but it on the other hand also makes an attempt to attain Platonic or neo-platonic sense of integration and harmony or a form of absolute order. W. B. Yeats is found to be deeply influence with ideals of the Romantic poets particularly William Blake and P.B. Shelley.

W.B. Yeats employs the term 'Romanticism' in two different contexts, one when he refers to literary condition in one of his well known poems titled "September 1913": "Romantic Ireland's dead and gone, /It's with O'Leary in the grave" and another in a political situation which he explains in " Coole Park and Ballylee, 1931":

> We were the last romantic-choose for theme
> Traditional sanctity and loveliness;
> Whatever's written in what poet's name.
> The book of the people; whatever most can bless
> The mind of man or elevate a rhyme.

It is indeed quite important to investigate the relationship between the political and literary use of the term 'Romantic'. Yeats though appears to be an ambivalent romantic yet he proposes that literature and politics are intertwined, even when he opposes the reduction of literature to mere opinion. His ideas on Romanticism call into question the current notions of periodicity. He transcends the romantic confinement within the "Big Six" and spiral out from there to include a poetic tradition from Dante, Spencer, and Milton. This denotes the fact that 'Romanticism' is not only a historical epoch but an odd assemblage of some quiddities and qualities.

William Butler Yeats does not only seem to be deeply influenced by underlying features of 'Romanticism' but he also imitates them and shapes his literary firmament. He appears to be echoing the sounds of P.B. Shelley's poetic compositions and prose works. He too believes in the basic tenets of Shelley's "A Defence of Poetry" and hence by believing that the poet is an unacknowledged legislator of the world, he intertwines art with politics. He instrumentally employs art in the service of creating a particular kind of consciousness and ideology which may make the people aware of their myth, legend and culture which may further help the people to defy the dogmatic and oppressive colonial and dogmatic social, political, and economic order. On the contrary, he also imitates the platonic philosophy of Beauty and aesthetics which P.B. Shelley divulges in his "A Hymn to Intellectual Beauty". His Rose poems reinstate the platonic philosophy of truth and beauty. Yeats imbibes the Blakeian philosophy of contraries and hence he also believes in there is no progression without contraries.

Mainstream Victorian aesthetics and moral positions have entrenched deeply upon the formation of Yeats' literary and political fervour. Yeats owes profoundly to a great man of Victorianism, Matthew Arnold, who has been quite instrumental in shaping his aesthetic philosophy. Yeats in part has created or constructed his version of Victorianism, and has grappled with the substance as well as the shadow of the Victorian age and finally he forges a lifelong aesthetic and philosophical position. He investigates the basic tenets of Victorianism particularly of Rationalism, Naturalism, Impressionism, Realism, and expressionism. He believes that science and its principles may only create the mechanical beauty but not the aesthetic sublime and intellectual beauty. Further he holds that it is imagination which may create intellectual beauty. But Yeats has frequently attacked upon Victorian literature on the grounds of its narrow moralism. He is repeatedly severe on what he sees as an ethical bias in the literary attitudes and critical principles of two quintessential Victorians, Matthew Arnold and George Eliot. He frequently alludes, and always with hostility, to Matthew Arnold's dictum that poetry should be "a criticism of life". He is even more antagonistic to George Eliot, who fails to provide Yeats with what he sees as an inescapable quality o great art, namely joy: "She

seemed to have a distrust or a distaste for all in life that gives one a springing foot...she knew so well how to enforce her distaste by the authority of her mid- Victorian science". Yeats' "At Stratford-on-Avaon" does not only revoke the concept of periodization of Romanticism but it proposes some features of establishing the basic features of Romanticism. The excessive dominance of Enlightenment principles, conflict between Science and Religion, yearning for integration, Utilitarianism, industrial growth and human behaviour etcetera are some major concerns of the phenomenon called Victorianism.

A close reading of his poems reveal the fact that some antithetical values like sin, argumentative, utilitarianism, reason, efficiency, vulgar, success, commonplace, the mob, puritan, merchant inform his major poetic compositions. Gradually, he records the fact that the ethical and improving bent of Victorian literature, especially when vented in poetry, adulterated the essential business for art, which was to reveal timeless truths, and that its palpable design on its readers produced a banality of rhetoric rather than the beauty of rhythm and word that alone was conducive to vision. Further, Yeats believes that the special focus on Irish myth and legend may provide an opportunity to the people of Ireland to find meaning in life in this state of complete futility and anarchy of the uncontrolled passion of utilitarianism and mechanical exploitation.

Pre-Raphaelite poetry with its features lays a great impact upon Yeats' literary corpus. One particular aspect of Pre-Raphaelite art is notably represented in Yeats' own poems of the nineties, collected in "The Wind Among the Reeds". The women or woman of the poems is obviously derived from the paintings of Rossetti, especially his Sibylla Palmifer, and his Venus Syriaca. The thick and flowing hair, the long throats, the heavy eyelids and the rapt eyes at once sensual and spiritual, the air of nobility and mysterious sadness- all the features of Rossetti paintings are to be found in Yeats' poems, where hair is long and heavy and dim, and the lover will be hidden by it or drown in it; where eyes are "passion-dimmed" or "dream-dimmed"; and where the incantatory rhythms suggest the sense of mysterious ritual. Finally, Yeats cannot be understood without being placed firmly in the Victorian context. Nietzsche, whom Yeats has called "that strong enchanter", has further stated that we are merely the resultant of previous generation; we are also the resultant of their errors, passions and crimes: it is impossible to shake off this chain. Though we condemn the errors and think we have escaped them, we cannot escape the fact that we spring from them.

Now, let us study the poems which have been prescribed in the syllabus:

10.4. "SAILING TO BYZANTIUM"

I

That is no country for old men. The young
In one another's arms, birds in the trees
---Those dying generations---at their song,
The salmon-falls, the mackerel-crowded seas,
Fish, flesh, or fowl commend all summer long
Whatever is begotten, born, and dies.
Caught in that sensual music all neglect

Monuments of unaging intellect.

II

An aged man is but a paltry thing,
A tattered coat upon a stick, unless
Soul clap its hands and sing, and louder sing
For every tatter in its mortal dress,
Nor is there singing school but studying
Monuments of its own magnificence;
And therefore I have sailed the seas and come
To the holy city of Byzantium.

III

O sages standing in God's holy fire
As in the gold mosaic of a wall,
Come from the holy fire, perne in a gyre,
And be the singing-masters of my soul.
Consume my heart away; sick with desire
And fastened to a dying animal
It knows not what it is; and gather me
Into the artifice of eternity.

IV

Once out of nature I shall never take
My bodily form from any natural thing,
But such a form as Grecian goldsmiths make
Of hammered gold and gold enamelling
To keep a drowsy Emperor awake;
Or set upon a golden bough to sing
To lords and ladies of Byzantium
Of what is past, or passing, or to come.

10.4.1. Introduction to the Poem

Yeats has deeply been attracted by Byzantium as it represents a brilliant integrated art and it has been the place which has witnessed aesthetic absoluteness and a unique integration of history, religion, aesthetics and practical life. The aesthetic design reflects the vision of the whole people of the place. The poet intends to transcend the dying generations and the music of the earthly world as it distracts the attention of the people from the contemplation of the monuments of unageing intellect. Further, the poet is also concerned with the ageing condition of the old man and his disregard in the contemporary society. The old man is "a tattered coat upon a stick" and therefore, he hails him to for the masters of his old man's soul. In addition, the poet requests the old man to renounce all physical incarnation so that he may attain immortality. The act of renouncing his body may also allow him to get rid from the perishable and physical world. The old wishes to

become an artificial Byzantine bird as it may provide him with aesthetic absoluteness because it becomes a form of art. Thus the poem advocates for the rejection of passion but pleads for a gradual movement for intellection and art. Further, it also denies the phenomenon of embodiment and vouches for permanence in the form of art.

10.4.2. Analysis of the Poem

Stanza I

"That is no country for old men" introduces the major theme of the poem as the poem opens with the ostrasization of the old men by the young people of the modern age. They are found to be engrossed in the inextricate world of carnal desire where the old men may not find any place. The poem reveals the fact the young lovers, birds and fish are busy in copulating and spawning and these are their whole being and therefore, the old men are not at all interested in coming back to the city which is so involved in material and physical world.

Stanza II

The stanza pleads the old men for further augmentation of joy and appreciation. The soul of the old men must rejoice which is generally neglected by the young people: all passion must be left behind; the soul must be free to study the emblems of unchanging age.

Stanza III

The poet looks towards the sages in the gold mosaic of a wall and wants them to come out to master his soul. He wants them to purge his soul by becoming the singing masters of his soul. He wants them to inculcate a sense of spiritual quest him which may allow him to realize his reality. Finally, he believes that only those sages can purge his heart of all impurities, and give him the permanence which great object of art possess.

Stanza IV

The poet is profoundly determined to renounce his body and once he renounces it he does not intend to get any earthly shape because all physical and carnal objects are bound to decay. Rather, he intends to be eternal and imperishable like art. The design of the golden bird, which is an example of art, will provide him with immortality as the bird may provide him with spiritual ecstasy and he will be surrounded not by young and careless lovers and other animal creatures of the sexual cycle, but by an audience that is elegant and abstract.

10.5. "A PRAYER FOR MY DAUGHTER"

Once more the storm is howling, and half hid
Under this cradle-hood and coverlid
My child sleeps on. There is no obstacle
But Gregory's wood and one bare hill
Whereby the haystack- and roof-levelling wind,
Bred on the Atlantic, can be stayed;
And for an hour I have walked and prayed
Because of the great gloom that is in my mind.

I have walked and prayed for this young child an hour
And heard the sea-wind scream upon the tower,
And under the arches of the bridge, and scream
In the elms above the flooded stream;
Imagining in excited reverie
That the future years had come,
Dancing to a frenzied drum,
Out of the murderous innocence of the sea.

May she be granted beauty and yet not
Beauty to make a stranger's eye distraught,
Or hers before a looking-glass, for such,
Being made beautiful overmuch,
Consider beauty a sufficient end,
Lose natural kindness and maybe
The heart-revealing intimacy
That chooses right, and never find a friend.

Helen being chosen found life flat and dull
And later had much trouble from a fool,
While that great Queen, that rose out of the spray,
Being fatherless could have her way
Yet chose a bandy-leggèd smith for man.
It's certain that fine women eat
A crazy salad with their meat
Whereby the Horn of Plenty is undone.

In courtesy I'd have her chiefly learned;
Hearts are not had as a gift but hearts are earned
By those that are not entirely beautiful;
Yet many, that have played the fool
For beauty's very self, has charm made wise,
And many a poor man that has roved,
Loved and thought himself beloved,
From a glad kindness cannot take his eyes.

May she become a flourishing hidden tree
That all her thoughts may like the linnet be,
And have no business but dispensing round
Their magnanimities of sound,
Nor but in merriment begin a chase,
Nor but in merriment a quarrel.
O may she live like some green laurel
Rooted in one dear perpetual place.

My mind, because the minds that I have loved,
The sort of beauty that I have approved,

Prosper but little, has dried up of late,
Yet knows that to be choked with hate
May well be of all evil chances chief.
If there's no hatred in a mind
Assault and battery of the wind
Can never tear the linnet from the leaf.

An intellectual hatred is the worst,
So let her think opinions are accursed.
Have I not seen the loveliest woman born
Out of the mouth of Plenty's horn,
Because of her opinionated mind
Barter that horn and every good
By quiet natures understood
For an old bellows full of angry wind?

Considering that, all hatred driven hence,
The soul recovers radical innocence
And learns at last that it is self-delighting,
Self-appeasing, self-affrighting,
And that its own sweet will is Heaven's will;
She can, though every face should scowl
And every windy quarter howl
Or every bellows burst, be happy still.

And may her bridegroom bring her to a house
Where all's accustomed, ceremonious;
For arrogance and hatred are the wares
Peddled in the thoroughfares.
How but in custom and in ceremony
Are innocence and beauty born?
Ceremony's a name for the rich horn,
And custom for the spreading laurel tree.

10.5.1. Introduction to the Poem

It is one of the remarkable poems from Michael Roberts and the Dancer where the image of a child holds the actants of the poem. The poem seems to be teemed with the imageries of violence and unrest which can also be identified in Yeats' "The Second Coming". Here, the poet pleads that his daughter must be like her mother but not like Maud Gonne. He places two different images to explain his intends why he does not want his daughter to be an image of Maud Gonne. The first image; 'the rich Horn of Plenty' which he associates with courtesy, aristocracy, and ceremony; and the second is 'hidden laurel tree' which provides innocence for the soul, which may allow his daughter to survive in this murky world. Further, the poems records the changing mood of the poet; on the one hand he accuses the ravishing beauty of Helen and Aphrodite or by implication Maud Gonne; but one the other he appreciates courtesy, charm, ceremony, wisdom and the glad kindness. Thus, the poem expresses both love and hatred.

10.5.2. Analysis of the Poem

The opening stanzas of the poem depict the destructive nature of wind and sea; in fact, they articulate the history of human civilization in which the process of construction and destruction have always moved together. The wind and the sea destructive and murderous but they are innocent too. They are innocent as they do not have any subjective impulse against anyone yet they are destructive. As the poem move further, the third stanza of the poem, presents the covert desire of the poet that he fosters for his daughter. He wants her to grow in a beautiful woman but beauty must not cause any harm and trouble to any unknown because he unpacks his biographical experiences and asserts that some beautiful women enjoys the process of tormenting some other men, who by some fault fall in love with them. Further, he wishes for his daughter that her beauty should not cultivate her into an unkind and unemotional woman because without kindness she may find it very tough to get an apposite partner.

The fourth stanza of the poem is a candid explication of some inviolable Greek myths; the first is the graphic narrative of Helen for whom the beauty becomes one of the major elements of her destruction; the second reference is made about Aphrodite, the goddess of love and beauty, even in her case, her beauty is proved to be a curse for her because she was unhappy with her husband and had developed an illicit love affair with another god; similarly, the narrative of Cornucopia also explains the instance of misery which is caused by its plenty and prosperity. Therefore, in the fifth stanza of the poem, the poet advises his daughter of inculcate kindness and courteous manner so that she may not spoil her life.

The sixth stanza of the poem is a further account of the poet for his daughter. He wants her to grow like a flourishing tree where she may sing some beautiful songs which may create harmony and love among the people of its existence. He also wants her not to be involved into any wanton acts and mischievous activities because they may tarnish her image. In the next stanza, the poet believes that one must not nourish any hatred for any one because if a man has no hatred for any one in his mind, no harm can come to him from the storms of life. In stanza eight of the poem, the poet is absolutely against any intellectual hatred as it brings nothing but suffering and unhappiness.

Stanza ninth of poem is again a humble pleading of the poet for his daughter and for other for inculcating innocence and it is possible, he says, by shunning all hatred from one's mind. Finally, the last stanza of the poem express Yeats' wish for this daughter to inculcate custom and ceremony as they are opposed to arrogance and hatred and they breed innocence and beauty.

Self- Assessment Question III

1. Bring out the critical analysis of the poem.

10.6. "WHEN YOU ARE OLD"

WHEN you are old and grey and full of sleep,
And nodding by the fire, take down this book,
And slowly read, and dream of the soft look
Your eyes had once, and of their shadows deep;

How many loved your moments of glad grace,
And loved your beauty with love false or true,
But one man loved the pilgrim Soul in you,
And loved the sorrows of your changing face;
And bending down beside the glowing bars,
Murmur, a little sadly, how Love fled
And paced upon the mountains overhead
And hid his face amid a crowd of star

10.6.1. Introduction to the Poem

The poem is a directly addressed to Maud Gonne, whom Yeats had proposed several times and was rejected at all his attempts. Here, the poet brings a dualism between physical and spiritual love. He delineates that love of the common lovers are merely physical and hence it dies very soon but his love is spiritual and hence it knows no decay. Further, he also describes the inevitability of the decay of human body which is bound to decay with the passage of time and when the body is deceased she (Maud Gonne) may realize the importance of his perennial love. The poem is deeply romantic as it is teemed with melancholy and melody.

10.6.2. Analysis of the Poem

The first stanza of the poem intends to remind Maud Gonne of her physical beauty and her constant perishability. The poet reminds her that when she is turned old, grey haired, and when she sits beside the fire, feeling sleepy and drowsy, she must read his poetic composition. Similarly, in the second stanza of the poem, the poet avers that many people may come and express their love but they may not have the same intensity and depth of love that he possesses for her. Finally, the poet asks Maud Gonne to picture to her mind the difference between what was and what is. She will then, in a mood of reflection and melancholy, bend beside the red-hot coals in the fire place and tell herself in a low voice that all her lovers except one had proved inconstant. She will then realize that those men who loved her bodily attractions and physical charms had completely forgotten her and that all their love had taken wing and hidden itself among the stars above.

Self-Assessment Question IV

1. Why does the poet juxtapose the physical with the Spiritual?
2. Bring out the central concerns of the poem.

10.7. SUMMING UP

The unit in the context has made you acquainted with a gradual growth and maturation of W.B.Yeats' poetic oeuvre. It has also analysed three remarkable poems namely "Sailing to Byzantium", "A Prayer for my Daughter" and "When you are Old" which the poetic complexity and vates like quality of W.B.Yeats.

10.8. ANSWER TO SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

I

For questions 1-4, refer to the discussion at 10.3.

II

1. For questions 1-3, refer to the discussion at 10.3.

III

1. Refer to the discussion at 10.5.

IV

1. Refer to the discussion at 10.6.

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10.9. TERMINAL AND MODEL QUESTIONS

1. Describes the biographical and creative details of W.B.Yeats.
2. How does W.B.Yeats negotiate with three major movements and ages of English Literatrue?
3. Discuss “Sailing to Byzantium” as a symbolic poem.

UNIT 11 THOMAS STEARNS ELIOT

THE WASTE LAND

11.1. INTRODUCTION

The present unit seeks to explore and to evaluate one of the most prominent poets, theorists, and dramatists of the modern age, T.S. Eliot. Eliot has not only redefined the complex texture of poetics but also has reshaped literary theory and criticism. His literary creations have always brought him at *fin de siècle*. You will be reading *The Waste Land* a master piece of modern age and it may allow you to see Eliot's use of points of view, use of allusions, application of myth and Anthropology etcetera. You may also find some autobiographical, social, and cultural aspects in the poem. The rich rubric of the poem may allow you to understand the complexity of the poem.

11.2. OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- understand the making of T.S.Eliot, the poet and the man
- develop and understanding of Eliot's use of points of view, use of allusions, application of myth and Anthropology etcetera. You may also find some autobiographical, social, and cultural aspects in the poem.

11.3. THOMAS STEARNS ELIOT: AN INTRODUCTION

Thomas Stearns Eliot (1888-1965) was born on 26th September, 1888 in an intellectually enriched and economically empowered family where his grandfather was a man of letters and his father Henry Eliot, a poet and his mother, a social activist. They have contributed significantly in bringing out Eliot's enriched and complex personality. He was admitted to a school at St. Louis where he studied till 1905. Later he joined Harvard University where he acquainted himself with a wide variety of subjects beginning from language and literature to some classics and where he also developed a keen interest in comparative literature and finally he got graduated from Harvard in 1910. In 1911, he came in contact with certain philosophers and men of literary interest which encouraged him to study Indian philosophy and Sanskrit literature at Harvard. In 1913, he was elected the president of the Harvard Philosophical Club and in 1914 he travelled to Germany to continue his philosophical studies but because of the outbreak of the First World War in 1914, he came back to Oxford and continued his studies at Oxford till 1915. Thereafter, he takes recourse to journalism and unleashed his poetic potential. He has coroneted with the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1948. He wrote on the wide variety of literary genres. Brief information of his literary production is as follows:

Poetry

The poetic detour of T.S.Eliot can be visualized through five distinct phases.

The First Phase (1905-09) This period in Eliot's life is seen as the period of his juvenilia in which he polished some poems in several college and school magazines.

The Second Phase (1909-1917) Some important poems of this collection are:

"The Love Song of J.Alfred Prufrock" "Portrait of a Lady" "The Preludes"
"Rhapsody on a Windy Night" "The Boston Evening Transcript" "Mr.Apollinax"

The Third Phase (1918-1925) Some important poems of this phase are:

"Geronation" "Burbank with a Baedekar" "Sweeney Erect"
"A Cooking Egg" "Sweeney among the Nightingales" "The Waste Land"
"The Hollow Men"

The Fourth Phase (1925-35) The more characteristic poems of this Christian period are: "Ash Wednesday" "Journey of the Magi" "Animila" "Marina" "Choruses form The Rock" "Coriolanous"

The Fifth Phase (1935-43) This is the period of the Four Quartets, which were published as follows: "Burnt Norton" "East Coker" "The Dry Savages" "Little Gidding"

Drama

Eliot did much to bring about a revival of English poetic drama, both through his practice and critical pronouncements. His dramatic production includes: *The Rock, a Pageant Play* (1934), *Murder in the Cathedral* (1935) *The Family Reunion* (1939), *The Cocktail Party* (1950) *The Confidential Clerk* (1954) *The Elder Statesman*(1959)

Prose

Literary Criticism

Eliot's critical pronouncements first published largely in the form of articles and essays, in numerous periodicals and journals of the day, have now been collected in the following books:

The Use of Poetry and Use of Criticism, 1933, *The Ideal of a Christian Society*, 1939, *Notes Towards a Definition of Culture*, 1948, *Selected Essays*,Third Edition, 1951, *On Poetry and Poets*, 1957 and *To Criticise the Critic*,1965

Journalism

Eliot worked as editor of The Criterion from 1922-1939. This literary magazine stood for the integrity of European culture. It received contributions from all over Europe on a wide variety of subjects, and its contents reflect the Catholicity of Eliot's interests. Eliot himself closed down the magazine when, with the outbreak of war, it became clear that the breakdown of communication with Europe was inevitable.

From the 1920s until his death, T.S. Eliot had a massive influence on literature and literary criticism in English-speaking world. Though Eliot's modernist contemporaries – such as Ezra Pound, Wyndham Lewis, Virginia Woolf, D. H. Lawrence – also wrote criticism, they were not taken seriously as critic in the way that Eliot was. Eliot's criticism was seen as being almost equal in importance to his poetry whereas the criticism of Pound and the others was seen as very much secondary to their creative output. Eliot was also the most respected of the modernist writers – with the possible exception of Joyce, who had no aspiration to be a critic – and this gave his criticism a special status. Modernist writing had created a crisis for traditional forms of criticism since it seemed to demand a new critical approach that would be appropriate to the literary innovations ushered in by modernism. The fact that Eliot was both a high priest of modernism and a critic who seemed to take his criticism as seriously as his poetry gave him authority as a critic unmatched in the twentieth century. Over the past thirty years or so a reaction has set in and Eliot has been attacked on a number of fronts: for example, a Marxist critic such as Terry Eagleton describes his criticism as a response to a "world imperialist crises" which led him "to adopt the aesthetics of a late phase of Romanticism

(symbolism), with its view of the individual artefact as organic, impersonal and autonomous, and then project this doctrine into an authoritarian cultural ideology" (1976, 147); it has also been suggested that his criticism as well as his poetry is contaminated by anti-Semitism (Julius 1995), and that it devalues 'minor' cultures by denying them any possibility of producing significant literature since '[n]o writer can achieve real significance, "maturity", unless he has the weight of a developed tradition on which to drew' (Craig 1996, 14). But despite such attacks, just as it is impossible to discuss twentieth-century poetry without taking account of Eliot's work, likewise the foundational force of his criticism cannot be denied even by those who may be in basic disagreement with its premises.

Though Eliot was a major innovator in literary form, in some respect his criticism is old fashioned. If one compares it with the writings of the Russian formalists or with the work of I. A. Richards or William Empson it seems to belong to a previous tradition: that of the critical essayist. He does not explore fundamental concepts in the manner of Richards, nor was he a close reader in the manner of Empson or the New Critics. Indeed, Eliot rejected the idea that there could be critical laws or even a critical method: "there is no method except to be very intelligent" (1960, 11). However, though Eliot was not a theorist in the orthodox sense, significant theoretical assumptions and implications clearly emerge from his criticism.

Eliot's most important and influential critical study is his collection of essays, *The Sacred Wood*, first published in 1920, and the most highly regarded essay in the collection was *Traditional and the Individual Talent* which has been reprinted in virtually every anthology of twentieth-century criticism. A major reason for Eliot's authority as a critic was the unlike major literary innovators of the past who tended to see themselves as a rebels in both social and artistic terms, Eliot was a strong defender of conservative values. He had no interest in striking bohemian attitudes pour épater le bourgeois in the manner of such poetic predecessors as Shelley or Baudelaire or Rimbaud, and even more important: though associated with literary innovation in his poetry, in his criticism he defended tradition and regarded himself as a traditionalist. 'Tradition and the Individual Talent' is crucial essay because it confronts this paradox and explains how Eliot can be both a practitioner of and advocate for the new while apparently being faithful to what has gone before.

T. E. Hulme in *Speculations* (1924) saw classicism and romanticism as being in fundamental conflict and Eliot's allegiance in this conflict, like Hulme's, was to classicism. Eliot's detestation of romantic subjectivism and individualism is clear all through his criticism. Instead of art being a matter of individual self-expression on the part of the artist, he claims in "Tradition and the Individual Talent" that "The progress of an artist is a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality" (1960, 53). He goes on to declare that "The emotion of art is impersonal", with the poet achieving such impersonality by 'surrendering himself wholly to the work to be done (1960, 59). Moreover, he argues "that not only the best, but the most individual parts of [the poet's] work may be those in which the dead poets, his ancestors, assert their immorality most vigorously", and he goes on to say that "No poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone" (1960, 48, 49). Tradition is a force in poetry precisely because it is not inert, something passively inherited; the poet must "obtain it by great labour" (1960, 49). The poet must acquire a historical sense so that he writes not only for readers in the

present "but with a feeling that the whole of the literature of Europe from Homer and within it the whole of the literature of his own country has a simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order" (1960, 49). What follows from this is the paradox that the present is as much an influence on the past as the reverse: "What happens when a new work of art is created is something that happens simultaneously to all the works of art which preceded it. The existing monuments from an ideal order among themselves, which is modified by the introduction of the new (the really new) work of art among them" (1960, 49-50). A radical theory of intertextuality, therefore, underlies Eliot's discussion of tradition.

Eliot's concept of tradition had consequences for both literary practice and critical judgement. To make a significant literary contribution it was not enough merely to be an innovator: innovation should not ignore tradition but must seek out a relationship with it. Thus for Eliot a poet such as Blake could not be a major figure as his work was too individual. In an essay on Blake in *The Scared Wood* he writes: "His philosophy, like his visions, like his insight, like his technique, was his own" (1960, 155). The consequence was that Blake was 'eccentric' and his poetry "inclined to formlessness". In contrast, writers such as Dante or Lucretius who did not create original philosophies avoid formlessness: "Blake did not have that more Mediterranean gift of form which knows how to borrow as Dante borrowed the theory of the soul; he must needs create a philosophy as well as a poetry" (1960, 156) This is not merely a problem for Blake but "frequently affects writers outside of the Latin traditions" (1960, 157). Eliot asserts that "What [Blake's] genius required, and what it sadly lacked, was a framework of accepted and traditional ideas" (1960, 157-8), and given this situation he was inevitably limited, a kind of do-it-yourself poet whom one might admire in the same way as one might admire someone who creates "an ingenious piece of home-made furniture" (1960, 156) to which Eliot compares Blake's philosophy.

Blake could be seen as a romantic in the broad since he rebelled against tradition in terms both of art and of ideas. However, the modern writer could not merely emulate Dante and identify easily with the tradition. The problem for the modern writer was that such a relationship with tradition no longer seemed possible. Here we see Eliot's critical concerns coming together with his concerns as a poet. It has often been pointed out that Eliot's criticism should be seen as part of a strategy to justify his own poetic practice and what is clear from that practice, especially in a poem such as *The Waste Land*, is that the modern writer must connect with tradition in new ways and this means that modern writing must adopt very different forms from those that had been dominant in the past. It seemed clear to modernists like Eliot that western culture has been fragmented by various cultural developments so that traditions based on classicism and Christianity had broken down. There was no obvious way in which such fragmentation could be overcome and some sort of unity restored; rather the modern writer had to try to construct a tradition out of fragmentation. As Eliot famously put it at the end of the *The Waste Land*: "These fragments I have shored against my ruins". Whereas poets of the past and their readership had shared tradition, this is no longer obtained for modern poets. Yet since Eliot believed that great poetry could only be written in relation to tradition, his only option was to forge the tradition necessary for himself as poet. An added incentive for doing this was that Eliot regarded the English poetic tradition as conventionally perceived, one in which Milton was a dominant figure, as an unfortunate development in the history of English poetry. Since Eliot the poet needed a tradition for himself as a modern poet and believed

that a poet could achieve major status only within one of the major literary traditions, Eliot the critic set about adapting this tradition to suit his purposes.

As an American, Eliot felt he had not been born into a major poetic tradition but he believed that he and other writers in a similar situation were not necessarily at a disadvantage since it was open to writers to make a commitment to such a tradition, Eliot himself choosing to identify with an English tradition within the wider European tradition. For him, great literature could only emerge from such a tradition. In a discussion of Scottish literature, questioning weather Scottish writing could ever have major literary status, he wrote: "... when we assume that a literature exists we assume a great deal: we suppose that there is one of the five or six (at most) great organic formations of history" (Craig 1996, 14). And in Notes towards the Definition of Culture he claimed that "the benefits which Scottish, Welsh, and Irish writers have conferred upon English literature are far in excess of what the contribution of all these individual men of genius would have been had they, let us say, all been adopted in early infancy by English foster-parents" (Craig 1996, 15-16). In other words, writers from 'minority' cultures have to identify with the literary tradition of major culture if they are to have chance of achieving significant literary status, but once such identification has taken place, as with Eliot himself, the writer who comes from outside the culture may have much greater influence than native-born writers. There is reciprocity: the outsider is absorbed but in compensation may bring new life to an existing major tradition. The influence of Eliot's ideas about tradition are apparent in the work of F. R. Leavis who in *The Great Tradition* included the American Henry James and the Pole Joseph Conrad in Leavis's view having chosen to situate their fiction within the tradition of the English novel.

One of the most significant elements of Eliot's critical project arising out of his belief both in tradition and in the need continually to renew it is cannon formation. At the time he began writing Milton and the major romantics were seen as central to the tradition of English poetry, whereas writers he admired more and who were more useful to him as a poet were seen as marginal: the Metaphysical poets and Elizabethan and Jacobean dramatists. Tradition therefore be reconstructed (or perhaps deconstructed) to marginalize Milton and Shelley and lace Donne and Webster closer to the centre as well as being widened to take account of European literature. Even Shakespeare's status could be questioned in this reconstruction of tradition. In The Sacred Wood, Eliot questions whether the play generally regarded as Shakespeare's greatest, Hamlet – and perhaps significantly the play most revered by the romantics – could be regarded as artistically successful: "So far from being Shakespeare's masterpiece, the play is most certainly an artistic failure" (1960, 98).

It is in *Hamlet and his Problems* that Eliot introduces a critical concept that was to be extremely influential: the 'objective correlative'. Eliot's critique of Hamlet is indirectly an attack on the romantic approach to writing. The elevation of Hamlet, Eliot claims, is the result of critics who were also artists, such as Goethe and Coleridge, 'find[ing] in Hamlet a vicarious existence for their own artistic realization' (1960, 95). For Eliot this is artistic heresy since the critic's first business was to study a work of art' and to resist such subjective indulgence as identifying with characters. The problem with Hamlet is that it encourages this kind of subjectivist criticism because of Shakespeare's artistic failure, since "Hamlet, like the sonnets, is full of some stuff that the writer could not drag

to light, contemplate, or manipulate into art" (1960, 100). This leads Eliot to formulate an alternative to the idea that art arises out of the self-expression of emotion: [T]he only way of expressing emotion in the form of art is by finding an 'objective correlative'; in other words, a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula of that particularemotion; such that when the external facts, which must terminate in sensory experience, are given, the emption is immediately evoked. (1960, 100)

It is clear that this can be equates with Eliot's impersonal view of art: there is no need to discuss the artist or the artist's state of mind since the work itself, if it is successfully realized, embodies emotion dramatically, and such emotion does not necessarily need to have been experienced directly by the artist. It is also clear that the concept of the 'objective correlative' reflects the idea that the image was seen as overwhelmingly the dominant element in modernist writing. In such writing interpretation was also superfluous because one could not adequately paraphrase an image. As Eliot writes earlier in *Hamlet and his Problems*: "Qua work of art, the work of art cannot be interpreted; there is nothing to interpret; we can only criticize it according to standards, in comparison to other works of art" (1960, 96).

By implication, therefore, the problem for the modern artist was how to achieve from given the emphasis on the image and the loss of a coherent sense of tradition that existed for earlier poets such as Dante. One of the reasons why Eliot admired Joyce's *Ulysses* was that he saw it as offering a solution to the problem of form for the modern artist living in a contemporary reality that seemed fragmentary and chaotic. Joyce's use of myth Eliot asserts in "Ulysses, Order and Myth" (1923) "is simply a way of controlling, ordering, of giving a shape and a significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history" (Eliot 1997, 22). Eliot believes this 'mythical method' has general application to modern writing and can provide the superstructure, as it were, within which modern writing can establish a relation to tradition. But since the writer has to reformulate tradition rather than sharing one with the reader, tradition can enter modern writing only in a fragmentary and allusive way. It has also to be accommodated to the dominance of the image which has a further fragmentary effect. The inevitable consequence of this is a form of writing that may seem wilfully obscure. Whereas writers in the past are alluding to tradition in the form of allusions or citations from classical or Biblical texts would assume that their ideal reader would share this knowledge, modern writers could assume no such ideal reader. They wrote in the knowledge that their works might appear to be wilfully obscure not only because tradition could only exist within works in a fragmentary from but also because many works that a writer such as Eliot regarded as central to his sense of tradition, such as plays by minor – at least by conventional literary standards – Jacobean dramatists, would not have been familiar to even a well-educated readership.

Eliot's belief that conventional notions of poetic tradition needed to be undermined and that modern writing needed to relate itself to what he regarded as a more authentic tradition was based on one of his most influential critical ideas: his claim that feeling and intellect had become split off from each other because of a 'dissociation of sensibility' that took place in the middle of the seventeenth century. This idea was first put forward in Eliot's essay on the Metaphysical poets, published in 1921. He refers to the presence in Chapman of "a direct sensuous apprehension of thought, or a reaction of thought into feeling, which is exactly what we find in Donne" (1951, 286). In contrast nineteenth

century poets such as Tennyson and Browning 'do not feel their thought as immediately as t6he odour of a rose' (1951, 287). They are the victims of a dissociation of sensibility, one from which Eliot claimed, 'we have never recovered', and which 'was aggravated by the influence of the most powerful poets of the seventeenth] century, Milton and Dryden' (Eliot 1951, 288). In later writings Eliot modified his position somewhat, absolving Milton and Dryden from responsibility and seeing it as a consequence of the English Civil War and even having wider European origins.

The historical basis of Eliot's claim has been attacked, notably by Frank Kermode in Romantic Image, first published in 1957. For Kermode, "The theory of the dissociation of sensibility is, in fact, the most successful version of a Symbolist attempt to explain why the modern world resists work of art that testify to the poet's special, anti-intellectual way of knowing truth" (1966, 143). However, the idea not only allowed Eliot to discard writers who embodied a tradition that was antagonistic to his own poetic purposes – such as Milton, romantic and Victorian poetry – but to satisfy this in critical terms and thus deflect the claim that his references merely reflected his own poetic prejudices. Attacks on the "dissociation of sensibility' on the grounds that it lacks historical objectivity are perhaps beside the point despite Eliot's attempts to argue that it did have a historical basis. It should perhaps be seen as similar to such concepts as Freud's 'Oedipus complex' or Lacan's 'mirror phase' which are beyond confirmation in empirical terms. The value of such concepts lies in their explanatory power, and the influence of Eliot's nation of a 'dissociation of sensibility' over several decades indicates that for many people it did have an exceptional explanatory power. Of course, the culture has moved on since and arguably the idea of a 'dissociation of sensibility' may now have outlived its usefulness, but it is undeniable that the concept has played a major role in twentieth-century culture.

Eliot's key critical concepts: tradition, artistic impersonality, the objective correlative, the dissociation of sensibility, have had a crucial effect on twentieth-century criticism. The work of the critics and theorists who came after him: I. A. Richards and especially F. R. Leavis and the American New Critics, were fundamentally affected by these concepts. For a while the literary status of Milton and romantics such as Shelly was seriously under-mined; Donne ascended the poetic hierarchy almost to the level of Shakespeare; the fusion of feeling and thought through images that could not be paraphrased became a criterion of literary value, together with its corollary that literature was a force in itself separate from history or philosophy. Even when advocates of a different critical philosophy emerged, such as Northrop Frye and Harold Bloom, one can feel the power of Eliot's thought in the background as something to be resisted. His influence has only been seriously weakened by the emergence of form of literary criticism that have been shaped by critical and cultural theories influenced to a considerable extent by continental philosophy. Many critical questions that were not addressed for several decades during the ascendancy of Eliot and Eliot-influenced criticism have now come back onto the agenda.

Perhaps one of the most crucial of these questions is whether art and literature can be separated from the political. One of Eliot's fundamental assumptions is that the poem is a work of art and is autotelic that is it has no purpose or end beyond itself. In the introduction to the 1928 edition of The Sacred Wood Eliot declared that 'the problem appearing in these essays, which gives them that what coherence they have, is the problem of the integrity of poetry, with the repeated assertion that when we are

considering poetry we must consider it primarily as poetry and not another thing' (1960, viii). He dismisses the definitions of great predecessors such as Wordsworth or Arnold, denying that poetry is 'emotion did not recollect in tranquillity or a 'criticism of life', nor can it be reduced to morals, politics, religion or to 'a collection of psychological data about the minds of poets, or about the history of an epoch' (1960, x).

The issues raised here are perhaps highlighted most powerfully in relation to Eliot's own poetry. The extent to which Eliot succeeded in dominating critical thinking up until the 1960s is indicated by the fact that certain aspects of his own poetry were hardly ever mentioned or discussed, notably the apparent anti-Semitism of certain of the earlier poems. A subject such as anti-Semitism in its twentieth-century context does powerfully raise the question as to whether Eliot's view that poetry can be discussed legitimately only as poetry and not in terms of other discourses is sustainable. If one adopts Eliot's critical philosophy there seems no way of confronting directly anti-Semitism in his poetry yet these poems are clearly embroiled in the cultural matrix that created the conditions for mass murder. During the ascendancy of Eliot and those critics influenced by him this kind of problem was ignored because Eliot had created a critical discourse that defined literature in very narrow terms and endeavoured to preserve literature from any contamination by non-literary considerations. To discuss question of meaning was anti-literary as the literary text was a special form of discourse: in Archibald MacLeish's celebrated formulation: "A poem must not mean / But be." Though this view now seems highly questionable what one should put in its place still remains problematic as going to the opposite extreme and judging poetry by its content seems equally unsatisfactory. Does 'great poetry' somehow transform anti-Semitism and if so in what way, or should poetic value be simply denied to any poetry embodying such an ideology, or does the issue need to be discussed in quite different terms? These are questions that still need to be debated and perhaps the emergence recently of a theoretically sophisticated 'ethical criticism' which has redirected critical attention to the responsibility of both author and reader in the production of meaning in literary texts indicates an awareness that these sorts of questions need to be discussed.

Other related developments in contemporary criticism that have undermined Eliot's critical philosophy are the claims by feminist and gay critics that gender and sexual orientation cannot be excluded in any discussion of a literary text, and as a result of their work the textualism and anti-intentionlaism of the Eliot influential New Critics have been seriously undermined. Although textualism still remains powerful in contemporary criticism in the work of deconstructive critics, it takes its cue not so much from Eliot as from a theorist like Derrida who comes from a quite different tradition. Also Eliot's claim that significant writers must belongs to a major literary tradition can be questioned on the grounds that many of the most significant writers of the twentieth century were born outside the dominant culture and raised identification with it, writers such as Yeasts, Joyce, Beckett, MacDiarmid, Rilke, Kafka. It has been argued that, contrary to Eliot's cultural philosophy, 'peripheries' have refused to accept the dominance of the 'cultural core' as the unequal relationship between centre and margins is founded on 'a system of cultural exchange designed to enhance the core and impoverish the periphery and thereby to maintain the power relationship between them' (Craig 1996, 29), and that in this changed cultural context Eliot's identification of tradition with the dominant culture has lost its force.

The above mentioned detours must have made you acquainted with the biographical and contextual details of T.S.Eliot. Answer the following questions to fathom your understanding.

Self-Assessment Question I

1. Describe the context in which T.S.Eliot composed and ascribed his poetic, dramatic, and prosaic writings.
2. Evaluate T.S.Eliot as a Modernist writer.
3. List the poetic corpus of T.S.Eliot with publication date.

11.4. THE WASTE LAND

I. The Burial of the Dead

April is the cruellest month, breeding
Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing
Memory and desire, stirring
Dull roots with spring rain.
Winter kept us warm, covering
Earth in forgetful snow, feeding
A little life with dried tubers.
Summer surprised us, coming over the Starnbergersee
With a shower of rain; we stopped in the colonnade,
And went on in sunlight, into the Hofgarten,
And drank coffee, and talked for an hour.
Bin gar keineRussin, stamm' ausLitauen, echtdeutsch.
And when we were children, staying at the arch-duke's,
My cousin's, he took me out on a sled,
And I was frightened. He said, Marie,
Marie, hold on tight. And down we went.
In the mountains, there you feel free.
I read, much of the night, and go south in the winter.

What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow
Out of this stony rubbish? Son of man,
You cannot say, or guess, for you know only
A heap of broken images, where the sun beats,
And the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no relief,
And the dry stone no sound of water. Only
There is shadow under this red rock,
(Come in under the shadow of this red rock),
And I will show you something different from either
Your shadow at morning striding behind you
Or your shadow at evening rising to meet you;
I will show you fear in a handful of dust.

Frisch weht der Wind
Der Heimat zu
Mein Irisch Kind,
Wo weilest du?

"You gave me hyacinths first a year ago;
"They called me the hyacinth girl."
—Yet when we came back, late, from the Hyacinth garden,
Your arms full, and your hair wet, I could not
Speak, and my eyes failed, I was neither
Living nor dead, and I knew nothing,
Looking into the heart of light, the silence.
Oed' und leer das Meer.

Madame Sosostris, famous clairvoyante,
Had a bad cold, nevertheless
Is known to be the wisest woman in Europe,
With a wicked pack of cards. Here, said she,
Is your card, the drowned Phoenician Sailor,
(Those are pearls that were his eyes. Look!)
Here is Belladonna, the Lady of the Rocks,
The lady of situations.
Here is the man with three staves, and here the Wheel,
And here is the one-eyed merchant, and this card,
Which is blank, is something he carries on his back,
Which I am forbidden to see. I do not find
The Hanged Man. Fear death by water.
I see crowds of people, walking round in a ring.
Thank you. If you see dear Mrs.Equitone,
Tell her I bring the horoscope myself:
One must be so careful these days.

Unreal City,
Under the brown fog of a winter dawn,
A crowd flowed over London Bridge, so many,
I had not thought death had undone so many.
Sighs, short and infrequent, were exhaled,
And each man fixed his eyes before his feet.
Flowed up the hill and down King William Street,
To where Saint Mary Woolnoth kept the hours
With a dead sound on the final stroke of nine.
There I saw one I knew, and stopped him, crying: "Stetson!
"You who were with me in the ships at Mylae!
"That corpse you planted last year in your garden,
"Has it begun to sprout? Will it bloom this year?
"Or has the sudden frost disturbed its bed?
"Oh keep the Dog far hence, that's friend to men,
"Or with his nails he'll dig it up again!
"You! hypocrite lecteur!—mon semblable,—mon frère!"

II. A Game of Chess

The Chair she sat in, like a burnished throne,
Glowed on the marble, where the glass
Held up by standards wrought with fruited vines
From which a golden Cupidon peeped out
(Another hid his eyes behind his wing)
Doubled the flames of seven branched candelabra
Reflecting light upon the table as
The glitter of her jewels rose to meet it,
From satin cases poured in rich profusion;
In vials of ivory and coloured glass
Unstoppered, lurked her strange synthetic perfumes,
Unguent, powdered, or liquid—troubled, confused
And drowned the sense in odours; stirred by the air
That freshened from the window, these ascended
In fattening the prolonged candle-flames,
Flung their smoke into the laquearia,
Stirring the pattern on the coffered ceiling.
Huge sea-wood fed with copper
Burned green and orange, framed by the coloured stone,
In which sad light a carvéd dolphin swam.
Above the antique mantel was displayed
As though a window gave upon the sylvan scene
The change of Philomel, by the barbarous king
So rudely forced; yet there the nightingale
Filled all the desert with inviolable voice
And still she cried, and still the world pursues,
"Jug Jug" to dirty ears.
And other withered stumps of time
Were told upon the walls; staring forms
Leaned out, leaning, hushing the room enclosed.
Footsteps shuffled on the stair.
Under the firelight, under the brush, her hair
Spread out in fiery points
Glowed into words, then would be savagely still.

"My nerves are bad tonight. Yes, bad. Stay with me.
"Speak to me. Why do you never speak. Speak.
"What are you thinking of? What thinking? What?
"I never know what you are thinking. Think."

I think we are in rats' alley
Where the dead men lost their bones.

"What is that noise?"
The wind under the door.

"What is that noise now? What is the wind doing?"
Nothing again nothing.
"Do
"You know nothing? Do you see nothing? Do you remember
"Nothing?"

I remember
Those are pearls that were his eyes.
"Are you alive, or not? Is there nothing in your head?"

But
O OOO that Shakespeherian Rag—
It's so elegant
So intelligent
"What shall I do now? What shall I do?"
"I shall rush out as I am, and walk the street
"With my hair down, so. What shall we do tomorrow?
"What shall we ever do?"
The hot water at ten.
And if it rains, a closed car at four.
And we shall play a game of chess,
Pressing lidless eyes and waiting for a knock upon the door.

When Lil's husband got demobbed, I said—
I didn't mince my words, I said to her myself,
HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME
Now Albert's coming back, make yourself a bit smart.
He'll want to know what you done with that money he gave you
To get yourself some teeth. He did, I was there.
You have them all out, Lil, and get a nice set,
He said, I swear, I can't bear to look at you.
And no more can't I, I said, and think of poor Albert,
He's been in the army four years, he wants a good time,
And if you don't give it him, there's others will, I said.
Oh is there, she said. Something o' that, I said.
Then I'll know who to thank, she said, and give me a straight look.
HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME
If you don't like it you can get on with it, I said.
Others can pick and choose if you can't.
But if Albert makes off, it won't be for lack of telling.
You ought to be ashamed, I said, to look so antique.
(And her only thirty-one.)
I can't help it, she said, pulling a long face,
It's them pills I took, to bring it off, she said.
(She's had five already, and nearly died of young George.)
The chemist said it would be all right, but I've never been the same.
You are a proper fool, I said.
Well, if Albert won't leave you alone, there it is, I said,

What you get married for if you don't want children?
HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME
Well, that Sunday Albert was home, they had a hot gammon,
And they asked me in to dinner, to get the beauty of it hot—
HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME
HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME
Goonight Bill. Goonight Lou. Goonight May. Goonight.
Ta ta. Goonight. Goonight.
Good night, ladies, good night, sweet ladies, good night, good night.

III. The Fire Sermon

The river's tent is broken: the last fingers of leaf
Clutch and sink into the wet bank. The wind
Crosses the brown land, unheard. The nymphs are departed.
Sweet Thames, run softly, till I end my song.
The river bears no empty bottles, sandwich papers,
Silk handkerchiefs, cardboard boxes, cigarette ends
Or other testimony of summer nights. The nymphs are departed.
And their friends, the loitering heirs of city directors;
Departed, have left no addresses.
By the waters of Leman I sat down and wept . . .
Sweet Thames, run softly till I end my song,
Sweet Thames, run softly, for I speak not loud or long.
But at my back in a cold blast I hear
The rattle of the bones, and chuckle spread from ear to ear.

A rat crept softly through the vegetation
Dragging its slimy belly on the bank
While I was fishing in the dull canal
On a winter evening round behind the gashouse
Musing upon the king my brother's wreck
And on the king my father's death before him.
White bodies naked on the low damp ground
And bones cast in a little low dry garret,
Rattled by the rat's foot only, year to year.
But at my back from time to time I hear
The sound of horns and motors, which shall bring
Sweeney to Mrs. Porter in the spring.
O the moon shone bright on Mrs. Porter
And on her daughter
They wash their feet in soda water
Et O ces voix d'enfants, chantant dans la coupole!

Twit twittwit
Jug jug jug jug jug jug
So rudely forc'd.
Tereu

Unreal City
Under the brown fog of a winter noon
Mr.Eugenides, the Smyrna merchant
Unshaven, with a pocket full of currants
C.i.f. London: documents at sight,
Asked me in demotic French
To luncheon at the Cannon Street Hotel
Followed by a weekend at the Metropole.

At the violet hour, when the eyes and back
Turn upward from the desk, when the human engine waits
Like a taxi throbbing waiting,
I Tiresias, though blind, throbbing between two lives,
Old man with wrinkled female breasts, can see
At the violet hour, the evening hour that strives
Homeward, and brings the sailor home from sea,
The typist home at teatime, clears her breakfast, lights
Her stove, and lays out food in tins.
Out of the window perilously spread
Her drying combinations touched by the sun's last rays,
On the divan are piled (at night her bed)
Stockings, slippers, camisoles, and stays.
I Tiresias, old man with wrinkled dugs
Perceived the scene, and foretold the rest—
I too awaited the expected guest.
He, the young man carbuncular, arrives,
A small house agent's clerk, with one bold stare,
One of the low on whom assurance sits
As a silk hat on a Bradford millionaire.
The time is now propitious, as he guesses,
The meal is ended, she is bored and tired,
Endeavours to engage her in caresses
Which still are unreproved, if undesired.
Flushed and decided, he assaults at once;
Exploring hands encounter no defence;
His vanity requires no response,
And makes a welcome of indifference.
(And I Tiresias have foresuffered all
Enacted on this same divan or bed;
I who have sat by Thebes below the wall
And walked among the lowest of the dead.)
Bestows one final patronising kiss,
And gropes his way, finding the stairs unlit . . .

She turns and looks a moment in the glass,
Hardly aware of her departed lover;
Her brain allows one half-formed thought to pass:

"Well now that's done: and I'm glad it's over."
When lovely woman stoops to folly and
Paces about her room again, alone,
She smoothes her hair with automatic hand,
And puts a record on the gramophone.

"This music crept by me upon the waters"
And along the Strand, up Queen Victoria Street.
O City city, I can sometimes hear
Beside a public bar in Lower Thames Street,
The pleasant whining of a mandoline
And a clatter and a chatter from within
Where fishmen lounge at noon: where the walls
Of Magnus Martyr hold
Inexplicable splendour of Ionian white and gold.

The river sweats
Oil and tar
The barges drift
With the turning tide
Red sails
Wide
To leeward, swing on the heavy spar.
The barges wash
Drifting logs
Down Greenwich reach
Past the Isle of Dogs.
Weialala leia
Wallala leialala

Elizabeth and Leicester
Beating oars
The stern was formed
A gilded shell
Red and gold
The brisk swell
Rippled both shores
Southwest wind
Carried down stream
The peal of bells
White towers
Weiala laleia
Wallala leialala

"Trams and dusty trees.
Highbury bore me. Richmond and Kew
Undid me. By Richmond I raised my knees
Supine on the floor of a narrow canoe."

"My feet are at Moorgate, and my heart
Under my feet. After the event
He wept. He promised a 'new start.'
I made no comment. What should I resent?"

"On Margate Sands.
I can connect
Nothing with nothing.
The broken fingernails of dirty hands.
My people humble people who expect
Nothing."
lala

To Carthage then I came

Burning burningburningburning
O Lord Thou pluckest me out
O Lord Thou pluckest

burning

IV. Death by Water

Phlebas the Phoenician, a fortnight dead,
Forgot the cry of gulls, and the deep sea swell
And the profit and loss.
A current under sea
Picked his bones in whispers. As he rose and fell
He passed the stages of his age and youth
Entering the whirlpool.
Gentile or Jew
O you who turn the wheel and look to windward,
Consider Phlebas, who was once handsome and tall as you.

V. What the Thunder Said

After the torchlight red on sweaty faces
After the frosty silence in the gardens
After the agony in stony places
The shouting and the crying
Prison and palace and reverberation
Of thunder of spring over distant mountains
He who was living is now dead
We who were living are now dying
With a little patience

Here is no water but only rock

Rock and no water and the sandy road
The road winding above among the mountains
Which are mountains of rock without water
If there were water we should stop and drink
Amongst the rock one cannot stop or think
Sweat is dry and feet are in the sand
If there were only water amongst the rock
Dead mountain mouth of carious teeth that cannot spit
Here one can neither stand nor lie nor sit
There is not even silence in the mountains
But dry sterile thunder without rain
There is not even solitude in the mountains
But red sullen faces sneer and snarl
From doors of mudcracked houses
If there were water
And no rock
If there were rock
And also water
And water
A spring
A pool among the rock
If there were the sound of water only
Not the cicada
And dry grass singing
But sound of water over a rock
Where the hermit-thrush sings in the pine trees
Drip drop drip drop dropdropdrop
But there is no water

Who is the third who walks always beside you?
When I count, there are only you and I together
But when I look ahead up the white road
There is always another one walking beside you
Gliding wrapt in a brown mantle, hooded
I do not know whether a man or a woman
—But who is that on the other side of you?

What is that sound high in the air
Murmur of maternal lamentation
Who are those hooded hordes swarming
Over endless plains, stumbling in cracked earth
Ringed by the flat horizon only
What is the city over the mountains
Cracks and reforms and bursts in the violet air
Falling towers
Jerusalem Athens Alexandria
Vienna London
Unreal

A woman drew her long black hair out tight
And fiddled whisper music on those strings
And bats with baby faces in the violet light
Whistled, and beat their wings
And crawled head downward down a blackened wall
And upside down in air were towers
Tolling reminiscent bells, that kept the hours
And voices singing out of empty cisterns and exhausted wells.
In this decayed hole among the mountains
In the faint moonlight, the grass is singing
Over the tumbled graves, about the chapel
There is the empty chapel, only the wind's home.
It has no windows, and the door swings,
Dry bones can harm no one.
Only a cock stood on the rooftree
Co corico co corico
In a flash of lightning. Then a damp gust
Bringing rain

Ganga was sunken, and the limp leaves
Waited for rain, while the black clouds
Gathered far distant, over Himavant.
The jungle crouched, humped in silence.
Then spoke the thunder
DA
Datta: what have we given?
My friend, blood shaking my heart
The awful daring of a moment's surrender
Which an age of prudence can never retract
By this, and this only, we have existed
Which is not to be found in our obituaries
Or in memories draped by the beneficent spider
Or under seals broken by the lean solicitor
In our empty rooms
DA
Dayadhvam: I have heard the key
Turn in the door once and turn once only
We think of the key, each in his prison
Thinking of the key, each confirms a prison
Only at nightfall, aethereal rumours
Revive for a moment a broken Coriolanus
DA
Damyata: The boat responded
Gaily, to the hand expert with sail and oar
The sea was calm, your heart would have responded
Gaily, when invited, beating obedient
To controlling hands

I sat upon the shore
Fishing, with the arid plain behind me
Shall I at least set my lands in order?
London Bridge is falling down falling down falling down
Poi s'ascose nel foco che gli affina
Quando fiam uti chelidon—O swallow swallow
Le Prince d'Aquitaine à la tour abolie
These fragments I have shored against my ruins
Why then Ile fit you. Hieronymo's mad againe.
Datta. Dayadhvam. Damyata.
Shantih shantih shantih

11.4.1 Introduction to the Poem

In *The Waste Land* (1922) the experience of the old waiter becomes relevant to a whole land, at once the Fisher King myth and the modern reality. One may assume that the French poem was already behind the poet—four years separate their publication—when it suddenly fell into the larger scheme suggested by Jessie L. Weston's book on the Grail legend, From Ritual to Romance. The latent intention of The Waste Land might be called a reversal of Miss Weston's title—to translate romance back into its meaning as ritual. In her scheme the experience of sex, like that of Phiebas, assumes a universal or religious significance; it is connected with the state of the land. For the Vegetation myths erect the cycle of the seasons into a series of divinely ordered events; and this cycle of life is based on sex and personified in ritualistic figures. The fortune of the land depends upon the treatment of these figures, and thus upon religion.

To incorporate the individual into this scheme it is only necessary to parallel his experience with that of a figure in this ritual. The Fisher King in particular was both maimed sexually and restored magically. But one side of this experience can be paralleled in "Dans le Restaurant" and the other in the story beginning in Dante's Vita Nuova. Thus a twofold, issue can-be found in the experience of sex, providing a negative and a positive movement for The Waste Land. The most important idea for Eliot in Miss Weston's scheme was that the Grail story subsumes a number of myths; this provided him with both a central myth and a basic system of metaphor. Miss Weston argued that he meaning of the Grail legend centered in the Fisher King, and was explained by the Vegetation or Fertility rites. In this connection she called attention to the use of the Tarot pack, including the contrast between its present disrepute and its past authority. And she emphasized the importance of the Vegetation rites "as a factor in the evolution of religious consciousness" " (p. 6). Of course this statement oversimplifies the elements which are compounded in this poem. Basically its myths have a common meaning, which permits their union; and this fact testifies to something permanent in human nature, which may be repeated in individual experience.

Before beginning our inspection of the poem we must admit the fact that in its original formit was nearly twice as long. Ezra Pound reduced it to its present form, and Eliot has praised hi performance. This is the special point of the dedication, "For Ezra Pound in migliorfabbro (the better Craftsman)" – Arnaut Daniel again (Purgatorio26:117). Obviously Eliot did not feel that violence had been done the essential form of the poem;

certainly not that it was maimed. Hence this poem exists with the same sanction as his other poems; moreover, it does not pose a different order of problems. Only the publication of the original could dispute Eliot's judgment; meanwhile he rests on its present form. In one respect that form has changed slightly: the first paragraph of Part III was formerly two.

This revision of the original may account for the notes attached to The Waste Land, or part of them. But what use is to be made of them? They identify sources upon which he has drawn, occasionally reproducing the pertinent passage; and they provide other information about the materials of the poem, sometimes including an opinion. So far as the recovery of this information is helpful to the reader, they may be used. But the effect of the poem cannot properly rely upon them, except as such effects are frustrated by lack of knowledge. Given the qualified reader, the poem must produce its effect without the notes. And qualification here does not mean recognition of every borrowing, but of borrowings which derive part of their effect from the shift in context.

The most important notes, however, are those which call attention to formal aspects of the poem whether of character, theme, or plan. Of these none is more important, so far as poetic method is concerned, than those which relate lines to one another, or provide cross-references. These are not hints of the so-called musical organization of the poem; but, rather, significant relations or connections of experience. They indicate the operation of the subsumptivemyth its common themes or experiences and its interchangeable characters. Under this myth any parallel myth or any of its parts is a potential metaphor for other members of the same class; hence translations of one into another are both frequent and sudden, but neither wanton nor cynical. The effects of these translations, however, are complicated often ironic, because of the differences between the contexts of the translated term. But these translations are possible only because of basic identities, which provide their real significance though often by pointing up differences. They are not a series of paradoxes; they are not mere variations on a theme.

But let us consider what the prefatory note tells us. First,that three things were suggested by Miss Weston's book: the title, the plan, and much of the "incidental symbolism." Now the title draws its significance from the Fisher King story; therefore the plan of a poem with this title might be expected to relate to this story— the subsuming myth for Miss Weston's incorporation of Fertility ritual into the Grail legend. Likewise the "incidental symbolism" suggests the incorporated material, which is supplemented from Frazer's The Golden Bough. Finally, he speaks of the elucidation of the difficulties of the poem, and for this purpose recommends Miss Weston's book rather than his own notes. Many readers have found neither very helpful. Let us remember first that the sexual maiming and restoration of the Fisher King is reflected in his land and that when he is maimed the land is waste; but most of all that it is a regeneration story of a comprehensive kind.

The early note on the Tarot pack of cards shows how comprehensive it became for Eliot; his manipulation of the pack itself shows how he adapted it to that story and incorporated other elements of his poem. This pack, which Miss Weston had connected with the vegetation or revival myth, is the chief key to his plan. It will be noticed that death and revival are prominent in the items mentioned in this note; and that his final arbitrary association is "with the Fisher King himself," a turn of phrase which suggests his central, if not archetypal, character.

Now the Grail legend, as interpreted by Miss Weston, connects the Lance and Grail, or sacred vessel of the Last Supper, with the sex symbolism which is found in the four suits of the Tarot pack. Thus the ceremonial of the Grail, which has regeneration for its end, employs means that are significant for both Christian and nature rites. Its object, the Fisher King, is a symbol of reproductive Nature, like the vegetation gods; having been maimed like them, he has become the object of similarities; and it is to the volumes dealing with these gods that Eliot turns in The Golden Bough. But this king connects by his name with the Fish-Fisher symbols— an ancient Life symbolism both pagan and Christian, which was based on the belief "that all life comes from the water." And it is to get both the Hanged God and the Fisher King into the Tarot pack that Eliot modifies its associations, for it becomes the unifying device by which he tells the fortune of the modern world. Its original use, which appears degraded "to predict the rise and fall of the waters which brought fertility to the land," is thus enlarged so as to include these associations, which are likewise centered in the idea of death and rebirth.

Miss Weston's treatment of the legend enables Eliot to see in the experience of sex the potentialities of the Fisher King and his Waste Land. In the poem the Fisher King is the prototype of the male characters who melt into one another, and his is the subsuming myth; hence the poem closes on him and his predicament, just as it develops after a comparable experience. He is the type who speaks throughout, even in the Tiresias interruption, which extends the speaker to include the other sex and to suggest the alternative consequences of blindness and vision. The same experience brought both to Tiresias. Some years later Eliot is explicit on the consummation of the lower love in the higher love, which alone can save sex from animalism; and distinguishes between Dante and Baudelaire on this basis. But at this time he had in Miss Weston the suggestion "that the Mystery ritual comprised a double initiation, the Lower, into the mysteries of generation, i.e., of physical Life; the Higher, into the Spiritual Divine Life, where man is made one with God" (pp. 147, 172). This scheme could have provided him with a double level and a double issue for the experience of the poem.

Thus the poem becomes a kind of dramatic lyric, in which the lyric themes are projected by characters associated with the central experience, and the individual fortune becomes a general fortune. The basic experience is that of the Fisher King, which is made universal in Tiresias, and the central speaker comprehends not only the characters within the poem but the audience which he taunts. The speaker also is the "son of man," his inheritor; and this inheritance is the lot of the Fisher King, whose experience he repeats. This speaker, who is the subject of the fortune, is most constantly related to Ferdinand, Prince of Naples. But, needless to say, Ferdinand as potential Fisher King is not Shakespeare's character, for he hears a very different music and it brings him to a very different vision. Yet the contrast is not without its advantage, for Eliot uses him as a link between magical and modern experience, recalling the Miranda vision. Ferdinand combines the roles of the Sailor and the Fisher King, or mediates between them. While both represent the same disablement by sex, they also suggest different issues of this experience. For this division Eliot may have found support in the double initiation of the Mystery ritual, with the first of which Miss Weston associated "the horrors of physical death." But Eliot makes death a consequence not a test, for the first—unless it is completed by the second. As a modem knight of this legend, Ferdinand is a victim rather than a restorer, and this role is foreshadowed by another change.

At the beginning of *The Waste Land* we notice a fundamental, indeed instrumental, difference in Eliot's use of the vegetation myths. In these myths the appropriate attitude towards the renewal of life, or spring, is one of rejoicing; here it is the reverse. Aside from these myths, this attitude strikes the reader as a paradox in English poetry; in relation to these myths, it is fundamental to the meaning of the poem. The people of the Waste Land are not made happy by the return of spring of fruitfulness to the soil; they prefer the barrenness of winter or the dead season. On the psychological level, the sex level of the myths, the same attitudes are evident. This reorientation should never be forgotten in the poem; it is indispensable not only to the meaning of the whole but also to the reference of particular parts. For example, it is evident in the general attitude toward water, the life-giving element of the myth; and of course explains the use of water. Where water appears as desirable, it is only in recognition of a terrible need. One is more likely to drown in it as the vital principle than to slake his thirst by its symbolic meaning; hence its connection with both sex and religion. Miss Weston provided a hint for developing the different aspects of water when she opposed the belief "that all life comes from the water" to "a more sensual and less abstract idea" that connected "the Fish with the goddess Astarte or Atargatis" p. 126). When the lack of water is felt, it assumes a positive character; but for the most part it is negative or something to be feared. This is a logical consequence of Eliot's inversion of the vegetation myth, which makes the inhabitants of the Waste Land fear the return of life. And this reversal enables him to express the theme of religious frustration in terms of the myth which subsumes so many myths, for sex can be seen as both the origin and frustration of life.

It is a mistake to say that the poem "exhibits no progression" and ends where it began. The fear which the speaker promised to show is exhibited in its full course and ultimate potentiality. From one point of view it is a tremendous compression of human history; from another it is an equally startling expansion of "Dans le Restaurant." In a poem so compactly organized, it is necessary to form some idea of its basic scheme; in a poem so full of symbolic translation, it is imperative to keep our eye on the term that is translated. Hence we shall give our attention first to the relation of the parts to a basic scheme, and then to the connection of themes within and between the parts. Our purpose, as before, will be to see what the poem is about in its simple and immediate sense.

As the title indicates the myth of the Waste Land, so that myth gives meaning to the protagonist. We have already noticed how Eliot accommodated the Tarot pack to this myth, since the Tarot is his chief means of exploiting it. Hence this myth, as implemented by the cards which appear in the fortune, should provide the basic reference for the parts of the poem. In this myth we have noticed that the Waste Land owes its condition to the disability of the Fisher King, who thus resembles the vegetation god. But Eliot has introduced both the Fisher King and the Hanged God into the Tarot pack, and hence wishes to keep their roles separate.

In fact, though both were victims, the Hanged God, whom the Madame does not find, represents in the poem the final cause of the Waste Land and its possible restoration. In legend he was sacrificed in order that nature might he renewed. Now "The Burial of the Dead" relates primarily to him, and the state of the land is an effect of his death. Any change in that state is contingent upon his revival, but also upon the attitude of the people. The Fisher King's role is to represent man's fate as it originates in sex but cannot transcend it; without this transcendence, which is figured in the Hanged God, he is

doomed to death. The Fisher King is differentiated from the Phoenician Sailor by his awareness of the means of transcendence. Hence the first part of the poem develops the death theme, for god and man, and relates the fear of it to sex, as in the myth.

In the second part the protagonist, whose association with the Phoenician Sailor is made to suggest Ferdinand, encounters "Belladonna, the Lady of the Rocks." Her attraction for him and her danger to a sailor are both suggested by her names. Now life as the sex game is sterile, like the land. In "A Game of Chess" sex as the death principle is exposed on two levels of society. Here, both by text and by note, the reader is forcibly reminded of the garden experience and the fortune of Part I, the effects of which appear in the protagonist.

"The Fire Sermon" brings the Merchant of the fortune, with suggestions of his mergence with the Sailor. The music which creeps by Ferdinand upon the waters of Leman develops the lust or death theme, reveals its moral significance, and suggests its moral need. Since his fate has been connected with water, water has assumed a fateful attraction for the protagonist, who both fears and craves it. In terms of the fortune the course of these waters is highly significant.

"Death by Water" brings the Phoenician Sailor and the ultimate consequence of the lust theme, of the fire. Now the protagonist's anticipated fate has been executed. But some elements of his fortune have not yet appeared, and hence some of its meaning remains to be unfolded.

In "What the Thunder Said" these elements appear, in a continuationof the scene which originally evoked the Waste Land and in an intensification of its terrible need. The Hanged Man becomes more explicit, and is associated with the "hooded figure" in the passage to Emmaus. Now the "crowds of people" take on substance, and the Fisher King, like the Hanged Man, becomes more distinct in the Man with Three Staves. To these, as to the dead Sailor, the opening theme is relevant; for the Thunder, as head of spring, speaks of revival. Death has become an agony; and, after his journey through the Waste Land, the protagonist is given by the Thunder three staves which could make revival possible. But, once more fishing, he prepares for death, his fate; and describes his situation by means of the fragments, the "broken images" of Part I, which he has shored against his ruins. And death is the ultimate meaning of the Waste Land for a people to whom its explanation is only a myth, for whom sex is destructive rather than creative, and in whom the will to believe is frustrated by the fear of life.

11.4.2. Analysis of the Poem

At this point it will perhaps be sufficient merely to cite an omission till now, the epigraph of the poem. Its source is the Satyricon (Ch. 48,) of Petronius, and its speaker is Trimalchio, a wealthy and vulgar freedman: "With my own eyes I saw the Sibyl suspended in a glass bottle at Cuinae, and when the boys said to her: 'Sibyl, what is the matter?' she would always respond: 'I yearn to die.'" This ironic situation is matched in that of Madame Sosostris; both conceal a deeper meaning, and both seem to mock it. Perhaps we can point to the center of this effect in Eliot's poem. Reduced to its simplest terms, *The Waste Land* is a statement of the experience that drives a character to the fortune-teller, and the unfolding of that fortune. But the latent narrative is both universalized and greatly complicated by being set in a framework of the legend i which Miss Weston had seen so many, myths. And the poem follows the cycle of its torment,

from spring to: spring, the time of Easter—a religious festival of great antiquity. The realism of the poem brings it into Baudelaire's symbolic "mode of release and expression" as defined by Eliot: "not merely in the use of imagery of the sordid life of a great metropolis, but in the elevation of such imagery tothe first intensity—presenting it as it is, and yet making it represent something much more than itself."

The paradox of the seasons, with which the poem begins, inverts the normal attitude towards the life-cycle, thus reversing the significance of the vegetation myth and giving an ironic turn to the office of "The Burial of the Dead." Spring disturbs the dead land, stirring memory and desire; winter lets it forget. Then the verse modulates into narrative, the stirred memory that illustrates and supports this attitude. Summer caught them unaware (surprised them), coming with rain. If it were not for the opening lines, this would seem little more than an international episode—a memory of another spring. In this garden scene Marie is introduced by the German, "I am not Russian, I come from Lithuania, pure German." Her desire for the mountains is mixed with a memory of fear, and her life is a retreat.

But what are the dull roots to be stirred by rain? The son of man cannot answer because he knows only the Waste Land, which here suggests both the death imagery from Ecelesiastes and the fear "of that which is high" illustrated in Marie. V Here Ecclesiastes 12 blends images from Isaiah 32 and Luke 23: latent in the "dead tree" and the "red rock"—the color of. "The Fire Sermon"—is the burial of Christ, which involves the preserver of the Grail (Joseph of Arimathea) and brings the journey to Emmaus in Part V. The speaker, who often echoes the prophetic note, will show man something different from the shadow of time in this land; he will show him "fear in a handful of dust." If this image begins with the Biblical association, it ends in the vegetation myths. And again we get a garden scene, framed by the sailor's melancholy song in Tristan, a story of tragic passion. The question "where lingerest thou?" is finally answered by "desolate and empty the sea." But the garden scene accounts for the answer. The capitalized Hyacinth suggests the vegetation god and a victim of love. The protagonist's response is striking: a failure of speech and sight, a state neither living nor dead, describing the effect of the vision of the Grail upon the impure. A love-death would be appropriately framed by snatches of song from Wagner's Tristan und Isolde, but the sea in itself expresses a sufficient change. The Cerman carries us back to the scene with Marie and amplifies its associations.

Eliot's references to the present scene in Part II make it very important. Its final meaning, what is to be discovered in "the heart of light, the silence," remains to be seen. Let us remember that we were to be shown fear; the associations of this experience acquire a new setting in the fortune. For the moment we may venture this statement: the initial state of mind is defined by the experience of spring followed by the experience of the Waste Land; "the roots that clutch" in both are those of fear, and their origin is found in the "Hyacinth garden."

The speaker's need of clairvoyance introduces Madame Sosostris; perhaps she can look into the silence and interpret. She is a psychic fortune-teller, but she has a bad cold, which may hamper her powers; nevertheless, her wisdom is the best there is, involving a malicious pack of cards. The fortune itself has already entered our discussion, and accounts for the rest of the poem; but some details may be observed. In general, the limitations, and the irony of the poem, appear in what she does not see. Her clairvoyance does not extend to an identification of the protagonist with Ferdinand, but only with the

drowned Phoenician Sailor; yet the line from The Tempest which suggests this identification also connects the "pearls that were his eyes" with the preceding experience, "my eyes failed." Of course this is a transformation image, which in the present context is committed to death. The irony of her shortcomings is more apparent in the failures to see which she mentions. In fact, the voice of irony begins to be heard in this section. In terms of these cards (but not of-the initial attitude) there is none greater than to "fear death by water." If "dear Mrs. Equitone" is the lady of nerves in Part II, we may add to the irony. Certainly we must not forget it in the line, "One must be so careful these days" —lest this wisdom fall into the wrong hands. But the fundamental irony is the restoration of a greater meaning to life by means of this "wicked pack of cards."

Henceforth this fortune and the experience which it interprets color the vision of the protagonist. Although he has become one of the dead—"I had not thought death had undone so many"—the city appears "unreal" to him as it does not to them. They do not share his misgivings about the Waste Land; they are not conscious of the cruelty of April or of "a dead sound on the final stroke of nine" (Luke 23:44). He not only confuses but mingles his fortune with their reality. This explains the illusionary aspect of the poem, which assumes the Hamlet mask of irony or madness when the apparent contrast seems too great. Death echoes through this section until it culminates in "That corpse you planted last year in your garden." You do not plant corpses, except in vegetation ceremonies; and we are reminded of the "Hyacinth garden," of the slain Hyacinth and the garden experience. The taunting questions about the expectation of growth is so intimate that this was not so much a planting as "the burial of the dead." And the "hypocritical reader," as well as Stetson and the speaker, engaged in this planting of the corpse which evokes the corn-god Osiris, the scattered god of resurrection, and suggests the Hanged Man, whom the Madame did not find. The sardonic tone of the speaker has behind it not only this awareness but the weight of his own experience in the garden, of his attitude towards the seasons, and of his fortune. The corpse of the garden appears again in Part V, where this theme is openly resumed.

But one or two details in this section cannot be ignored. When the protagonist mentions "the ships at Mylae," he is associating himself, appropriately enough, with the Phoenician Sailor in a famous engagement of the Punic Wars. We should note the associations with the sea and things Phoenician in the poem; they are part of the protagonist's inheritance. The "Dog" is more important than Eliot's transformation of Webster; rather, it is the transformation, for it develops the ambiguity of the planted corpse. If Dog involves Sirius—as in "Sweeney Among the Nightingales"—he becomes a sign of the rising of the waters and is friendly to growth. But Dog may also involve Anubis, guardian of the dead, who helped to embalm the broken Osiris. By his ambiguity the Dog presents an ironical aspect, and this irony centers in the intent of the planting, which explains the "hypocrite lecteur" and his ambiguity as both subject and object. We must not ignore Eliot's use of capitals. As a source the dirge in The White Devil (V. iv) is significant because it provides a suggestive parallel and contrast with the dirge from The Tempest, which describes the drowned Phoenician Sailor; and. because it belongs to a scene which recalls the mad Ophelia and includes a ghost with a flower-pot containing "A dead man's skull beneath the roots of flowers." This is Eliot's most Websterian poem, not least in the imagery. And let us observe that the ironic close which is found in Part I is repeated in other parts. If the Dog and the Hyacinth garden generalize the memory of "Dans le Restaurant," they illustrate the extension of that poem.

Of the rich allusiveness of the opening section of Part II, much is indicated in the notes, and much has been said. In its opulent detail "the lady of situations" issues from a long past into a luxurious present. Egyptian Cleopatra and Phoenician Dido suggest her varied for- V tunes, and their splendor surrounds her, touched now and then by a sly detail like the parenthesis. Most insinuating, however, are "her strange synthetic perfumes," which "troubled, confused And drowned the sense"; for here we are in the presence of Belladonna, no less narcotic than cosmetic, herself presently in need of an anodyne. But as a Siren she is more than a parody of Pater's, Mona Lisa. The pictured "change of Philomel," whose place in Part III is indicated by a note, introduces another significance in the suggestion of violation survived by the "inviolable voice."

> And still she cried, and still the world pursues,
> "Jug Jug" to dirty ears.

The chase has not ceased, and the nightingale's sounds are both representative "Elizabethan and associative modern". If the other pictures are "withered stumps," like Philomel's tongue, they come into the class of "broken images"; but at least provide an inclination, "leaning, hushing the room enclosed." As someone approaches, the lady's hair becomes a sensuous and irritable image of her mood.

Then as she speaks we are reminded of the garden experience, for her questions counterpoint "I could not speak." The protagonist is thinking about "rats' alley," the waste alley of death; and a note connects it with Part HI. If the borrowing from Webster's Devil's Law- Case (III. ii) is looked up, it will only reinforce the Websterian character of this scene. But the wind's part in this poem' bears inspection. The questions about knowing, seeing, and remembering nothing play over past details as the memory comes. We remember "my eyes failed . . . and I. knew nothing" as he recalls his "death"; and a note connects it with the garden and fortune. Of course his replies puzzle the lady until she asks if there is nothing in his head. And he answers, nothing "But O O O O that Shakespeherian Rag"—only the tune of Ariel's dirge. While he mocks, she becomes the image of distraction; and her ultimate, question is answered by his derisive but grim summary of the daily boredom waiting for the final knock. Eliot's reference to Middleton's play merely emphasizes the game of chess as a cover for seduction, especially for "the lady of situations" in the upper class.

The change of speech in the next section immediately places the scene on a lower level of society. But to place it in a "pub" or tavern, we need to recognize "Hurry up please its time" as the words which announce its closing time. This scene makes explicit, without the reticence of the other's game, what is meant by "a good time." And it does this in verse that not only catches the inflections of the lower class, but shows time hurrying it along instead of hanging upon its hands. The problem which appears in Lou's or May's gossip comes to a climax in the question, "What you get married for if you don't want children?" It puts "a good time" against a background of the frustration of life, and modulates the death theme to this level. The final "good night"—ironic in its elegant, ceremonious contrast—is in the language of the first scene, and derives from Ophelia's mad farewell (Hamlet, IV. v.); hence the protagonist did not stay with the lady of nerves, but is still mocking the lady of situations with bits of "Shakespeherian Rag," as he recalls another death by water. If this is a very economical rounding-off of both scenes, it is not a departure from Eliot's manner of making his speaker identify himself, and certainly not from the particular means of discrimination employed in this part.

"The Fire Sermon" not only extends "A Game of Chess" but exposes its moral significance. It is developed likewise in terms of the obsessions which derive from the protagonist's fortune. What haunted his mind in the previous part now centers his vision, "death by water," which is associated with the characters that develop its ominous implications. Here we find the Merchant who melts into the Sailor and "the Lady of the Rocks," but in the midst of all the river. The dead season has come to the river; its canopy of leaves is broken:

the last fingers of leaf
Clutch and sink into the wet bank.

And so do all who live by this river, which ultimately flows into the sea that drowns the Phoenician Sailor. The "Sweet Thames" refrain, which derives from Spenser's Prothalamium, reminds us of "A Spousall Verse" and announces another song. The title has warned us that there is a sermon in the song, and both indicate that this part will be more evocative than dramatic.

After the reminder of Spenser, the description of the river suggests that his song is being rewritten in a modern key; and this suggestion is reinforced by the transition from the "nymphs" to their "friends," who have been casual indeed, "left no addresses." Then comes the sudden revelation, both of the waters and the mood:

By the waters of Leman I sat down and wept …

This line is reinforced by remembering Psalm 137: "By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion." But why the change to "Leman"? Not because it is the old name for Lake Geneva, but because it is an old name for "lover." Water in the modern Waste Land is a negative element, a river of lust. After this apparent but not real non sequitur he reinvokes the Thames. The request to "run softly till I end my song" may acquire further meaning.

The next lines, after the method of this poem, identify the speaker by his thought. The sounds of death haunt the protagonist with whom we have been concerned. He is not the poet, unless we choose to ignore all of his efforts to project a character by means of a series of illusory characters. Now he hears Mervell's figure of time as a figure of death, and is once more in "rats' alley" as the one who wept at Ariel's dirge. But Ferdinand is modernized; he is not merely

Sitting on a bank
Weeping again the King my father's wrack.

And he is also more ancient than Ferdinand; he belongs to the line of Fisher Kings. It was while sitting on this bank that Ferdinand heard Ariel's dirge- now fixed in the protagonist's mind by its association with the Phoenician Sailor. Before long he echoes the line which completes this quotation, but meanwhile much has intervened to reinterpret "this music."

But at his back he hears other sounds—or are they different? They are the sounds of the city, but in a familiar pursuit. They are the modem sounds of hunting, of lust; whether it is "Actaeon to Diana," or "Sweeney to Mrs. Porter," it is the old game of Tereus and Philome]. To the protagonist, whether he would be a Parsifal or is to be a Fisher King, washing the feet is a spring, rite in another sense, for it preceded the restoration of the Fisher King and was accompanied by the singing of children in the choir loft ("And O! those voices of children, singing in the cupola!"). The irony belongs to his vision: water

has lost its proper efficacy, has become malignant. But the choir melts into other soundsthat carry a theme—the song of rape belonging to the nightingale,..already introduced.

"Unreal City" indeed to such a vision, to a mind concerned with the Fisher King! Of course the implication is that it lacks true reality. On the realistic side.however, it appears unreal "Under the brown fog of a winter noon.

Whether the name of the Merchant plays on the meaning of "well-born" or not, he is now unkempt; and reminds us, particularly by his vulgar French, of the old waiter in "Dans le Restaurant." Perhaps that poem has given us both the Merchant and the Sailor, who coalesce. If he has made improper advances to the protagonist, which would support the general lust theme, he is still the trader; and business is probably the rival mystery which the Maclame is forbidden to see, despite her discreet "Thank you". This would explain the use of cryptic business terms. Of course they may be subordinate to the "currants" as dried vestiges of the Bacehic cults, and thus part of an initiation into similar orgies, or merely of an initiation into the modem ritual, involving a sight draft. Miss Weston (p. 160) stresses the importance of such traders in spreading the Attis cults. But "profit and loss" is an important sign in the mergence of Merchant and Sailor, and must not be discounted, even as a Phoenician lust. Thus the loss of Vision passes from the garden to the fortune to this embodiment.

If the sequence carries us from the "one-eyed" to the blind, it does not leave the hunt of lust in the city; and if the protagonist has now been qualified in the knowledge of both sexes, he is ready to assume the role of Tiresias. Madame Sosostris has already sounded the prophetic note "by the waters of Leman," and the "motors now pass into the "human engine," which expresses itself mechanically. "I Tiresias" is the only explicit identification of the speaker in the poem, and there is a reason for it. He is not a character in the fortune; but he is the supreme metamorphosis that brings together all the metaphoric transformations and thus is qualified to summarize their experience. "What Tiresias sees, in fact, is the substance of the poem," but not the whole poem. This departure from the fortune is therefore identified. And for the protagonist the sexual qualifications of Tiresias have a deeper meaning than prophetic power: he, "though blind," is "throbbing between two lives," one dead, the other powerless to be born. But, like Tiresias, he can see the nature of the "dead"; his vision springs from similar experience.

The introduction of "the typist" illustrates Eliot's device of syntactic. condensation; functioning as both object and subject, she exemplifies the metamorphic flow of things in this poem. The typist scene repeats on still another level, and still more openly, the "game of chess" episode; but, more significantly, it interprets bluntly this experience for the participants. They are apathetic, both, morally and emotionally—human machines. The role of Tiresias is also appropriate to the protagonist because he is now walking "amont the lowest of the dead." Finally the modern significance of this act is registered in the reaction of the typist; the "gramophone" makes it also mechanical. The "automatic hand" has already appeared, with a similar implication, in "Rhapsody on a Windy Night" Of course the shift in values is projected by the parody of Goldsmith's song; in that poem, "When lovely woman stoops to folly," her only art is—to die. Both likeness and difference are responsible for the irony.

"This music crept by me upon the waters"—it is a synoptic music, amplifying Ariel's dirge; and the speaker is once more Ferdinand. This music transports him to another world in the haunts of fishmen—he is one too—near the church of Magnus Martyr; the collocation becomes more than geographical, whether in a Biblical or a Fisher King context. What the church holds is "inexplicable," but not unhinted; its colors bear watching in the next section. Here "in Lower Thames Street" he hears the Thames song; now it runs less softly.

The change of verse form provides the transition, but it is not unexpected because of the early distinction between his song, and that of the Thames. Of course the notes state this transition to the Song of the Thames- daughters (the departed "nymphs") and further indicate that the three' speak in turn from line 292 to 306 inclusive. But without this knowledge little would be missed, since their story is the same story. The two opening stanzas, or the song as distinct from its story, contrast present and past scenes of the river, which are centered in "barge" and "shell." Both craft are marked by "red," but white and gold are absent in the first scene and distributed in the second. In the modern scene Ionic "white and gold" hold an inexplicable splendor in the church, perhaps suggestive of the Grail. And since these are the waters of Babylon, Zion may be suggested by Magnus Martyr. The chorus might be recognized by an opera-goer, but we also have the note. This refrain of the Rhine-daughters in Gotterddmmerung ("the judgment of the gods") laments the loss of the Rhinegold or beauty of the river; it performs a similar function here, for other guardians of the gold; and again the poem returns to. Elizabeth and Leicester both figure in Spenser's Prothalainium and give continuity to the "affairs" of the river, not to its drift and pollution.

As the Thames-daughters recount their story, we learn that they, like the Rhine-daughters, have been violated. The scene carries them down the river to the sea, and the moral journey is similar, ending in a state that "can connect Nothing with nothing," that calls its violation merely the "broken fingernails" of people who expect nothing. The syncopation of the chorus to that flippant, modern "la Ia" repeats the last ironic echo of the gramophone.

But "the waters of Leman" flow on; "red sails" still carry the Leman, like St. Augustine, to Carthage. The protagonist finishes the song which he has heard, connecting it with meaning, in which it has failed; for Carthage, like Mylae, was familiar to the Phoenician Sailor, his card. Now the sermon enters the song of the Thames. We can read the "burning" line without becoming aware of Buddha's Fire Sermon, but not without being aware of its theme of passion or lust. And we do not need to know St. Augustine in order to know out of what the Lord plucks—out of this burning, or these waters. It may help to know that St. Augustine said, "I entangle my steps with these outward beauties, but Thou pluckest me out, O Lord, Thou pluckest me out"; or that Buddha preached that moral regeneration begins by "conceiving an aversion" for the lusts of the flesh; but these details merely amplify the significance of "burning" that is already in the poem.

Eliot's notes are interesting for his evaluation of his sources, but they are important chiefly for their emphasis on the collocation of Buddha and St. Augustine. In terms of the poem, theirs is a better wisdom than that of Madame Sosostris, and it is the same for both. The impact which theirwisdom loses by reason of poetic economy, it recovers by virtue of its culminating position which has the whole weight of the lust theme behind it. The syntactic ambiguity of the final "burning" suggests, of course, that burning may

define the means by which one is plucked out as well as the state from which one is plucked. As the river's song ends on the theme of being plucked out, we may recall the introduction:

> the last fingers of leaf.
> Clutch and sink into the wet bank.

And so they clutch and sink into the waters of Leman unless they are plucked out.

When "Death by Water is executed in Part IV," it marks the end of the journey on "the waters of Leman," the ultimate fear represented by the "drowned Phoenician Sailor." It rewrites the dirge which associated Ferdinand with the Sailor, and does so with the conclusion that finished a similar sequence of experience for the old Phoenician waiter in "Dans le Restaurant." This is the negative issue for such experience. It is significant that this is the only part without notes—the earlier note belongs to the second St. Augustine allusion at the end of Part III; 'here the poet is his own source, his own explanation.

This part describes the usual way of becoming free from the fire of passion, not the way of self-discipline. Here the Sailor is deprived of his lust for the "outward beauties" and the "profit and loss." Sea currents pick the lust from his bones, and he reverses the course of his life as he enters the vortex. There may be a reminiscence here of the sea-dogs of Scylla and the whirlpool of Charybdis; or of Virgil's allusion (Eclogue VI) to Scylla'swhirlpool and her sea-hounds that destroyed sailors. This conclusion now finds it unnecessary to say, "it was a painful fate," but necessary to add to the injunction,

> Gentile or Jew
> O you who turn the wheel and look to windward.

And with this addition comes the "Wheel"— of fortune or fate as well as of ships—which appeared in the Fortune. If the epitaph says, with Edmund in *King Lear,*

> The wheel is come full circle; I am here,
> it concludes ccith still more point,
> Consider Phlebas, who was once handsome and tall as you.

Hence this part closes, after the fashion of others, by including the audience in its frame of reference.

But if the ultimate fate of the protagonist has been indicated, neither his fortune as told by the Madame, nor his experience in the Hyacinth garden, has been exhausted. Hence what remains must belong to a different order of experience from that which properly terminates in death by water, or else to a different attitude toward water.

After "Death by Water," representing the fate of his card, the agony of the protagonist is intensified, and he turns from' the water that drowns to the water that saves—to the search for another river, associated with the origin of the Tarot cards. Now the gardens and agony of Part I merge into the trials of Christ or the Hanged God, and unite them in the conclusion that he is dead and we are dying. Now "the agony in stony places" and its fear are intensified both by thirst for water and doubt of its existence. The search of Part V —for its parts make one journey—leads ultimately to the sacred river and its wisdom. Throughout, the illusionary character of the protagonist's vision increases as his fortune converges.

The experience of agony and its doubt rise out of the physical conditions of this journey through the Waste Land, now the desert scene of Part I which emphasizes the need of

water. After observing, "here is no water but only rock," the spirit is tortured by the desire of water and no rock, or rock and also water, or merely the sound of water, even the illusion of its sound; "but there is no water." This torment has developed, by thematic imagery, from the "red rock" through the "Lady of the Rocks" to "only rock."

Physical and spiritual anguish distort his vision as he walks with the last shadow of his fortune, the Fisher King, once guardian of the Grail. Beside this unnamed figure he sees another, "gliding wrapt in a brown mantle, hooded"; it is the Hanged Man or Christ. But again uncertainty besets him, for he cannot identify the figure. The notes as well as Part 1 prepare us for "the journey to Emmaus," and thus help to confirm the identity of Christ but add little to the essential experience. This too is a journey made by the "slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken" (Luke 24), including resurrection; but none of the notes really adds to the realization of its agony.

Likewise, as the vision continues, "the present decay of eastern Europe" is realized quite apart from any need to identify it by a note. It organizes the chaos of the Waste Land, out of earlier materials in the poem, into an unreal image that turns them inside out and upside down. There is "maternal lamentation," as for the dead god; but the "hooded hordes" have their hoods because of their inability to see the "hooded" one. Here we find the "crowds of people, walking round in a ring"—the last item mentioned by Madame. Sosostris; they already simulate .the motions of Phiebas "entering the whirlpool." Now the unreal city extends to the east, embracing centers of various cultures; the "lady of situations" fiddles lullabies on her hair to "bats with baby faces," adding frustration to maternal lamentation; the bells, towers, and chanting voices of "The Fire Sermon" are all inverted; the "empty cisterns and exhausted wells" dry up the fountain and cistern of the Ecciesiastes passage echoed in Part I, where the poem centers on the "dust" image.

After the vision of the disintegrating city, the protagonist draws near the chapel "in, this decayed hole among the mountains"; the reader should recall the mountains of Part I. The chapel, the note as well as the Grail theme tells us, is more than chapel; it 'is the Perilous Chapel of the Grail legend, and the Perilous Cemetery is also suggested. But they have lost their terrors, and hence their meaning. The spirit's abode is in ruins, "only the wind's home," and its "bones can harm no one"; it belongs to "rats' alley." Here we should recall the opening of Part III: "the wind Crosses the brown land, unheard." The quester denies their former meaning; and then, as with Peter, the cock crows, but as if in a French nursery rhyme. It is another use of the bird sounds that are so significant in the poem, and also of the irony of• the naïve. But only a weathercock stood on the rooftree in a flash of lightning—yet it is a heral4 of light. If this is the storm of the legend, the weathercock on the wind's home serves .to point its direction, even to herald the "damp gust bringing rain." In terms of the nature synbolism (vegetation, myth) it answers the doubt and denial: there is water, announced in a flash of lightning.

And Ganga (the Ganges) in the Waste Land waits for it. The sacred river, now sunken, was the home of the earliest vegetation myths, and its religious thought is represented here by words from an Upanishad, which is identified in the notes. Then we hear the "reverberation of "thunder of spring over distant mountains," which these words interpret. They are the conditions of the promise of spring which answers the doubt and 'denial expressed in this quest for the water of life.

The onomatopoetic voice of the Thunder is not left untranslated in the poem. For each command is suggested by the response. The question supplies "give" and the answer follows. Their giving has been surrender to passion, not love—as the poem abundantly illustrates. Yet, while self-regarding, this is their only evidence of life or existence; but it is not found in their obituaries, epitaphs ("memories"), or wills.

The second command is less clearly suggested, but it again is opposite to their reality. The prison of self in which each is locked prevents his sharing the concerns of others. Sympathy would open this prison, which has been locked by pride. Only at nightfall celestial rumors momentarily restore the broken exile of pride. The note quotes a philosophical basis for this isolation of the self, which frustrates the potentiality even of their kind of giving.

The reply to the third command clearly indicates "control," or response to control. This response of the heart counters the surrender to blood and is presented in imagery appropriate to the Sailor and Part IV. It extends that moral from the fate of the Sailor to an image of the heart glad in obedience to the will, from its "blood shaking"' to "beating obedient." This completes the conditions of ascent to the higher love which might develop out of their experience, including that of the protagonist, and which would relieve their anguish. These commands have all been violated in the Waste Land.

If this is the visionary journey which the protagonist takesin search of the water of life, it leaves him sitting upon theshore with the arid plain rather than the unreal city behind him. Once more fishing, his final guise is that of the Fisher King, to whose line he belongs; but without regeneration his fate is as hopeless as that of the Sailor. Having traveled the Grail road to no avail, he ends in the knowing but helpless state of the Fisher King. Now that the Thunder has spoken, he is the Man with Three Staves—with three cardinal virtues that could be supports that would insure the rain. But awareness is not will, and so he thinks of preparing for death, with a question that recalls Isaiah (38. 1): "Set thine house in order: for thou shalt die, and not live." This preparation involves some account of his fishing for life, of the fragments or "broken images" which he has shored against his ruins.

These 'define not only his predicament and state of mind, but the discoveries that are indicated in the poem. As partial quotations they are in fact "fragments" that have their full meaning in other contexts; they summarize the "broken images" of truth left in the Waste Land. Even nursery rhymes may contain or hide terrible truths; so "London Bridge" presents an image of modern disintegration, of sinking into the river. And these fragments follow: "Then he hid him in the fire which refines them . . . when shall I be as' the swallow—O swallow swallow. . . the Prince of Aquitaine at the ruined tower" This is the state of mind that attends the approaching "wrack" of Ferdinand. If the tower points to his ruins, theremay be a; saving ambiguity in this salvage. These fragments are all identified in the notes, but they speak for themselves; however, their connections require some comment. The first—from the Arnaut Daniel passage again —presents an image of voluntary suffering for purgation, the purgatorial burning hinted at the end of Part III; the second expresses the desire for regeneration, and connects with the nightingale image of "inviolable voice"; the third, to which the swallow's, attention seems to be implored presents an image of the speaker's predicament suggesting both the tower of self and the ruined chapel. Thus, even in their broken state, these fragments form a pattern.

Then the protagonist turns on the reader, as he turned at the close of Part I; and declares, in words of *The Spanish Tragedy* (IV. i), "Why then Ile fit you" —that is, supply you with what is suitable. And the irony is capped, while the seriousness is hidden, by the addition, "Hieronymo's mad againe." We may recall that the "show" Hieronymo promised was to be his revenge; that he could supply it because he had given his youth to "fruitless poetry"; and that its parts were originally in "sundry Languages." If these fragments substitute for the show, their ironic overtones may echo through these associations—even if 'the author has not thought it good, or possible, to set them down in English, "more largely, for the easier understanding to every public reader." Now the repetition of the Sanskrit commands, supported by the Upanishad ending, sounds like the mad talk of Hieronymo and hallucinativevision appears to end in madness.

If this account of the poem seems to minimize the anthropological framework, it is for a very simple reason. The framework is a means rather than an end, for the end is concerned with both the development and the decline of religious feeling in modern man. It is time that the anthropology reflects this development in the history of the race, but this reflection lends weight rather than direction to the poem. Neither is its direction taken from the idea that "where the anthropological outlook prevails, sanctions wither." While the emotional significance of the poem at no point is independent of this framework, it is likewise not equivalent to the framework, even when it seems most congruent.

Self-Assessment Question II

1. How does poem "The Waste Land" describe the reality of the Contemporary waste land? Evaluate it critically.

11.5. SUMMING UP

The present unit has familiarized with the complex reality of the Modernist Age in which T. S. Eliot holds a central position. It has also introduced you with different aspects of the poem "The Waste Land".

11.6. ANSWER TO SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

I

1. Questions 1-5 refer to the discussion at 11.3.

II

1. Refer to the discussion at 11.4.1. and 11.4.2.

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11.6. TERMINAL AND MODEL QUESTIONS

1. How does T.S.Eliot employ myth in the composition of "The Waste Land".
2. Discuss the mythic method of T.S.Eliot.
3. Why does Eliot employ several voices in the composition of the poem.

UNIT 12 W. H. AUDEN

"In Memory of W.B. Yeats", "In Praise of Limestone"

12.1. INTRODUCTION

Auden's poetic career spans about four decades from the late 1920s up to early 1970s. Auden's was a versatile literary talent and besides writing much for a living and compiling several anthologies such as "The Portable Greek Reader", "The Living Thoughts of Kickgaard" "The Poet's Tongue", "The Oxford Book of Light Verse" and "The Faber Book of Modern American Verse", an editing the works of several authors, he publisher several volumes of verse including "The Orators", "New York Letter", "The Age of Anxiety" and "Homage to Clio", verse plays like "The Dog Beneath this skin", "The Ascent of F6" and on the Frontier", a volume of critical essays "The Dyer's Hand", and other prose works. He attempted both the serious and light verse including sonnets.

Auden's poetry contains the elements both of greatness and popularity that go to make him the pre-eminent poet of his age. If the topicality of his verse and the treatment in it of contemporary issues and problems enable him to hold a popular appeal, his delineation of human condition in general and his concern with deeper issues give his poetry an enduring quality.

12.2. OBJECTIVES

After completing this unit you will have a clear picture of the following:

- The life of W.H.Auden
- W.H Auden as a poet
- The analysis and critically evaluation of Auden's poems "In Memory of W.B. Yeats" and "In Praise of Limestone"

12.3. AUDEN LIFE AND WORKS

Wystan Hugh Auden (W.H. Auden) was born in York on February, 21, 1907 in a professional middle class family. He was the third son of George Augustus and Constance Rosalie Auden. Auden's father was a Medical Officer and mother had been a nurse.

Auden inherited much from his parents. The traits he imbibed from his parents went a long way in the making of Auden, the man. In him we find a combination of the scientific and rational attitude he inherited from his father, and the humanitarian and religious learning he imbibed from his mother. Auden's clinical approach to the problems of human life owes greatly to the direct impact of his father. We find that quite like a doctor he diagnoses the symptoms of a diseased individual as well as of disintegrating civilization and prescribes a remedy.

In 1915, Auden was sent to St. Edmund's Preparatory School where he met Christopher Isherwood three years older than himself, and from 1920 to 1925 he was in Norfolk (at Gresham's School, Holt) where he specialized in biology.

Auden went to Christ Church, Oxford in 1925 and remained there till 1928. At Oxford Auden became a legendary figure. At Oxford Auden seemingly studied a good deal of psychology. He conceived the poet as a detached, clinical analyst of men and society,

diagnosing individual or social ills, and applying poetry to them as a sort of psychological therapy.

Auden was in Berlin in 1928. He spent old a year in Berlin. His parents offered him a year abroad and he unexpectedly chose Germany. In Berlin he came into contact with German Cabaret songs, Rake's poetry, the theatre of Brecht, and the psychological ideas of John Layard (based on Freud and Groddeck but move immediately on Homer Lane). In March 1929 Isherwod joined Auden in Berlin.

Economic pressures compelled Auden to return from Germany and are the job of a school master in England in 1930 at the Downs School, Colwall ear Malvern. In the same year he published 'Poems' containing 'Paid on Both Sides': A charade and 30 poems. He published 'The Orators' (dedicated to Stephen Spender) in1932, and 'The Dance of Death's in 1933. In 1935 Auden collaborated with Christopher Isherwood on a play entitled 'The Dog Beneath the Skin' and worked for six months with G.P.O. Film Unit, collaborating with Benjamin Britten on Coal Face, Night Mail and other films. He also edited, with John Garrett, an anthology, *The Poet's Tongue*.

Auden made frequent visits to foreign countries. After leaving Germany and after staying in England for a few years, he began his foreign trip with another school master Louis Mac Neice, with him he wrote "Letters from Iceland" which were published in 1937. In 1936, he also wrote a famous play "The Ascent of F6" with Isherwood and also published a new volume of poems, "Look Stranger", dedicated to Erika Mann, daughter of the celebrated German novelist "Thomas Mann." In 1937 January-March Auden made a trip to Spain during Civil War and worked there as an ambulance-driver of stretcher bearer on he Republican side. In 1938 he visited China with Christopher, Isherwood. They jointly published "Journey to a War in 1939. He wrote another play, "On the Frontier", with Isherwood, and also edited 'Oxford Book of Light Verse'. On their return from China, Auden and Isherwood first went to America and it was at this time that they decided, it was the country where they wished to stay.

Auden immigrated to America in 1939 with Isherwood. In 1946 he became a citizen of America. Since his residence in America he has accomplished an enormous amount of varied literary work, collaborating frequently with writers and composers, and has published an imposing amount of verse. His selected essays were printed in *The Dyer's Hand* (1962) and his lecturers at the University of Kent appeared as "Secondary Worlds" (1968). In particular Auden has turned to music and opera as field for collaboration and shares in such works as "Hymn to St. Cecilia' (with Britten); "The Rake's Progress" (with Stravinsky); "Delia" (Alibretto) English Versions of Mozart's "The Magic Flute" and "Don Glovanni" and of Brecht's "The Seven Deadly Sins", Henze's opera "Elegy for Young Lovers".

12.4. W.H. AUDEN AS A POET

W.H. Auden was the most important and influential English poet after T.S. Eliot. He enjoyed great popularity till his death in 1973. He was acclaimed as "the greatest living poet writing in English: by such critics as John Fuller in 1970. In 1974 Anthony Thwaite wrote:

> Though both Robert Lowell and Philip Larkin are fine poets, the death of Auden takes away the last Anglo-American poet to have an international audience. It is difficulty for poets to cross linguistic frontiers, but Auden did so? Auden justified throughout his career the position he quickly attained as the leader of a generation that followed Yeats and Eliot. He stands out among modern poets by his earnest effort to be a great modern thinker. His firm grip on contemporary currents of thought in political theory, science and psychology makes him undoubtedly a great modern poet.

Modernity in Poetry

There have been diverse opinions about the element of modernity in poetry. Some critics are of the opinion that poetry which deals with contemporary modern subjects is modern poetry. But it is very hard to find out a touchstone for the note of modernity in poetry. According to some critics it is the presence of a feeling of harsh, unresolved complexity and abstruseness that makes poetry modern. By general consent, t is held that modern poetry is difficult and complex, as G.S. Fraser observes:

> I think much modern poetry is very difficult, and that it does not always repay the labour of working it out. There are times when we turn with relief to poetry that it is not modern. Simplicity and clarity are perennially refreshing. Difficulty, however, has its proper place in literature; our world, and our place in its, are increasingly hard to understand and the sense of that difficulty has been increasing for more than a hundred years. A false, or affected, simplicity is a detestable thing.

Modernity in Auden's Poetry

Auden's poetry is certainly modern. There is evidently a conspicuous note of modernity in his poetry. The main aspects that make his poetry modern may be seen as follows:

(a) Complexity: If complexity and obscurity is the yardstick of modernity in poetry, Auden's poetry is certainly modern. His early poetry is obscure and difficult. In his early poetry obscurity is caused mainly by two reasons, his manipulation of language and syntax and secondly, by his intention of writing of a small, self contained audience. In this connection A.S. Collins writes that the early poetry of Auden is marked with uncertainty and obscurity. Like all young poets he had to work out his technique, and at first he was hampered by a feeling common to his fellows that they were speaking in isolation, with the result that he, and they, sometimes indulged in a private language, whose allusions were shared only by their friends. 'The Orators' is painfully obscure. 'Spain' is no less difficult on account of which its appeal is not so wide. Its rhetoric is strained and language is obscure. It is made so, because of omissions or ellipses, its lack of sequence or its private metaphor, the difficult allusion or the technical terms of psychology: sometimes articles or relative pronouns or connectives are omitted. But poets such as T.S. Eliot and Dylan Thomas are more obscure than Auden. The striking difference lies in the point that Auden invariably leads us to thinking state rather than a feeling state of mind. The intellect plays a greater part in the intuitive design of his poetry, and we are generally led from experience to idea, from feeling to thought or to a thoughtful assessment of the experience. No doubt, Auden's early poetry as difficult to understand, but with the passion of times his style became more clear and lucid, and easy to understand.

(b) Reflects the spirit of the Age: Then, Auden's poetry best reflects the modern age. Auden gave expression to the modern sense of loss and anxiety. 'City without Walls' very well presents the twentieth century ethos. He has presented the dilemmas of our age more fully than any other poet of modern age. In a minute analysis of the moral and spiritual ailments of the lost and misdirected individuals of our age he is unsurpassable, indeed. Ours is the age of disintegration, uncertainty and anxiety, and Auden has rightly named it as the "Age of Anxiety". Auden's concern with the political and social situation in the thirties, his employment of the modern psychological theories in the interpretation of man's inner dilemmas, his emphasis on the multi dimensional isolation of man, his treatment of the problem of anxiety and despair in man's life. And his final acceptance of religious humility and faith as the unerring solution of these problems place him in the forefront of the representative writers of the twentieth century. Auden established his modernity by writing in the thirties a new kind of revolutionary poetry in a new idiom, entirely different from the romantic lyricism of the Georgians and their predecessors. Communism as well as Freudianism had an imaginative appeal for him not merely as dialectic but as a way out from the prevailing frustration, degeneration, and disillusionment of his generation. Similarly, the validity of his religious poetry of the forties and onward lies in the fact that it makes us understand the peculiar position of man in an age of disbelief better than we could ordinarily do.

(c) Modern Stylistic Devices: Auden is also modern in his use of a number of stylistic devices to convey his meaning more forcefully and accurately, He is known as "stylistic chameleon". He wrote all kinds of poetry in all kinds of styles which is amazing. Even in the small amount of poetry e had written by 1937, he made use of numerous devices. He experimented with new styles ranging from the prose of Henry James's late works to the nursery rhymes of Edward Lear. In between he wrote parodies, songs, ballads, operas, etc. Aden had very explicit views about verse forms and their importance. Once he had chosen a particular form for a poem he allowed the form to give direction and shape to his ideas. Thus the verse form has a special importance in Auden's creative process. He wanted to do with them: His most brilliant piece of technical virtuosity is 'Canzone' (1945) where sixty-five lines employ only five-rhyme worlds altogether. He coins new words, and does not hesitate to use archaic, obsolete and unfamiliar, unusual words if they suit his purpose. Abstract nouns are personified and written with a capital letter. Similarly, adjectives are turned into nouns by the use of 'The' before them. In all these ways he makes his diction concrete and picturesque. The "Auden Simile" has become notorious, and so is his use of long catalogues to convey an idea of the complexity and variety of modern life. Thus, Auden is a great technician in poetry. His skill is unsurpassed. His virtuosity and the versatility of his powers over language bring him nearer to the title of 'the Poet's Poet'.

(d) Modern Imagery: Auden is a modern poet in his use of imagery as well. He does not use traditional imagery. On the other hand, he draws his objects for imagery from the world of science and industrialism. He reveals a unique capacity of turning his mage from the modern civilization to poetic advantage more often than almost any other poet of his age, Eliot, of course, being an exception. His images include such modern objects as ramshackle engine, deserted mine, unbuilt bridges, smokeless chimneys, rustling rails, coloured photograph, telegraph pole, drawing rooms civilized cry, the private nocturnal terror, loud explosions, flu-infected city, fractures towns, a silver-cocktail shaker, a transistor radio, Coffee-coloured honey, etc. All such images are sufficient to give a

touch of modernity to Auden's poetry. They also supply a catalogue of prodigies of modern civilization. Auden in interested in the historical perspectives. It is the earthly city that forms a vital part in the poetic scheme of Auden. In this aspect, Auden is typically modern.

(e) Experiments in Versification: Auden is also a modern poet in his experiments with verse-forms. He wrote in a number of stanza patterns. His early poetry shows that he used the conventional 19th century meters. These conventional meters are seen even in his later poetry. But gradually, he took recourse to free verse more and more poetry. But gradually, he took recourse to free verse more and more. He librated verse from the bondage of meters. For example, he uses a long flowing line which approximates closely to the structure of prose. His rhythms have often become colloquial and conversational. As Beach remarks, "Like others of his time, he aims at brevity, condensation rather than at diffuseness an elaboration."

12.5. "IN MEMORY OF W.B. YEATS"

I

He disappeared in the dead of winter:
The brooks were frozen, the airports almost deserted,
And snow disfigured the public statues ;
The mercury sank in the month of the dying day.
O all the instruments agree.
The day of his death was a dark cold day.

Far form his illness
The wolves ran on through the evergreen forests,
The peasant river was untempted by the
Fashionable queays'
By mourning tongues
The death of the poet was kept from his poems.
But for him it was his last afternoon as himself,
An afternoon of nurses and rumours;
The provinces of his body revolted.
The squares of his mind were empty,
Silence invaded the suburbs,
The current of his feeling failed:" he became his admirers.

Now he is scattered among a hundred cities
And wholly given over to unfamiliar affections;
To find his happiness in another kind of wood
And be punished under a foreign code of conscience
The words of a dead man.
Are modified in the guts of the living.

But in the importance and noise of tomorrow
When the brokers are roaring like beasts on the floor of

The Bourse,
And the poor have the sufferings to which they are
Fairly accustomed
And each in the cell of himself is almost convinced of his freedom;'
A few thousand will think of this day
As one thinks of a day when one did something
Slightly unusual.
O all the instruments agree.
The day of his death was a dark cold day.

II

You were silly like us; your gift survived it all;
The parish of rich women, physical decay,
Yourself; mad Ireland hurt you into poetry.
Now Ireland has hr madness and her weather still,
For poetry makes nothing happen: it survives
In the valley of its saying where executives
Would never want to tamper; it flows south
From ranches of isolation and busy griefs,
Raw owns that we believe and die in; it survives,
A way of happening, a mouth.

III

Earth, receive an hounoured guest;
William yeats is laid to rest
Let the Irish vessel lie.
Emptied of its poetry.

Time that is intolerant
Of the brave and innocent,
And indifferent in a week
To a beautiful physique
Worship language and forgives
Everyone by whom it lives;
Pardons cowardice, concert
Lays its honours at their feet.

Time that with this strange excuse
Pardoned killing and his views,
And will pardon Paul Claudel,
Pardons him for writing well.

In the nightmare of the dark
All the dogs of Europe bark.
And the living nations wait,
Each sequestered in its hate;

Intellectual disgrace

Stares from every human face,
And the seas of Bity lie
Locked and frozen in each eye.

Follow, follow right
To the bottom of the night,
With your on constraining voice
Still persuade us to rejoice.

With the farming of a verse
Make a Vineyard of the curse,
Sing of human unsuccess
In a rapture of distress.
In the deserts of the heart
Let the healing fountain start,
In the prison of his days.
Teach the free man how to praise.

February 1939

12.5.1. Summary

The poem begins as an elegy on the death of Yeats. In the first section, Auden describes, in dramatic setting, the death of Yeats whose death Auden looks upon as an ordinary occurrence. Yeats died on a bitter cold day when brooks were frozen and airports were frozen. His death did not affect the order of things.

Yeats' condition deteriorated as his mind and body revolted against his authority. Nurses moved actively here and there and people talked about his imminent death. The numbers spread all over his body and he became unconscious.

In the second section Auden expresses his opinion that there was nothing exceptional about the inevitable death.

Later the speaker addresses Yeats himself, chiding him for all of his mistakes, but also admiring Yeats's poetry.

Finally, the poem lapses into an oh-so-traditional elegiac form. This doesn't last for long, though – soon the speaker is off and running again, thinking about the problems of the here and now. It's 1939 and the world is on the brink of war (World War II, to be exact). In other words, things aren't so happy right now, and the speaker isn't silly enough to think that poetry can bring world peace. But that doesn't mean he thinks poetry isn't valuable. In fact, it's all the more valuable in desperate times, as Yeats's work demonstrates.

12.5.2. Critical Appreciation of "In Memory of W.B. Yeats"

The poem In Memory of W.B. Yeats by W.H. Auden is divided into three sections of varying lengths which form separate poetic units within the poem. The relationship among these units is not very close and organic, as each section is based on somewhat independent strains of thought. The poem, as its title indicates, is an elegy written to mourn the death of W.B. Yeats, but it is different from the conventional elegy.

Traditionally, in an elegy all nature is represented as mourning the death, here nature is represented as going on its course indifferent and unaffected. The great poet's death goes unnoticed both by man and nature: human life goes on as usual, and so does nature. Secondly, in the traditional elegy the dead is glorified and his death is said to be a great loss for mankind at large. But Auden does not glorify Yeats.

He goes to the extent of calling him 'silly' and further that his poetry could make nothing happen. "Ireland has her madness and her weather still." Thus, Auden reverses the traditional elegiac values and treats them ironically. Although, apparently the poem is an elegy, Auden reverses and departs from the known traditions of elegy. He does not idealize Yeats as a poet or sentimentalize his fate. He proceeds to embody certain general reflections on the art of a poet and the place of poetry in the flux of events, which constitute human history. So the death of Yeats remains at the focus of the poem only to support the peripheral reflections in the poem. Section I of the poem describes, in the dramatic setting, the death of Yeats. Yeats died on a day when it was bitter cold, brooks were frozen and airports were deserted. Auden looks upon the death of Yeats as an ordinary occurrence. His death did not affect the order of things. And here Auden introduces an idea which is central to the theme of the poem; a poet's work ultimately becomes independent of him because he had no control over the interpretation which posterity will give it. He becomes what his readers make him. Section II introduces another strand of thought. Here, Auden's expression becomes changed with psychological overtones. From the description of the mere physical death of Yeats, Auden proceeds to examine the psychological implications of the work of a poet and assesses the worth of poetry in terms of modern psychology. Despite the great poetry of Yeats, Ireland had remained the same. Poetry fails to produce any revolutions or to make changes in society. What lives after a poet in his style; his manner of saying rather than the subject or the content of his poetry? And this style, manner and language of the poet come to dwell in the subliminal depth of the human psyche, 'where executives would never want to temper' it. The uniqueness of poetry lies in the manner in which it objectifies the human condition. In section-III, the poet universalizes the tragedy of Yeats by relating it to the wider theme of the artist in society. Time, which is indifferent to the faults of character or physical charm 'worships language'. Time does not care for what the poet said but for something about the way he said it. The language of a poet redeems his views and oddity of character. The second half of section- III deals with the imminence of world war-II. The time of Yeats' death was a terrible one. "It was a time of 'intellectual disgrace' sans pity and compassion. Auden begins this ode with an archetypal image cluster that links winter and death. The setting is desolate and filled with winter, death and negative words, which often are linked by alliteration of d sounds. Alliterating negative words and phrase include: 'disappeared' and 'dad' (line1), 'deserted' (line 2), 'disfigured' (line3), 'dying day' (line 4), and 'day', 'death' (line 6). This repetition creates a powerful scene of desolation in which the world's deadliest time seems to mirror the poet Yeats' death. In an extended form of personification, the wintering earth itself seems to mourn the loss of the poet. In addition, Auden makes good use of other extended metaphors by establishing a different central metaphor for almost each stanza in part 1. He compares death to an invading army that takes over Yeats' whole being in stanza 4. The 'invasion' is preceded by 'rumors then 'revolt' in the provinces of his body; then the 'squares of his mind' are emptied, silence pervades the 'suburbs' of his existence, and the lights go out when the 'current of his feeling failed.'

Auden uses a cluster of geographic terms (provinces, squares and suburbs) to illustrate the personal world of Yeats being shut down. These linked geographical comparisons metaphorically make Yeats a whole country into himself, which magnifies the gravity of the loss. Auden also uses individual metaphors with great cleverness. One example is his use of 'mouth' at the end of part 2 to talk about poetry and the poet simultaneously. Poetry is a 'mouth' in that it metaphorically speaks to the reader. Since the 'mouth' is also the organ of speech, the word is used as a form of metonymy to refer to the poet himself. Like a mouth, poetry is an open potential from which words can issue. Mouths, like poems, are eternal features of humankind – one, the mouth, is a permanent physical feature, while the other, the poem, is an imaginative creation that endures beyond the poet's death. Auden shows considerable ingenuity in employing blank verse, iambic lines of unequal length, half rhymes and feminine endings. The seven syllable lines of the last section seem by contrast to move formally, like a funeral march, with a balance in each line between two major and two minor stresses the rise and fall of the slow-marching soldiers (feat): and with formal movement, the grand last section makes a formal statement. The form of odd is traditionally reserved for important and serious subjects and is written in an elevated style, so Auden gave Yeats great value and dignity by using the genre.

12.6. "IN PRAISE OF LIMESTONE"

If it form the one landscape that we, the inconstant ones,
Are consistently homesick for, this is chiefly
Because it dissolves in water. Mark these rounded slopes
With their surface fragrance of thyme and, beneath,
A secret system of caves and conduits; hear the springs
That spurt out everywhere with a chuckle,
Each filling a private pool for its fish and carving
Its own little ravine whose cliffs entertain
The butterfly and the lizard; examine this region
Of short distances and definite places:
What could be more like Mother or a fitter background
For her son, the flirtatious male who lounges
Against a rock in the sunlight, never doubting
That for all his faults he is loved; whose works are but
Extensions of his power to charm? From weathered outcrop
To hill-top temple, from appearing waters to
Conspicuous fountains, from a wild to a formal vineyard,
Are ingenious but short steps that a child's wish
To receive more attention than his brothers, whether
By pleasing or teasing, can easily take.

Watch, then, the band of rivals as they climb up and down
Their steep stone gennels in twos and threes, at times
Arm in arm, but never, thank God, in step; or engaged
On the shady side of a square at midday in
Voluble discourse, knowing each other too well to think

There are any important secrets, unable
To conceive a god whose temper-tantrums are moral
And not to be pacified by a clever line
Or a good lay: for accustomed to a stone that responds,
They have never had to veil their faces in awe
Of a crater whose blazing fury could not be fixed;
Adjusted to the local needs of valleys
Where everything can be touched or reached by walking,
Their eyes have never looked into infinite space
Through the lattice-work of a nomad's comb; born lucky,
Their legs have never encountered the fungi
And insects of the jungle, the monstrous forms and lives
With which we have nothing, we like to hope, in common.
So, when one of them goes to the bad, the way his mind works
Remains incomprehensible: to become a pimp
Or deal in fake jewellery or ruin a fine tenor voice
For effects that bring down the house, could happen to all
But the best and the worst of us...
That is why, I suppose,
The best and worst never stayed here long but sought
Immoderate soils where the beauty was not so external,
The light less public and the meaning of life
Something more than a mad camp. `Come!' cried the granite wastes,
`How evasive is your humour, how accidental
Your kindest kiss, how permanent is death.' (Saints-to-be
Slipped away sighing.) `Come!' purred the clays and gravels,
`On our plains there is room for armies to drill; rivers
Wait to be tamed and slaves to construct you a tomb
In the grand manner: soft as the earth is mankind and both
Need to be altered.' (Intendant Caesars rose and
Left, slamming the door.) But the really reckless were fetched
By an older colder voice, the oceanic whisper:
`I am the solitude that asks and promises nothing;
That is how I shall set you free. There is no love;
There are only the various envies, all of them sad.'

They were right, my dear, all those voices were right
And still are; this land is not the sweet home that it looks,
Nor its peace the historical calm of a site
Where something was settled once and for all: A back ward
And dilapidated province, connected
To the big busy world by a tunnel, with a certain
Seedy appeal, is that all it is now? Not quite:
It has a worldy duty which in spite of itself
It does not neglect, but calls into question
All the Great Powers assume; it disturbs our rights. The poet,
Admired for his earnest habit of calling
The sun the sun, his mind Puzzle, is made uneasy

By these marble statues which so obviously doubt
His antimythological myth; and these gamins,
Pursuing the scientist down the tiled colonnade
With such lively offers, rebuke his concern for Nature's
Remotest aspects: I, too, am reproached, for what
And how much you know. Not to lose time, not to get caught,
Not to be left behind, not, please! to resemble
The beasts who repeat themselves, or a thing like water
Or stone whose conduct can be predicted, these
Are our common prayer, whose greatest comfort is music
Which can be made anywhere, is invisible,
And does not smell. In so far as we have to look forward
To death as a fact, no doubt we are right: But if
Sins can be forgiven, if bodies rise from the dead,
These modifications of matter into
Innocent athletes and gesticulating fountains,
Made solely for pleasure, make a further point:
The blessed will not care what angle they are regarded from,
Having nothing to hide. Dear, I know nothing of
Either, but when I try to imagine a faultless love
Or the life to come, what I hear is the murmur
Of underground streams, what I see is a limestone landscape.

12.6.1. Summary of the Poem

The speaker says that we, the inconstant ones, are always homesick for that landscape that dissolves in water. The slopes are rounded and smell of thyme, and below them are caverns and conduits and laughing springs, which empty into little pools for fish and chisel out ravines whose cliffs amuse lizards and butterflies. Here the landscape is of "short distances and definite places", and is like Mother and her son, who arrogantly lounges against a sun-warmed rock, content that he is loved and whose works are merely "extensions of his power to charm".

From outcrop to temple, from flowing waters to fountains, wild to formal vineyards, these are the short steps of a child wishing he received more attention than his brothers did. You can watch the band of rivals walk arm-in-arm down the steep slope, or see them engaged in friendly and animated conversation in the square. They know each other well enough not to keep secrets or adhere to the idea that there is a god who has moral temper tantrums and cannot be pacified by "a clever line / Or a good lay". They are used to the stone god that responds to them and never have to veil their faces in front of a "blazing crater" of unquenchable fury. They are used to their local valleys where they can touch everything, and reach everything by walking. Their eyes have never had to peer through "the lattice-work of a nomad's comb" to find the infinite. They are born lucky because they were not born into the world of fungi and insects, whose forms are monstrous and of whom we are glad to say we have nothing in common with.

When one of them ventures into evil, the way his mind works remains understandable to them all. Becoming a pimp or dealing fake jewelry or wrecking one's singing voice in the quest for glory is something all but the best or worst of us are prone to. Of course, that is

why the best and worst do not linger here, and venture to "immoderate soils" that have less inherent beauty, less vivid light, and where the meaning of life is not just "a mad camp".

The granite waste calls for people to come, saying the limestone landscape's humor is evasive, its kisses accidental, its death permanent (those who want to be saints slip away). The clays and gravels call for people to come, saying there is room for armies to drill on their plains, rivers to tame, slaves to make you a glorious tomb. Both the earth and mankind are too soft, and must be changed (future Caesars leave, slamming the door behind them). The rest of the people, though, are lured by an "older colder voice", that of the ocean. The voice says it is the voice of solitude, and will ask and promise nothing, which is how it will free you. It says there is no love, only "the various envies, all of them sad".

The speaker says all those voices were right then and now; this limestone land is not a land that is as sweet as it looks, or that has "historical calm" and a sense that things are settled. It is dilapidated and connected to the outside world by a seedy tunnel. Where is the appeal? It does, though, have a "worldly duty" that it still finds important –it questions the assumptions of the Great Powers and "disturbs our rights".

There, the Poet who is admired for writing about how the world really is, feels uncomfortable in the presence of the marble statues which doubt his "ant mythological myths". The gamins follow the scientist down the streets with bold offers and disdain his concern for "Nature's / Remotest aspects". The speaker says he is also criticized for "what / and how much you know". Not getting caught, not getting left behind are what he desires. He does not want to be like a beast that repeats itself or something like a stone or water whose course is predictable. All of this is his, and there, Common Prayer; their great comfort is music because it "can be made anywhere, is invisible, / and does not smell".

He knows that death is a fact, and that he is right. But if sins are forgiven and people can rise from the dead, the formation of mere matter into athletes and "gesticulating fountains" make an even stronger point: those who are blessed do not care from which angle they are viewed because they have nothing to hide. The speaker says he knows nothing of either, but that when he ponders the idea of a "faultless love" or the afterlife, he hears the babbling of subterranean springs and sees a limestone landscape.

12.6.2. Critical Appreciation of "In Praise of Limestone"

Auden's "In Praise of Limestone" is one of the most difficult, striking, and rewarding poems in his canon. It is often considered one of his best, and has garnered a great deal of critical attention. It was written in May 1948 after a visit to Italy. It is written in loose syllabic lines. The critical consensus about the poem centers on it being a description of the Mediterranean, although some discussion of it being about the human body permeates the discussion. The critic James Persoon writes that it is about "the beauty of mutable, imperfect human nature," and critic Anthony Hecht says "it presents to us a climate, and, by extension, its characteristic landscape, which corresponds to, or even induces, certain moral qualities of human behavior, personality, or character traits."

The critic Rebecca Price Parkin's article on the poem discusses how it does not fall into one particular genre of poetry; "in a very broad, loose way it might be categorized as a

topographic-reflective poem" and "the door is open to the unplanned, the unpredictable – life as it is lived." She also calls attention to the tone of the poem, which is one of "intimacy, humility, and tenderness". She sees it as a lovers' colloquy, which "both intensifies the emotional impact of the poem and confirms its basic argument". There is a "relaxed but intimate and knowing contact with reality." Finally, she writes of the poet's use of everyday speech reinforcing the informal, friendly tone.

The poem begins with Auden paying homage to this landscape that dissolves in water. He extols the beauty of the fragrance of thyme, the system of caves, the charming springs, the private pools, the butterflies and lizards, the temples and fountains. The landscape is similar to that of the human body. It forms an excellent backdrop for the Mother and her son, "who lounges / Against a rock in the sunlight". The conflicts are on a small scale, as with one brother hoping to get more attention than his brothers. Camaraderie and companionship are valued, and there is an ease that characterizes the relationships between men.

The religion in the Mediterranean region is less harsh; the gods are human and do not require people to "veil their faces in awe". James Persoon writes that, "man's understanding of the divine results from his experience of nature," and "the limestone landscape contains nothing alien or inhuman, which, Auden suggests, is necessary to produce the absolutism of a moral God." Humanity and nature exist simultaneously, and abstract knowledge is joined with physical knowledge.

There are some, though, the "best and the worst" of us, that leave the limestone landscape and head for the harsher lands that have less aesthetic appeal. The granite wastes call them, and the saints slip away. The hard clays and gravels entice people with their open fields for armies to train, their slaves to construct grand tombs; the future Caesars find this appealing and leave the limestone. Then there is the "older, colder voice, the oceanic whisper" that is the solitude, the promise of nothing and the promise of freedom. These voices are appealing to some, and Auden concedes that they could be right. However, the truths they promise are only half-truths, and, as Parkin notes, "the same plasticity that is the ground for man's redemptive hopes makes it possible for a secular Caesar to turn him into a monstrous genocide machine".

Auden ends by bringing the reader back to the limestone landscape, invoking a sweeter and calmer form of religion that makes the point that "the blessed will not care what angle they are regarded / from, / Having nothing to hide". The poem is a wistful reminder of how the limestone landscape, especially during the war-torn totalitarian days of the mid-20th century, can offer an alternative of peace and beauty.

Self Assessment Questions

1. Describe W.H. Auden as a poet.
2. Give the summary of "In Memory of W.B. Yeats".
3. Give the critical appreciation of "In Praise of Limestone".

12.7. CONCLUSION

W.H. Auden is "a typically modern poet". As Beach comments, he "sedulously avoids the 'frontal attack on his subject w hose thought is characteristically rendered by the

'oblique or indirect method, the terms of his discourse being, not philosophical abstractions and plain statement of facts, but symbols, myths and implication, and whose effects are complicated by the use of such rhetorical devices as irony, ambiguity and dramatic impersonation." Critics have often been skeptical about calling Auden a modern poet. But his is certain that though he was old fashioned or traditional in his views about the role of the poet, in his desire to seek a large audience and to instruct and prove then, he delay with contemporary ideas and topical events, could turn inward when he wanted and leave his poetry as obscure as any modern poet. He gave expression to the modern sense of loss and anxiety without the "apparatus of polyglot scholarship such as 'The Waste Land' presented." Besides, as Spears puts it, he was highly modern in technique. Younger poets of our times found in him a stylistic chameleon and his technical skill an object of curiosity and envy. In fact, Auden stands out among modern poets by his earnest effort to be a great modern thinker. He had a firm grasp on modern channels of thought- history, philosophy and theology. He exerted an immense influence on the younger poets of England and America.

Besides discussing Auden as a poet and analyzing the salient features of Auden's poetry, we also took up a detailed study of two of Auden's well-known poems "In Memory of W.B.Yeats" and "In Praise of Limestone"

12.8. ANSWERS TO SELF-ASSESSMENT-QUESTIONS

1. Refer to the discussion given at 12.4.
2. Refer to the discussion given at 12.5.1.
3. Refer to the discussion given at 12.6.2.
4. Refer to the discussion given at 12.6.1.

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12.10. TERMINAL AND MODEL QUESTIONS

1. Give an estimate of the life of W.H.Auden in your own words.
2. Critically analyze Auden's "In Memory of W.B. Yeats"
3. Give the summary of "In Praise of Limestone".

UNIT 13 PHILIP LARKIN

"CHURCH GOING" "AMBULANCES"

13.1. INTRODUCTION

Philip Larkin, an eminent writer in postwar England, was a national favorite poet who was commonly referred to as "England's other Poet Laureate" until his death in 1985. Indeed, when the position of laureate became vacant in 1984, many poets and critics favored Larkin's appointment, but the shy, provincial author preferred to avoid the limelight. His first book of poetry, *The North Ship*, was published in 1945 and, though not particularly strong on its own, is notable insofar as certain passages foreshadow the unique sensibility and maturity that characterizes his later work.

In 1946, Larkin discovered the poetry of Thomas Hardy and became a great admirer of his poetry, learning from Hardy how to make the commonplace and often dreary details of his life the basis for extremely tough, unsparing, and memorable poems. With his second volume of poetry, *The Less Deceived* (1955), Larkin became the preeminent poet of his generation, and a leading voice of what came to be called 'The Movement', a group of young English writers who rejected the prevailing fashion for neo-Romantic writing in the style of Yeats and Dylan Thomas. Like Hardy, Larkin focused on intense personal emotion but strictly avoided sentimentality or self-pity.

In 1964, he confirmed his reputation as a major poet with the publication of *The Whitsun Weddings*, and again in 1974 with *High Windows*: collections whose searing, often mocking, wit does not conceal the poet's dark vision and underlying obsession with universal themes of mortality, love, and human solitude. Deeply anti-social and a great lover of American jazz, Larkin never married in his life and conducted an uneventful life as a librarian in the provincial city of Hull, where he died in 1985.

13.2. OBJECTIVES

After completing this unit you will have a clear picture of:

- Philip Larkin as a poet
- The central idea behind of the two of Larkin’s poems “Church Going” and “Ambulances”
- How to analyse and critically examine the above mentioned poems

13.3. PHILIP LARKIN LIFE AND WORKS

Philip Larkin was born on 9 August 1922 in Coventry, the only son and younger child of Sydney Larkin (1884–1948), who came from Lichfield, and his wife, Eva Emily Day (1886–1977) of Epping. The family lived in Radford, Coventry, until Larkin was five years old, before moving to a large three-storey middle-class house complete with servants’ quarters near to Coventry railway station and King Henry VIII School, in Manor Road. Having survived the bombings of the Second World War their former house in Manor Road was demolished in the 1960s to make way for a road modernization programme, the construction of an inner ring road. His sister Catherine, known as Kitty, was 10 years older than he was. His father was a self-made man who had risen to be Coventry City Treasurer, was a singular individual, 'nihilistically disillusioned in middle

age', who combined a love of literature with an enthusiasm for Nazism, and had attended two Nuremberg rallies during the mid-'30s.

Larkin's early childhood was in some respects unusual: he was educated at home until the age of eight by his mother and sister, neither friends nor relatives ever visited the family home, and he developed a stammer. Although home life was relatively cold, Larkin enjoyed support from his parents. From the junior school he progressed to King Henry VIII Senior School. He fared quite poorly when he sat his School Certificate exam at the age of 16. Despite his results, he was allowed to stay on at school; two years later he earned distinctions in English and History, and passed the entrance exams for St John's College, Oxford, to read English.

Larkin began at Oxford University in October 1940, a year after the outbreak of Second World War. The old upper class traditions of university life had, at least for the time being, faded, and most of the male students were studying for highly truncated degrees. Due to his poor eyesight, Larkin failed his military medical examination and was able to study for the usual three years. Through his tutorial partner, Norman Iles, he met Kingsley Amis, who encouraged his taste for ridicule and irreverence and who remained a close friend throughout Larkin's life. In 1943 he sat his finals, and, having dedicated much of his time to his own writing, was greatly surprised at being awarded a first-class honours degree.

In 1943 Larkin was appointed as librarian of the public library in Wellington, Shsropshire. It was while working there that in early 1944 he met his first girlfriend, Ruth Bowman, an academically ambitious 16-year-old schoolgirl. In 1945, Ruth went to continue her studies at King's College London; during one of his visits their friendship developed into a sexual relationship.

By June 1946, Larkin was halfway through qualifying for membership of the Library Association and was appointed assistant librarian at University College Leicester. It was visiting Larkin in Leicester and witnessing the university's Senior Common Room that gave Kingsley Amis the inspiration to write Lucky Jim (1954), the novel that made Amis famous and to whose long gestation Larkin contributed considerably. Six weeks after his father's death from cancer in March 1948, Larkin proposed to Ruth, and that summer the couple spent their annual holiday touring Hardy country.

In June 1950 Larkin was appointed sub-librarian at Queen's University Belfast, a post he took up that September. Before his departure he and Ruth split up. At some stage between the appointment to the position at Queen's and the end of the engagement to Ruth, Larkin's friendship with Monica Jones, a lecturer in English at Leicester, also developed into a sexual relationship. He spent five years in Belfast, which appears to have been the most contented of his life. While his relationship with Jones developed, he also had "the most satisfyingly erotic [affair] of his life" with Patsy Strang, who at the time was in an open marriage with one of his colleagues. At one stage she offered to leave her husband to marry Larkin. From 1951 onwards Larkin holidayed with Jones in various locations around the British Isles.

While in Belfast, he also had a significant though sexually undeveloped friendship with Winifred Arnott, the subject of "Lines on a Young Lady's Photograph Album". Their budding relationship came to a close when she married in 1954. This was this period in

which he gave Kingsley Amis extensive advice on the writing of Lucky Jim. Amis repaid the debt by dedicating the finished book to Larkin

In 1955 Larkin became University Librarian at the University of Hull, a post he held until his death. Professor R.L. Brett who was chairman of the library committee who appointed him and friend until Larkin's death wrote "At first I was impressed with the time he spent in his office, arriving early and leaving late. It was only later that I realised that his office was also his study where he spent hours on his private writing as well as the work of the library. Then he would return home and on a good many evenings start writing again."

In February 1961 Larkin's friendship with his colleague Maeve Brennan became romantic, despite her strong Roman Catholic beliefs. In early 1963 Brennan persuaded him to go with her to a dance for university staff, despite his preference for smaller gatherings. This seems to have been a pivotal moment in their relationship, and he memorialised it in his longest (and unfinished) poem "The Dance". Around this time, also at her prompting, Larkin learnt to drive and bought a car – his first, Singer Gazelle.

Meanwhile Monica Jones, whose parents had died in 1959, bought a holiday cottage in Haydon Bridge, near Hex ham, which she and Larkin visited regularly. His poem "Show Saturday" is a description of the 1973 Bellingham show in the North Tyne valley.

In 1964, in the wake of the publication of *The Whitsun Weddings*, Larkin was the subject of an episode of the arts programme Monitor, directed by Patrick Garland. The programme, which shows him being interviewed by fellow poet John Betjeman in a series of locations in and around Hull, allowed Larkin to play a significant part in the creation of his own public persona; one he would prefer his readers to imagine.

In 1968, Larkin was offered the OBE, which he declined. Later in life he accepted the offer of being made a Companion of Honour.

Larkin's role in the creation of Hull University's new Brynmor Jones Library had been important and demanding. Soon after the completion of the second and larger phase of construction in 1969, he was able to redirect his energies. In October 1970 he started work on compiling a new anthology, *The Oxford Book of Twentieth Century English Verse (*1973).

He was awarded a Visiting Fellowship at All Souls' College, Oxford for two academic terms, allowing him to consult Oxford's Bodleian Library, a copyright library. Larkin was a major contributor to the re-evaluation of the poetry of Thomas Hardy, which, in comparison to his novels, had been overlooked; in Larkin's "idiosyncratic" and "controversial" anthology, Hardy was the poet most generously represented. There were twenty-seven poems by Hardy, compared with only nine by T. S. Eliot; the other poets most extensively represented were W. B. Yeats, W. H. Auden and Rudyard Kipling. Larkin included six of his own poems—the same number as for Rupert Brooke.

In 1971 Larkin regained contact with his schoolfriend Colin Gunner, who had led a picaresque life. Their subsequent correspondence has gained notoriety as in these letters "Larkin was particularly frank about political and personal opinions", expressing right-wing views and using racist language. In the period from 1973 to 1974 Larkin became an Honorary Fellow of St John's College, Oxford and was awarded honorary degrees by Warwick, St Andrews and Sussex universities.

In January 1974, Hull University informed Larkin that they were going to dispose of the building on Pearson Park in which he lived. Shortly afterwards he bought a detached two-storey 1950s house in a street called Newland Park which was described by his university colleague John Kenyon as "an entirely middle-class backwater". Larkin, who moved into the house in June, thought the four-bedroom property "utterly undistinguished" and reflected, "I can't say it's the kind of dwelling that is eloquent of the nobility of the human spirit"

Shortly after splitting up with Maeve Brennan in August 1973, Larkin attended W. H. Auden's memorial service at Christ Church, Oxford, with Monica Jones as his official partner. In March 1975 the relationship with Brennan restarted, and three weeks after this he initiated a secret affair with Betty Mackereth, who served as his secretary for 28 years, writing the long-undiscovered poem "We met at the end of the party" for her. Despite the logistical difficulties of having three relationships simultaneously, the situation continued until March 1978. From then on he and Jones was a monogamous couple.

At the memorial service for John Betjeman, who died in July 1984, Larkin was asked if he would accept the post of poet laureate. He declined, not least because he felt he had long since ceased to be a writer of poetry in a meaningful sense. The following year Larkin began to suffer from oesophageal cancer. On 11 June 1985 he underwent surgery, but his cancer was found to have spread and was inoperable. On 28 November he collapsed and was readmitted to hospital. He died four days later, on 2 December 1985, at the age of 63. His headstone reads "Philip Larkin 1922–1985 Writer".

Larkin had asked on his deathbed that his diaries should be destroyed. The request was granted by Jones, the main beneficiary of his will, and Betty Mackereth; the latter shredded the unread diaries page by page, then had they burned. His will was found to be contradictory regarding his other private papers and unpublished work; legal advice left the issue to the discretion of his literary executors, who decided the material should not be destroyed. When she died on 15 February 2001, Jones, in turn, left one million pounds to St Paul's Cathedral, Hexham Abbey, and Durham Cathedral.

13.4. PHILIP LARKIN AS A POET

There are conflicting opinions about Larkin as a poet. In fact, there is a wide diversity of critical opinion about his achievement as a poet. Larkin has won applause, some of it very warm and enthusiastic; and he has provoked criticism, some of it very harsh and severe. Some of the most renowned critics have found fault with his poetry; and some of the most renowned critics have defended him against that fault-finding. Among the severest critics of his poetry are Alfred Alvarez and Charles Tomlinson; and his defenders include Donald Davie and Andrew Motion. Larkin's detractors have seen him as "the reluctant poet of the drab and austere surfaces of post-war Britain", while his defenders have pointed out the social realism of his poetry and its clear-sighted acceptance of the way things were. Eventually it was this image of ordinariness and intelligibility which served to recommend him to contemporary readers and helped to sustain his popularity.

The publication of his last volume of poems entitled "High Windows" in 1974 brought about a great change in the earlier critical appraisal of his work. It had become almost

common to say that his poetry suffered from the faults of boredom and mediocrity, and that it relied too much on a narrow range of traditional forms and techniques. But, after 1974, he began to be seen by most readers as a provocative and disquieting poet whose work showed the impact of modernism and symbolism. The previous charges of "gentility" and "parochialism" against him were now almost dismissed. Although he was regarded as one of the poets of what came to be known as the "Movement", his poetry was subsequently placed within the established literary traditions such as romanticism, realism, modernism, and symbolism. Previously he had been regarded as belonging to the tradition of poetry represented by Wordsworth, Thomas Hardy, and Edward Thomas; later he began to be recognized as a follower of W.B. Yeats, T.S. Eliot, and D.H. Lawrence, though he himself might not have been fully conscious of the influence of the second group of poets.

Themes in Larkin's Poetry, and his Treatment of the Themes

Time, death, chance, and choice have been identified by critics as the leading themes in Larkin's poetry. In fact, according to many critics, these themes are the very stuff of which Larkin's poetry is made. While Larkin's critics have pointed to the narrowness of this range of themes, his admirers have expressed their praise for his distinctive treatment of them. One of the critics, who is among his admirers, defined Larkin's greatness as a writer in the light of his treatment of a traditional and lasting subject-matter. This critic wrote: "His themes—love, change, disenchantment, the mystery and inexplicableness of the poet's survival, and death's finality—are unshakably major." Another critic has said that among Larkin's best poems are many which deal simply with universal themes of time, suffering, and death. This critic points out that Larkin's poem "Next Please" expresses the view that illusion is interwoven with all human thinking, and that human beings can never escape from the inadequacy of the present. This critic also says that Larkin in this poem does not rebel because failure seems to him one of the unalterable facts of life. Another admirer speaks about Larkin's particular kind of compassionate despair at the human condition; and this critic names the poem Faith Healing as an example. At the same time, this critic says that Larkin has made out of a bitter and unalterable situation a poetry which is undoubtedly modern in its content and its cadences. Yet another admirer of Larkin refers to the "perennial" themes of Larkin's poetry. According to this critic, death and old age are two of Larkin's most obsessive themes. But he also finds other themes in Larkin's poetry, and in this connection he makes the following significant comment on Larkin's poem "Vers de Societe" (written in 1971):

The poem shows how constant Larkin's themes have remained since 1946: disappointment in life, the pressures of society on the individual, the desire to escape those pressures together with the fear of the isolation such escape brings, the encroachment of time.

Yet another critic speaks of the contemporary circumstances of Larkin's poetry, and says that Larkin is intimately concerned with a world in which human beings have been caught up in time, desire, and disappointment; and he discusses the poem "Church Going", distinguishing contemporary agnosticism from earlier forms of disbelief, and saying that the speaker of the poem is "skeptical of the fruits of skepticism", and seemingly "as dissatisfied with his disbelief as with conventional dogma."

Another Critic's Views about Larkin's Themes

These are not the only critics who have discussed the themes of Larkin's poetry. There are others too. One of them refers to Larkin's emphasis on the sadness of the human condition, and says that the poem "At Grass" is a poem about old age. This critic also finds such other themes in Larkin's poetry as failure, the fragility of human choices (between bachelorhood and marriage, for example), the importance of vocation in life, the horrifying reality of death, the struggles of the common people, and the universality of human misery and sadness. According to this critic, Larkin is not only an analyst of the human mind but also a romantic deeply concerned with the spiritual health of human beings. This critic also finds rare moments of "experiential surprise" in the poems "Wedding Wind" and "The Explosion". And we may add that man's alienation from this world and his sense of isolation from his environment, from Nature, and from things in general are also prominent themes in Larkin's poetry.

The Stylistic Qualities and Poetic Techniques of Larkin's Work

A number of critics have discussed Larkin's poetic style and his poetic techniques. Larkin's technical achievements in many of his poems, including the imagery in them and their metre, rhythm, and syntax have been commented upon in great detail. For instance, one of the critics has pointed to the syntactic inversion of the closing line of the poem "At Grass", to the half-rhymes of "home" and "come", and to the subtle inner para-rhyme of "groom" in the final stanza. The effect of this, he says, is to feel the voice hush and the imagery become subdued. The inverted syntax, he further says, is part of the subdued and delaying echo of the verse. Both elements are part of an effect conveying the sense of evening and impending death. Another critic shows how aspects of meaning in poetry are indicated through metrical effects. This critic comments thus on the third stanza of the same poem, namely "At Grass":

The lines describe the scene, but the change in metre makes us hear and see it. Where the other stanzas are written in iambic pentameters, reversals of feet in the third stanza turn the first halves of these three lines into rocking choriambics, enacting the horses' gallop.

Actually, however, this poem is written not in iambic pentameter but in iambic tetrameter.

Other Views about Larkin's Style and Techniques

Another critic says that the grammatical features of the poem Mr. Bleaney, particularly its use of person, tense, and syntax, should be clearly understood if we are to appreciate fully how this poem functions. This poem describes two scenes: the speaker's conversation with the landlady, and the speaker's private reflections on his own existence. But, in the transition, there seems to be a fusion of person and tense; the first-person of the speaker merges with the third-person past of Mr. Bleaney. There is also a noticeable change in syntax, marked by the opening conjunction of the final two stanzas. What is unusual about these two stanzas is that they consist of a single complex sentence introduced by what appears to be a conditional clause. This critic then shows how the poem moves "from confident detachment to confused involvement", and how this progression is conveyed through specific linguistic devices. Another critic, speaking about the-linguistic features of Larkin's poetry, distinguishes between two poetic styles or structures of language, namely metaphor and metonymy. He then asserts that the

Movement poets including Larkin were essentially realistic and metonymic. He further says that Larkin pushed lyric poetry (which is an inherently metaphoric mode) towards the metonymic mode. He next points out that Larkin employs metonymic and synecdoche detail to evoke the race-day scene in the third stanza of the poem "At Grass". He also comments on the scarcity of metaphor in Larkin's work, and says that, while some of the early poems such as "Next Please" or "Toads" were extended metaphors, many poems have no metaphors at all. In the poem called "The Whitsun Weddings", for example, the scenery of the train journey is described largely by the use of metonymy and synecdoche ("drifting breadth," "blinding windscreens," etc.). What is unusual about this poem is that the final stanza suddenly takes off into a more affirmative element suggested by the metaphor of the rain shower. This metaphor, with its mythical, magical and archaic resonances, is powerful partly because it is so different from anything else in the poem. In this way Larkin is able to surprise us by allowing a current of metaphorical language into the poem. Something of the same kind happens in the poem Mr. Bleaney, though here the effect comes not so much from the introduction of the metaphor as from a subtle complication of metre, line-endings, and syntax.

The Metaphoric and Metonymic Modess

Another critic "expresses the view that the dynamic relationship between metaphoric and metonymic principles often leads to a symbolic mode which reveals itself in the hidden structures of many of Larkin's poems." A typical example, says this critic, is the seemingly metonymical description of the horses in the poem "At Grass". Here, the realistic description in each stanza is structured according to a pattern of standstill, incipient movement, developing to a climax, subsequent rest, and final standstill. When taken on its own, this motif is metaphoric; it functions as a vehicle of time's progress in human life. Simultaneously, however, such patterns are based on metonymical contiguities which do not seem to result from the poet's artistic transformation. Like "At Grass", most of Larkin's symbolic poems remain realistic. This critic then goes on to analyze Larkin's poem entitled here to demonstrate how the metonymic mode becomes symbolic. This critic's recognition of Larkin's symbolic mode of writing derives largely from the view of many critics that Larkin has been writing partly within a tradition of symbolist poetry going back to the work of W.B. Yeats and nineteenth-century French writers.

Larkin's Attitude to Modernism and Symbolism

From the very beginning, Larkin had been expressing a certain degree of hostility to the ideas and techniques of modernism. He expressed a deep dislike for the work of three modernists, the musician Parker, the poet Ezra Pound, and the painter Picasso. He regarded modernist experiments in the fields of music, poetry, and painting as irresponsible exploitations of technique in opposition to human life as we know it. However, in the nineteen-eighties, some critics began to perceive a distinct symbolist mode of writing in Larkin's poetry and, therefore, a fairly strong inclination towards modernism (because the symbolist technique is one of the most conspicuous modernist techniques). This new critical attitude towards Larkin's poetry showed recognition of the strongly affirmative and transcendent element in his poetry. What brought about this change in the attitude of the critics towards Larkin's poetry was the publication in 1974 of Larkin's last volume of poems entitled "High Windows". The poems in this volume were characterized by unusual experiments with form and by a frequent obscurity and

allusiveness. According to one critic, the total impression which this volume of poems produced was one of despair made beautiful, real despair and real beauty, with not a trace of posturing in either. Another critic noted that this volume contained fewer depressive poems, and that, instead, Larkin's tendency in them was to affirm the value , of human endeavour (in such poems as "To the Sea" "Show Saturday" and "The Explosion") or to expose it to comic satire (as in poems like "Posterity" "Homage to a Government" and "This Be the Verse".What surprised critics most, however, was the emergence of the symbolist vision which Larkin was believed to have abandoned soon after the publication in 1945 of "The North Ship," Larkin's first volume of poems.

Seamus Heaney's View of Larkin's Symbolist Potential

Larkin's symbolist potential received an impressive recognition from Seamus Heaney (who was appointed the poet-laureate of England in 1995). Heaney acknowledged Larkin's detailed social observation, but he also noted a simultaneous yearning for transcendence and revelation in Larkin's poetry. Heaney twice used the word "symbolist" to describe the linguistic structures of the poems in the volume entitled "High Windows". He noted the unusual diction of the poem "Sad Steps" and praised the poem "Solar" as a hymn to the sun. In "Solar", he said, Larkin was very far from the hatless man who took off his cycle-clips "in awkward reverence" (in the poem "Church Going"). At the same time Heaney emphasized the peculiar Englishness of Larkin's poetry. Another critic also pointed out that the poem "High Windows" was characterized by some of the ideas and techniques of French symbolist poetry. The eminent critic and biographer Andrew Motion explored in detail the symbolist dimensions of Larkin's poetry. He too agreed that Larkin had surely responded to the example of French symbolist poets at an early stage in his poetic career. However, Andrew Motion emphatically expressed the view that subsequently Larkin wrote his poems under the persistent and combined influence of Thomas Hardy and W.B. Yeats. According to this critic, Larkin's best and most characteristic work represents dialectic between the empirical mode of Hardy and the symbolist mode of Yeats, or between the language of sadness and isolation repeatedly competing with the language of aspiration and transcendence. In Andrew Motion's opinion, this dialectic is an expression of Larkin's divided response to the world. In other words, Larkin's poetry is a continual debate between hopeful romantic yearning and disillusioned pragmatism. This critic also expresses the view that the volume of poems entitled "The Whitsun Weddings" is a book which conforms most exactly to the attitudes and styles of the Movement group of poets and, therefore, the least symbolist in technique though he finds evidence of the symbolist method in the closing lines of the title poem in this volume and also in the closing lines of the poem "Water". As Andrew Motion equates the words symbolism and transcendence, it is evident that he emphasizes the positive or affirmative aspects of the title poem of this volume somewhat more than other critics had done. Andrew Motion further says that the volume of poems entitled "High Windows" contains more purely symbolist elements than the volume entitled "The Whitsun Weddings". The poem which most successfully employs symbolist techniques in his opinion is the title poem in the volume "High Windows". Andrew Motion rendered a great service to the cause of parkin's poetry by challenging the common view that Larkin's poetry was severely limited in outlook and unadventurous in style and

technique. However, one other eminent critic says that Andrew Motion has too neatly defined Hardy's and Yeats's roles as opposing influences, one empirical and the other symbolist, on Larkin.

A Writer of Dramatic Monologues

As one of the other critics says, Larkin's poems often take the form of dramatic monologues which seem intended to reveal Larkin's own thoughts and feelings because he is speaking out of his own strong convictions. In other words, the speakers in these poems is Larkin himself. Although this emphasis on his own thoughts and feelings may seem to be egoistical, it is this which gives strength to Larkin's poems; and, as he himself has said, it reflects the example of his literary mentor, Thomas Hardy. Yet his own experience and his own way of commenting on that experience are markedly different from Hardy's. For instance, when Larkin indulges in self-pity, he often parodies it, as for example in the poem Selfs the Man. Furthermore, when Larkin divides things into two opposing sides, he usually seems to be carefully weighing them against each other, measuring their relative merits, and coming to some sort of a logical conclusion.

His Obsession with Death and his Consequent Pessimism

Every critic has noted Larkin's obsession with death. According to one of the critics, Larkin emphasizes the omnipresence of death, as, for example, in the poem "Ambulances". The poem "Aubade" represents the climax of Larkin's preoccupation with death. The recurrence of this motif in his poems inevitably imparts a pessimistic quality to them. One critic says that Larkin has often been classified as a hopeless and inflexible pessimist. Another critic has described him as "the saddest heart in the post-war supermarket". Larkin has also been classified as "a graveyard poet". We, on our part, recognize the undeniable reality of death and, therefore, the realism of those poems in which Larkin dwells upon the theme of death. They may be saddening, but they are perfectly realistic and convincing. Why should we always expect poetry to be exhilarating or pleasurable? Even the poetry of death can bring about exhilaration in us through a catharsis of our feelings.

His Agnosticism; and his Love-Poems

In religion, Larkin was an agnostic as the poem "Church Going" clearly shows. Larkin's dilemma was not whether to believe in God but what to put in God's place. The poem "Church Going" describes a strictly secular faith, as a critic puts it. Larkin, unlike the romantic poets, had little faith in Nature or in any relationship between man and Nature. Indeed, he often in his poems represents man as being isolated from Nature. One of the critics' referred to Larkin's attitude of imperiousness towards the non-human world. It is, in fact, not imperiousness but an acknowledgment that the natural world is vulnerable and transient despite its beauty. Larkin also wrote a number of love-poems. But he did not depict love as a very ardent or satisfying passion. None of his poems records the achievement of complete success in love; and even those, which come close to describing success, are heavily diluted. The poem Wedding Wind, in spite of its excitement and fulfilment, dilutes its happiness with a volley of questions and with an acknowledgment that the speaker is sad because other people and animals cannot share the speaker's contentment. The same kind of ambivalence exists in the poem "An Arundel Tomb".

Throughout, Larkin carefully weighs losses against gains in the sphere of love. On one hand, love is merely a theoretical possibility; on the other hand, it might yet succeed.

13.5. "CHURCH GOING"

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

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

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

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

A shape less recognisable each week,
A purpose more obscure. I wonder who

Will be the last, the very last, to seek
This place for what it was; one of the crew
That tap and jot and know what rood-lofts were?
Some ruin-bibber, randy for antique,
Or Christmas-addict, counting on a whiff
Of gown-and-bands and organ-pipes and myrrh?
Or will he be my representative,

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

A serious house on serious earth it is,
In whose blent air all our compulsions meet,
Are recognized, and robed as destinies.
And that much never can be obsolete,
Since someone will forever be surprising
A hunger in himself to be more serious,
And gravitating with it to this ground,
Which, he once heard, was proper to grow wise in,
If only that some many dead lie round.

13.5.1. Summary of "Church Going"

The speaker of the poem sneaks into a church after making sure it's empty. He lets the door thud shut behind him and glances around at all the fancy decorations, showing his ignorance of (or indifference to) how sacred all this stuff is supposed to be. After a short pause, he walks up to the altar and reads a few lines from the notes that are sitting on a lectern. After this, he walks back out of the church and slides an Irish sixpence into the collection box, which is basically like donating an old shirt button.

The speaker thinks that the place wasn't worth stopping to check out. But he also admits that he did stop, and that this isn't the first time he's done so. He can't help but wonder what he's looking for when he keeps coming back to this place, and also asks himself about what will happen to churches when there are no more believers left in the world. He wonders if they'll make museums out of the churches, or if they'll just leave the buildings' doors open so that sheep can hang out inside them.

Nearing the end of the poem, the speaker asks what will happen to the world when religion is gone altogether. Then he wonders what the very last religious person will be like. Will they be an obsessive compulsive, who just can't stop wanting to smell incense? Or will they be more like the speaker, someone who's bored and ignorant about the church, and just passing by without knowing what they're looking for?

Finally, the speaker just comes out and admits that he's pleased by the church because it's a serious place for serious questions. Humanity, he concludes, will always have a hunger to ask those big questions like "Why are we here?" and "Where do we go when we die?" And for this reason, the kind of urge that created religion in the first place will never go away, even if organized churches do. Sorry, atheists. If you were looking for a poem that just trashes religion and calls spiritual people stupid, you'll have to look someplace else.

13.5.2. Critical Appreciation of "Church Going"

Church Going is a poem in which the speaker who is undoubtedly Larkin himself discusses the futility and the utility of going to a church. In the discussion he is half-mocking and half-serious. The speaker scoffs at the church and its equipment; and he scoffs at church-going, though at the end of the poem he finds that the churches, or at least some of them, would continue to render some service to the people even after they have ceased to be places of worship. According to the speaker, a time is coming when people would stop going to churches altogether, because they would have lost their faith in God and in divine worship. Then a time is also coming when people's disbelief in God and their superstitions would come to an end too. Eventually, however, some people might still visit the decayed and disused church buildings on account of some inner compulsion or to derive some wisdom from the sight of the many graves in the churchyard.

Church Going is a monologue in which the speaker frankly appears as an agnostic if not as a downright atheist. As Larkin himself was a sceptic or an agnostic, we are justified in thinking that the speaker in the poem is Larkin himself. The upshot of the whole argument in the poem is that the churches would continue to provide some sort of emotional or spiritual solace to some people even after the current belief in God and in a future life has collapsed and given way to scepticism or agnosticism. Thus, while Larkin dismisses the concept of a church being a house of God, he yet believes that churches would continue to serve some emotional or spiritual purpose even after people's rejection of the current religious beliefs. Church Going is really an interesting, and even entertaining, poem. A vein of irony runs through the poem; and particularly amusing are the following lines:

> The echoes snigger briefly. Back at the door
> I sign the book, donate an Irish sixpence,
> Reflect the place was not worth stopping for.
> Yet stop I did: in fact I often do.

Also amusing are the lines in which the speaker speculates as to the identity of the last, the very last, person who might visit a church in the belief that he is visiting the house of God for his spiritual edification. However, we do not share the view that the last stanza is also ironical or has any mockery in it. The last stanza seems to express the poet's view that a few at least of the forsaken, deserted, and ruined churches would continue to be visited by some people, if for no other reason, then only to draw some wisdom from the sight of the numerous graves in the churchyards. After all, the thought of death, to some extent, does make us wiser.

Critics' Comments

One of the critics says that the speaker in the poem "Church Going" begins the poem by banishing any signs of holy dread. The speaker appears as an interloper or intruder, slightly goofy or silly, disrespectful, bored, and uninformed. He introduces religion on his own terms, speaking as someone without faith, and as someone trying to recover the comfort which faith used to provide. He sees no indication that people can fill the gap created by the general loss of faith in God. Only structures (that is, church buildings) would remain; and these structures would become reliable by repetition: "marriage and birth/And death, and thoughts of these." The glow of sanctity may have faded from such things, but the things themselves remain, depending on custom for their validity. "It pleases me," Larkin says in the last line of the last but one stanza, "to stand in silence here" (that is, in an empty church). This critic also says that, in this poem, Larkin's dilemma is not whether to believe in God but what to put in God's place. Larkin is here concerned not with religion but with going to church. The title of the poem suggests a union of the important stages of human life—birth, marriage, and death—which going to church represents. In other words, the poem describes a strictly secular faith, and its author's speculations about what churches would become when they have fallen completely out of use. The speculations lead the poet to a conclusion in which the fear of death and the loss of religious belief are counter-acted by an unshakable faith in human and individualpotential. (This conclusion is reached in the final stanza of the poem). According to another critic the poem "Church Going" fits the programme of the Movement by carefully balancing agnostic dissent with an inclination to accept tradition and belief. According to this critic, Church Going is a poem which is both reverent and irreverent. Besides, the poem has a traditional iambic structure and a lucid, rational argument. The speaker in the poem is presented as an ordinary, fallible, and clumsy individual. Another critic says that Church Going is a poem which shows the persistence of both the English Church and the English poetic tradition. According to yet another critic; "Church Going" presents in concentrated form an image of the post-war Welfare State Englishman in the lines "Hatless, I take off/My cycle-clips in awkward reverence". It is the image of a shabby Englishman who is not concerned with his appearance but who is poor, having a bike not a car; who is gauche (or clumsy) but full of agnostic piety; who is under-fed, under-paid, over-taxed, hopeless, bored, and wry. According to another critic, the punning title of this poem demonstrates both the erosion ofthe Church as an institution, and the persistence of some kind of ritual ceremonies. The speaker in this poem responds to conflicting attitude, and also uses a variety of speech-forms. The speaker here is "bored" and "uninformed," and yet he appears to be knowledgeable and articulate about such things as "parchment, plate, and pyx." This apparent contradiction shows how Larkin's speakers are constructed in a way which allows a poem to explore different perceptions of the same event. The final stanza of this poem expands the poem's observations by making the experiences of the speaker representative:

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

The subtle movement from the first person singular to the first person plural (we or our) is a characteristic device in Larkin's poetry, and one which is predicated upon the assent of its readers. In this way, the poem is able to accommodate both a sceptical view of religious rituals ("robed as destinies" suggests an act of make-believe) and an assertion of the continuing value and significance of these rituals. Even so, the question of "what remains when disbelief is gone" is an indication of how radical and unsettling the agnosticism in Larkin's poems can be. An essential aspect of the social context of this poem (written in 1954) is the marked and general decline in religious attendance at churches after 1945 (the. year of the end of World War II). At the beginning of 1950, less than ten per cent of the population were church-goers. The poem "Church Going" embodies what may be called secular Anglicanism which concedes that belief must die but which also insists that the spirit of tradition represented by the English Church cannot die. As the Church seems to lose its importance, there are fears that its place in modern society would become insignificant. The poem "Church Going" acknowledges those fears, and reveals its own specific context by locating "this cross of ground" at the edge of "suburb scrub".

Another critic says that, Larkin often makes a sharp distinction between Nature outside and man's enclosure inside a building, a scene which dramatizes man's separation from Nature. The poem "Church Going" seems to alter this habitual consciousness of Nature by focussing initially on the inside of a building to the exclusion of its surroundings. The poet begins his encounter with the church building by describing the contents of the building; but the distinctions between what is outside in Nature, and what is inside in man's architectural dominion, begin to blur. The building is seen by the poet as surrounded by the forces of Nature and perhaps soon to be merged with them. He imagines the decaying edifice being eventually let "rent-free to rain and sheep"; thus Nature itself will enter the church and become part of it, or will simply take over the church completely. The destructive forces of Nature are even now merging with the elements of the building: "grass, weedy pavement, brambles, buttress, sky"—all these coalesce. They increasingly nullify the church and its function, making of it "a shape less recognizable each week/A purpose more obscure". Plants grow up in the cracks ("weedy pavement"), and the church building is gradually merging with its surroundings. In fact, the larger setting of the building becomes almost as important as the church itself. The poet sees it as "a serious house on serious earth", and as existing on a symbolic "cross of ground". These references to the churchyard tend to make it seem that Nature has some potential religious significance as well, at least as it is set apart from the unattractive "suburb scrub" surrounding it. Religion remains ambiguous or undefinable though, either through an inherent lack in the church's ability to communicate its value or through the poet's own lack of comprehension. In some sense, the church building—which also contains some aspects of Nature—becomes the all-important setting which the poet must interpret, much as -the romantic poets went outside to learn Nature's moral lessons from the vernal woods. Characteristically, the speaker in this poem feels isolated from this setting, both in its reference to Nature and to religion. The basic problem, as the poet defines it, is that he does not know "what to look for". Does the meaning of the church reside in the historical past ("it held unspoilt so long and equably what since is found only in separation"), or in the still existing symbols of its spiritual function in worship (the "parchment, plate, and pyx" which he imagines salvaged from the decaying church buildings and with them put "on show"). He tries to answer this question by wondering

what kind of person would be "the last, the very last, to seek this place for what it was". This is an important distinction to make because the last person to do this would be the one who can still interpret what the church means, or can derive from it something that he wants even though the church is now at the outer limits of disintegration. This particular function, then, would be the one which is most durable, and thus ultimately the most important. And the end of the poem declares that this durable function would be performed by the churchyard which makes the church proper a place to grow wise in, if only because so many dead persons lie buried outside it. Yet even this perception is immaterial in relation to the spiritual power of the place itself, apart from its Christian symbolism. The poet visualizes the potentially ruined church as still providing a reason for superstitious people to visit it:

> Or, after dark, will dubious women come
> To make their children touch a particular stone;
> or to perform some other superstitious rites.

This is the closest the poet comes to seeing Nature itself as possessing some sort of inherent religious and spiritual meaning. But the tone is emphatically ironic, and the seekers after cures are merely women who are traditionally gullible. Thus the poem "Church Going" is unusual in figuratively merging Nature with a building; yet it still shows the speaker courteously detached from the forces of Nature as they suggest spiritual meaning or invite an emotional response. This critic agrees with the view that the poem is not a veiled message in support of Christianity, but says that the poem .shrewdly and accurately defines the multiple sides of the dilemma of redundant churches and what they represent, namely a religious tradition in decline. There both is and is not seriousness, wisdom, and comfort to be derived from an empty church building. The church's main function as a place for worship is long gone, though it still has its value as a historical relic.

3.6. "AMBULANCES"

> Closed like confessionals, they thread
> Loud noons of cities, giving back
> None of the glances they absorb.
> Light glossy grey, arms on a plaque,
> They come to rest at any kerb:
> All streets in time are visited.
>
> Then children strewn on steps or road,
> Or women coming from the shops
> Past smells of different dinners, see
> A wild white face that overtops
> Red stretcher-blankets momently
> As it is carried in and stowed,
>
> And sense the solving emptiness
> That lies just under all we do,

And for a second get it whole,
So permanent and blank and true.
The fastened doors recede. Poor soul,
They whisper at their own distress;

For borne away in deadened air
May go the sudden shut of loss
Round something nearly at an end,
And what cohered in it across
The years, the unique random blend
Of families and fashions, there

At last begin to loosen. Far
From the exchange of love to lie
Unreachable inside a room
The traffic parts to let go by
Brings closer what is left to come,
And dulls to distance all we are.

13.6.1. Summary of the Poem

As Philip Larkin grew older, he became more and more obsessed with the concept of death. Larkin was largely considered to be an atheist; so for Larkin death didn't mean passing through the pearly gates into heaven, instead death was an all-powerful entity that could take you at any time to some unknown terrifying abyss. In Larkin's poem Ambulances, he uses an ambulance to convey both the loneliness of age and death, and the fact that death comes to all, sooner or later. Ambulances are generally vehicles that are associated with help and rescue, but in this poem the ambulance is portrayed in an ominous light, in order to jar the reader's sense of security. In this poem, the ambulance is in effect like the Grim Reaper, who comes to collect souls and ferry's them into the afterlife.

Larkin's uses the confessional to demonstrate the difference a generation makes; the previous generation would have gone to church to heal themselves, while the new generation with its new health care system went to hospitals; thus, the ambulance becomes the modern day confessional. Confessionals are enclosed stalls in a Roman Catholic Church in which priests hear confessions. "Closed like confessionals" is a simile; the closed door of the confessional is similar to the confined space of an ambulance when its doors are closed. Like a confessional, an ambulance can be a very vulnerable place for its inhabitants; you bear your soul in a confessional, and put your life/body in the hands of the paramedics. Ambulances thread-to make one's way through or between-the noontime rush-hour; they will also most likely have their siren on, which draws the stares of strangers. The ambulance doesn't stop to explain; it is on a mission, to save a life. Some are startled by the siren and the presence of the ambulance, while others are curious about what has happened. The appearance of the ambulance also tends to frighten, because it means that someone out there, no one knows who, could be injured, dying, or even dead. The color of the ambulance is a "light glossy grey," and it has a plaque with the emergency services coat of arms on the side. It is fitting that the

ambulance is painted grey, because ambulances often serve as the grey area between life and death; some who enter the ambulance alive leave it dead. The last two lines are particularly ominous; you never know when it will be your turn to die, but rest assured that one day it will be your turn to die. Death is inevitable and all-powerful.

Everyone stops what they are doing to look at the ambulance. Children stop playing and stand strewn-scattered-on door steps and streets; women stop shopping; dinners are left on the stoves, all so that they can watch as the ambulance's newest victim be taken away. The person being put into the ambulance is void of any identity; he or she is simply described as having a "wild white face." The whiteness could be referring to two things: first, the person has grey hair, and from that we can infer that the person is older; and second, that all of the blood has gone from the person's face due to fear or illness. Wild probably refers to the patient being scared or having some psychosis, seizure, or other ailment that would require hospitalization. The person is carried into the ambulance/confessional on a stretcher and secured into place for the long journey to the hospital/afterlife.

The men, women, and children standing around watching this spectacle all sense for a moment the solution for the emptiness that they all feel inside; the solution is death. Death lies under all we do; the fear of dying drives us to live and take chances. For a second they feel whole with the knowledge that death is permanent, blank, and true; death offers an end from all of their fears, worries, and obligations, but dying also means not being able to experience happiness and love anymore. Nothing is greater or more powerful than death; death is the ultimate truth. "Poor soul" is italicized to emphasis the doom felt by the spectators and the inevitably of the person's death; by referring to the person as a "soul" the narrator is telling us that that person will be dying soon. The spectators whisper as a way to calm their nerves, and in an effort not to attract death. They are sad for the person in the ambulance, but they are also happy that it wasn't their time, yet.

The person in the ambulance is borne-carried-away to the hospital (or metaphorically to the afterlife), in the deadened air. The "deadened air" has a twofold meaning: first, there is death in the air, meaning someone is going to die soon; and second, the noontime noises have quieted down in reverence for the "poor soul" being taken away. The people, who were standing around watching the paramedics load the person into the ambulance and then drive off, is reminiscent of a funeral; the people at the "funeral" had a moment of silence for the person, as people do at traditional wakes and funerals. The person's life is "nearly at an end;" he/she will take with them the "unique random blend of families and fashions" that has made up their unique life. Happiness and love are fleeting, but death is the only thing that we can truly count on in life.

The person's ties to their earthly existence are fading. Gone are the days of love with loved ones. He/she is now unreachable inside the ambulance. The traffic parts to let the ambulance through; the closer to the hospital they get, the further that person is from their life. These are his/her last moments. Who we are, no longer matters, death is all there is now.

13.6.2. Critical Appreciation of “Ambulances”

This is a poem which describes an ordinary or everyday scene is “Ambulances” by Philip Larkin. “Ambulances” is about an ambulance going to take someone away and the

neighborhood is watching what is happening. It shows the curiosity that is in every human being and the inevitability of dying. This essay will discuss how the poet uses an ordinary/everyday scene and make it important and to explore a wider universal theme. The essay will also show how Larkin's use of poetic techniques makes and ordinary or everyday scene turn into something bigger.

A Pessimistic Poem about Illness and Death

The main idea in this poem is that an ambulance signifies illness, and that it fills the spectators with the thought of death. The spectators perceive their own lives coming to an end when they see a seriously ailing man being taken to a hospital by an ambulance. The approach of death, says the poet, would mean an end to a life of activity which includes family relationships and fashions. But, when death comes, this "unique random blend of families and fashions" would come to an end, thus depriving life of all its meaning. Here then is another poem about death by Larkin who had felt obsessed with the fact and the reality of death throughout his life. This, again, is a pessimistic poem with an atmosphere of pathos and melancholy hovering over it.

Vivid and Realistic Imagery

The first two stanzas of this poem contain vivid and realistic imagery of the ambulances threading their way through the streets of a city possibly at noon-time when there are many loud noises coming from the traffic and from the crowds of people. When an ambulance comes to a stop, women coming from the shops look at the wild white face of the sick man who is being taken away to a hospital. There is a realistic detail about the women coming from the shops, "past smells of different dinners," meaning that these women have passed several food-shops which were emitting odours of different kinds. The remaining three stanzas of this poem contain the poet's reflections and meditations on the sad fate which awaits all of us. The entire life of an individual loses its meaning in the face of his approaching death. There is a vivid picture also in the line: "The traffic parts to let go by". When an ambulance is driving through a street, the people move quickly to one side or the other in order to make way for the ambulance.

A Depressing Poem

This poem is a really depressing one. The very title suggests something saddening. The sight of an ambulance has an immediate effect on the spectators who would at once think of somebody dying. An ambulance may remove a sick man, who has been injured seriously in a road accident, to a hospital. But an ambulance always symbolizes illness, disease, a road accident, and possibly death. The sight of an ambulance is by no means a cheering one.

Self Assessment Questions

1. Describe Philip Larkin as a poet.
2. Give the critical appreciation of "Church Going".
3. Give the summary of "Church Going".
4. Give the critical appreciation of the poem "Ambulances".

13.7. CONCLUSION

To sum up, in this unit you read about Larkin as a Movement Poet and examined his poetic achievements. In this unit, Larkin's poems were also examined on the basis of imagery, metre, rhythm, and syntax. Furthermore, Larkin's "Church Going" and "Ambulances" were also discussed at length.

13.8. ANSWERS TO SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

1. Refer to the discussion given at 13.4.
2. Refer to the discussion given at 13.5.2.
3. Refer to the discussion given at 13.5.1.
4. Refer to the discussion given at 13.6.2.

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13.10. TERMINAL AND MODEL QUESTIONS

1. Give an estimate of the life of Philip Larkin in your own words.
2. What is the central idea discussed in the poem "Church Going"?
3. Give a summary of the poem "Ambulances".

UNIT 14 TED HUGHES

"DAFFODILS" "HAWK ROOSTING"

14.1. INTRODUCTION

Edward James "Ted" Hughes was an English poet and children's writer. Critics routinely rank him as one of the best poets of his generation. Hughes was a British Poet from 1984 until his death.

Hughes was married to the American poet Sylvia Plath, from 1956 until her suicide in 1963 at the age of thirty. His part in the relationship became controversial to some feminists and (particularly) American admirers of Plath. His last poetic work, *Birthday Letters* (1998), explored their complex relationship. These poems make reference to Plath's suicide, but none of them addresses directly the circumstances of her death. A poem discovered in October 2010, *Last Letter*, describes what happened during the three days leading up to Plath's suicide. In 2008 *The Times* ranked Hughes fourth on their list of "The fifty greatest British writers since 1945"

14.2. OBJECTIVES

After completing this unit you will have a clear picture of:

- the life of Ted Hughes
- the characteristics of Ted Hughes' poetry
- how to analyze Ted Hughes' poems, with special reference to "Daffodils" and "Hawk Roosting"

14.3. TED HUGHES LIFE AND WORKS

Hughes was born on 17 August 1930 at 1 Aspinall Street, in Mytholmroyd, West Riding of Yorkshire, to William Henry and Edith (née Farrar) Hughes, and raised among the local farms of the Calder valley and on the Pennine moorland. Hughes' sister Olwyn was two years his senior and his brother Gerald was older than him by ten years.

Hughes loved hunting and fishing, swimming and picnicking with his family. He attended the Burnley Road School until he was seven, when his family moved to Mexborough, South Yorkshire, then attending Schofield Street junior school. His parents ran a newsagent's and tobacconist's shop. In Poetry in Making he recalled that he was fascinated by animals, collecting and drawing toy lead creatures. He acted as retriever when his elder brother gamekeeper shot magpies, owls, rats and curlews, growing up surrounded by the harsh realities of working farms in the valleys and on the moors.

Hughes attended Mexborough Grammar School, where a succession of teachers encouraged him to write, and develop his interest in poetry. Teachers Miss McLeod and Pauline Mayne introduced him to the poets Hopkins and Eliot. Hughes was mentored by his sister Olwyn, who was well versed in poetry, and another teacher, John Fisher. Poet Harold Massingham also attended this school and was also mentored by Fisher. In 1946 one of Hughes' early poems, "Wild West" and a short story were published in the grammar school magazine The Don and Dearne, followed by further poems in 1948. By 16 he had no other thought than being a poet. During the same year Hughes won an open exhibition in English at the Pembroke College, Cambridge, but chose to do his National Service first.

In 1951, Hughes initially studied English at Pembroke College under M. J. C. Hodhart, an authority on balladic forms. Hughes felt encouraged and supported by Hodhart's supervision, but attended few lectures and wrote no more poetry at this time, feeling stifled by literary academia and the "terrible, suffocating, maternal octopus" of literary tradition.

He wrote, "I might say, that I had as much talent for Leavis-style dismantling of texts as anyone else, I even had a special bent for it, nearly a sadistic streak there, but it seemed to me not only a foolish game, but deeply destructive of myself." In his third year he transferred to anthropology and archaeology, both of which would later inform his poetry. He did not excel as a scholar. His first published poetry appeared inChequer. A poem "The little boys and the seasons", written during this time, was published in Granta, under the pseudonym Daniel Hearing.

After University, living in London and Cambridge, Hughes went on to have many varied jobs including working as a rose gardener, a night watchman and a reader for the British film company J. Arthur Rank. He also worked in a local zoo, a post that offered plentiful opportunities to observe animals at close quarters. On 26 February 1956, Hughes and his friends held a party to launch St. Botolph's Review which had a single issue. In it Hughes had four poems. At the party he met the American poet Sylvia Plath, who was studying at Cambridge on a Fulbright Scholarship. She had already published extensively; having won various awards, and had come especially to meet Hughes and his fellow poet Lucas Myers. There was a great mutual attraction but they did not meet again for another month, when Plath was passing through London on her way to Paris. She visited him again on her return three weeks later.

Hughes and Plath dated and then were married at St George the Martyr Holborn, on 16 June 1956, four months after they had first met. The date, Bloomsday was purposely chosen in honour of James Joyce. Plath's mother was the only wedding guest and she accompanied them on their honeymoon to Benidorm on the Spanish coast.

Hughes's biographers note that Plath did not relate her history of depression and suicide attempts to him until much later. Reflecting later in Birthday Letters, Hughes commented that early on he could see chasms of difference between himself and Plath, but that in the first years of their marriage they both felt happy and supported, avidly pursuing their writing careers. On returning to Cambridge, they lived at 55 Eltisley Avenue. That year they each had poems published in The Nation, Poetry and The Atlantic. Plath typed up Hughes' manuscript for his collection Hawk in the Rain which went on to win a poetry competition run by the Poetry centre of the Young Men's and Young Women's Hebrew Association of New York

The couple moved to America so that Plath could take a teaching position at her alma mater, Smith College during this time Hughes taught at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. In 1958 they met Leonard Baskin who would later illustrate many of Hughes' books, including Crow. The couple returned to England, staying for a short while back in Heptonstall and then finding a small flat in Primrose Hill, London. They were both writing, Hughes working on programmes for the BBC as well as producing essays, articles, reviews and talks. During this time he wrote the poems that would be published in Wodwo (1967) and Recklings (1966). In March 1960 Lupercal came out and won the Hawthornden Prize. He found he was being labelled as the poet of the wild, writing only

about animals. He began to seriously explore myth and esoteric practices within as shamanism, Buddhism and alchemy, perceiving that imagination could heal dualistic splits in the human psyche and poetry was the language of the work.

Hughes and Plath had two children, Frieda Rebecca (1960) and Nicholas Farrar (1962) and in 1961, bought the house Court Green, in North Tawton, Devon. In the summer of 1962 Hughes began an affair with Assia Wevill who had been subletting the Primrose Hill flat with her husband. Under a cloud of his affair, Hughes and Plath separated in the autumn of 1962 and she set up life in a new flat with the children.

Beset by depression, and with a history of suicide attempts, Plath took her own life on 11 February 1963, although it is unclear whether she meant to ultimately succeed. Hughes was devastated. In a letter to an old friend of Plath's from Smith College, he wrote, "That's the end of my life. The rest is posthumous." Some feminists argued that Hughes had driven Plath to suicide.

Plath's gravestone was repeatedly vandalized by those aggrieved that "Hughes" is written on the stone and attempted to chisel it off, leaving only the name "Sylvia Plath." In 1970, radical feminist poet Robin Morgan published the poem "Arraignment", in which she openly accused Hughes of the battery and murder of Plath; other feminists threatened to kill him in Plath's name. In 1989, with Hughes under public attack, a battle raged in the letters pages of The Guardian and The Independent. In The Guardian on 20 April 1989 Hughes wrote the article "The Place Where Sylvia Plath Should Rest in Peace":

In the years soon after [Plath's] death, when scholars approached me, I tried to take their apparently serious concern for the truth about Sylvia Plath seriously. But I learned my lesson early... If I tried too hard to tell them exactly how something happened, in the hope of correcting some fantasy, I was quite likely to be accused of trying to suppress Free Speech. In general, my refusal to have anything to do with the Plath Fantasia has been regarded as an attempt to suppress Free Speech...The Fantasia about Sylvia Plath is more needed than the facts. Where that leaves respect for the truth of her life (and of mine), or for her memory, or for the literary tradition, I do not know.

As Plath's widower, Hughes became the executor of Plath's personal and literary estates. He oversaw the publication of her manuscripts, including Ariel (1966). Some critics were dissatisfied by his choice of poem order and omissions in the book and some feminists argued that Hughes had essentially driven her to suicide and therefore should not be responsible for her literary legacy. He claimed to have destroyed the final volume of Plath's journal, detailing their last few months together. In his foreword to The Journals of Sylvia Plath, he defends his actions as a consideration for the couple's young children.

Following Plath's suicide, he wrote two poems "The Howling of Wolves" and "Song of a Rat" and then did not write poetry again for three years. He broadcast extensively, wrote critical essays and became involved in running international poetry festivals in the hopes of connecting English poetry with the rest of the world. In 1966, he wrote poems to accompany Leonard Baskin's illustrations of crows, which became the epic narrative The Life and Songs of the Crow, one of the works for which Hughes is best known.

On 25 March 1969, six years after Plath's suicide by asphyxiation from a gas stove, Assia Wevill committed suicide in the same way. Wevill also killed her child, Alexandra Tatiana Elise (nicknamed Shura), the four-year-old daughter of Hughes, born on 3 March

1965. Their deaths led to claims that Hughes had been abusive to both Plath and Wevill. In shock, Hughes could not finish the Crow sequence, which remained unfinished until the work Cave Birds was published in 1975.

In August 1970 Hughes married Carol Orchard, a nurse, and they remained together until his death.

Hughes' first collection, *The Hawk in the Rain* (1957) attracted considerable critical acclaim. In 1959 he won the Galbraith prize which brought $5,000. His most significant work is perhaps Crow (1970), which whilst it has been widely praised also divided critics, combining an apocalyptic, bitter, cynical and surreal view of the universe with what sometimes appeared simple, childlike verse.

In a 1971 interview with London Magazine, Hughes cited his main influences as including Blake, Donne, Hopkins and Eliot.

Hughes worked for ten years on a prose poem, "Gaudete", which he hoped to have made into a film. It tells the story of the vicar of an English village who is carried off by elemental spirits, and replaced in the village by his enantiodromic double, a changeling, fashioned from a log, who nevertheless has the same memories as the original vicar. The double is a force of nature who organises the women of the village into a "love coven" in order that he may father a new messiah. When the male members of the community discover what is going on, they murder him. The epilogue consists of a series of lyrics spoken by the restored priest in praise of a nature goddess, inspired by Robert Graves's White Goddess. It was printed in 1977. Hughes was very interested in the relationship between his poetry and the book arts and many of his books were produced by notable presses and in collaborative editions with artists, for instance with Leonard Baskin.

In addition to his own poetry, Hughes wrote a number of translations of European plays, mainly classical ones. His *Tales from Ovid* (1997) contains a selection of free verse translations from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. He also wrote both poetry and prose for children, one of his most successful books being *The Iron Man*, written to comfort his children after Sylvia Plath's suicide. It later became the basis of Pete Townshend's rock opera of the same name, and of the animated film *The Iron Giant*.

Hughes was appointed Poet Laureate in 1984 following the death of John Betjeman. It was later known that Hughes was second choice for the appointment. Philip Larkin, the preferred nominee, had declined, because of ill health and writer's block. Hughes served in this position until his death in 1998. In 1992 Hughes published *Shakespeare* and *The Goddess of Complete Being*, a monumental work inspired by Graves' *The White Goddess*.

In 1998 his Tales from Ovid won the Whitbread British Book of the Year prizes. *In Birthday Letters*, his last collection, Hughes broke his silence on Plath, detailing aspects of their life together and his own behaviour at the time. The book, the cover artwork for which was by their daughter Frieda, won the 1999 Whitbread Prize for poetry.

14.3. TED HUGHES AS A POET

Introduction

Unlike some modern poets so believe that a poem should not mean but be, Ted Hughes is profoundly concerned with the subject matter of his poetry. The major theme of his poetry as well as short stories and plays is of course man, that is, the question of human existence, man's relation with the universe, with the natural world and with his own inner self. He is awfully serious about this last aspect of the problem of being, namely, the problem of human consciousness.

As Terry Gifford and Neil Roberts have observed, Ted Hughes's "endeavour is to gain access to, and give expression to, a level of being at which the continuity between theprocesses of nature experienced within and observed without is unimpeded byconsciousness. Here lies the source of all energy, creativity and delight. Individualconsciousness, insisting all the time on it separateness, is the cause of painful and destructive alienation from this inner life—the obscure unhappiness of many of the human protagonists of Hughes's poems and stories. But consciousness is inescapable, and poems are ultimately acts of consciousness.

Animals in Ted Hughes's Poetry

Right from his childhood, Ted Hughes has been interested in animals. When his parents lived in the Calder valley, Ted Hughes had a chance to see the world of the animals from close quarters. As he later recalled, he had a brother whose "one interest in life was creeping about on the hillside with a rifle. He took me along as a retriever and I had to scramble into all kinds of places collecting animals. In Hughes' words, "An animal I never succeeded in keeping alive is the fox. I was always frustrated, twice by a farmer who killed cubs I had caught before I could not get to them, and once by a poultry keeper who freed my cub while his dog waited."

Here, Hughes learnt the first lesson that animals were by and large victims. The wild world of the animals was at the mercy of the ordered human world. Yet, as Hughes realized and emphasized in his poetry, the human world was fascinated by the world ofthe animals because it had pushed into the unconscious what the animal world still possessed: vat, untapped energies.

It was this close intimacy with the interest in animals that informed Hughes's poetry collected in *The Hawk in the Rain* and *Lupercal*. The title poem of the first collection itself announces the major themes: man in relation to the animals, the earth, the weather, time, and mortality. In the first poem, as Keith Sagar comments on it, "The 'eye of the hawk hangs as still as a polestar, at the eye of the storm the still centre round which all that violence threatens. The poet's eyes are his most vulnerable part, tumbed by wind nd rain, but the hawk's seems as impervious as immortal diamond." Symbolically, "the eye is the 'I', the window of the soul, the outward expression of the hawk's innermost being, its unquestionable identity, its concentrated, inflexible being."

Other animal poems establish a similar connection between man and animals. Like "The Hawk in the Rain," "The Horses" too is concerned with the poet-perceiver's view of the patience and endurance of the horses during a cold winter night. In "The Thought-Fox" the fox that the poet-perceiver visualized is a symbol of the poetic inspiration which

intrudes into the dark, lonely room and then into the mind of the poet and causes the poem to be written. Symbolically, the movement of the fox pervades and describes the process of the composition of a poem, not only a particular poem but all poems in general:

Across clearings, an eye,
A widening deepening greenness,
Brilliantly, concentratedly,
Coming about its own business,
Till, with a sudden sharp hot stink of fox
It enters the dark hole of the head,
The window is starless still; the clock ticks,
The page is printed.

Nature that once belonged to man but now lies deep-buried in the human consciousness. This is not to detract from Hughes's skilful capturing of animals in verse. But, as emphasized earlier, animals in Hughes's poetry do operate on several levels: literal, mythical and symbolic.

Huges as a Nature poet

Just as Hughes explores the relations between the animal world and the human world, he also thinks of Nature as part of this universe to which man is closely related. In this respect, Hughes continues the tradition of Nature poetry which starts with the pastoral and reaches the twentieth century via Shakespeare, Wordsworth, Blake, and Tennyson. In his plays Shakespeare tries to establish a harmony between the human world and the world of Nature. A disorder in the one is often reflected in another. But it world be difficult to say that Shakespeare agrees with the Duke Senior of As You Like Itwho finds sermons in stones, tongues, in trees and good in everything. For, as Hughes comments on Venus and Adonis and The Rape of Lucrece, Shakespeare does not hesitate to present a certain ambivalence about Nature. After all, it is Nature which produces a Cordelia and Gonreil and makes them sisters.

Huges comparison with Wordsworth

Wordsworth, who is known as the greatest poet of Nature in English, is rather limited in his view, a view which Duke Senior of As You Like It anticipated. Wordsworth's attitude to Nature in his own words makes it rather narrow. In a letter cited by A. P. Rossiter, Wordsworth refers to "the spirituality with which I have endeavoured to invest the material universe, and the moral relations under whom I have wished to exhibit its most ordinary appearances." And to prove his point, Wordsworth often chose to select a "favoured corner" in his own countryside landscape, which could convince him that "Nature never did betray the heart that loved her."

In contrast to Wordsworth, poets like Tennyson were aware of the presence of Nature which was not a moral teacher, nurse and guardian, but instead, a terrible force, "red in tooth and claw." This version is close to the Schopenhauer's concept which treats Nature as a nightmarish force. Much earlier than Tennyson and Schopenhauer, Hume had spoken of blind Nature in the following words:

Look around this Universe. What an immense profusion of Beings, animated and organized, sensible and active! You admire this prodigious variety and fecundity. But

inspect a little more narrowly these living Existences, the only beings worth regarding. How hostile and destructive to each other! How insufficient all of them are for their own Happiness! How contemptible or odious to the Spectator! The whole presents nothing but the idea of a blind Nature impregnated by a great vivifying Principle, and pouring forth from her lap without Discernment or parental Care, her maim'd and abortive Children.

But Ted Hughes unlike Hume, Schopenhauer, Wordsworth and Tennyson, but like Shakespeare on the one hand and Robert Grave on the other, consider Nature an ambivalent force. This is why Ted Hughes looks at Nature with various, differing attitudes. In a poem like "The Horses," Ted Hughes describes a natural landscape in winter as vividly and pictorially as Wordsworth:

> But the valleys were draining the darkness
> Till the moorline-blackening dregs of the brightening gry
> Halved the sky ahead.
> I listened in emptiness on the moor-ridge.
> The curlew's tear turned its edge on the silence.
> Slowly detail leafed from the darkness. Then the sun Orange, red, red erupted.
> In "October Dawn" he describes the onset of winter by creating a veritable myth:
> October is marigold, and yet
> A glass half full of win left out
> To the dark heaven all night, by dawn
> Has dreamed a premonition,
> Of ice across its eye as if
> The ice-age had begun its heave.

Symbolism in Huges Poetry

Hughes often sees this violence and restless energy in Nature in which, according to Darwin, the rule of the survival of the fittest prevails. In "Hawk Roosting" as discussed in the preceding section of this chapter, the hawk is symbolic of the thinking of Nature itself, which, treats everything as a means to its end. The predatory nature of the thrushes, the otter, and the jaguar are sings of the law of jungle. In yet another poem, "The Relic," the vast sea demonstrates the Darwinian view of Nature by devouring everything in it:

> I found this jawbone at the sea's edge:
> The crabs, dogfish, broken by the breakers or tossed
> To flap for half an hour and turn to a crust
> Continue the beginning. The deeps are cold:
> In that darkness camaraderie does not hold:
> Nothing touches but, clutching, devours. And the jaws
> Before they are satisfied or their stretched purpose
> Slacken, go down jaws; go gnawn bare. Jaws
> Eat and are finished and the jawbone comes to the beach;
> Vertebrae, claws, carapaces, skulls.

All in all, the subject of Nature fascinates Hughes much that whether he depicts Nature as Wordsworth did, or uses it as symbolic of the internal human condition, he looks at Nature from varying perspectives.

Theme of War

When the Second World War started Ted Hughes was only nine; and when the War ended he was scarcely fifteen. Ted Hughes therefore did not have much experience of the World War II. But his father had fought in World War I and was one of the seventeen lucky men of his regiment to have survived death in the Gullipoli battle. When Hughes was still young, his father told him of how shrapnel which would have killed him was diverted by his paybook in the breast-pocket. Afterwards he took several months to recover the physical injuries and the mental horror that he had undergone during the war. All this left an indelible impression on the mind of the young, sensitive poet. When World War II had caused a great havoc, especially in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and when Hughes learnt of the large scale massacre of the Jews by the Nazis, his poetic mind felt a great revolt against this entire man-made calamity.

But his response to the nightmare created by World War II was quite different from that of the movement poets, such as Amiss and Hollowy, who felt quite benumbed by the war, took refuge in avoiding any talk of the war, and insisted on the faithful depiction of an urban reality. Ted Hughes felt that this was not the right attitude because one could not avoid the problem by simply shutting one's eyes to it. Hughes, therefore, depicts faithful pictures of the nightmare that the War had created and the vision of a nightmarish world it had left behind. This is how he recalled the experience of his childhood when he described it in "Out".

My father sat in his hair recovering
From the four-year mastication by gunfire and mud,
Body buffeted wordless, estranged by long soaking
In the colours of mutilation.
His outer perforations
Were valiantly healed, but he and the hearth-fire, its blood-flicker
On biscuit-bowl and piano and table leg,
Moved into strong and stronger possession
Of minute after minute, as the clock's tiny cog
Laboured and on the thread of his listening
Dragged him bodily from under
The mortised four-year strata of dead Englishmen
He belonged with.

Similarly in "Six Young Men" Hughes brings out the contrast between what these six young men in a holiday mood were before the war, and what became of them during it:

This one was shot in an attack and lay
Calling in the wire, then this one, his best friend,
Went out to bring him in and was shot too;
And this one, the very moment he was warned

Hughes shows a rare boldness in facing the situation and in expressing the horror that war had created. While the Movement poets were shutting their imagination from this ugly reality, Hughes decided to face it. And since East European poets, many of whom had fought in the war and lost their lives in the process, Hughes felt attracted towards them. Hughes wrote:

The Western poet perhaps envies his brother in East, for while he sings of comparative comfort, comparative freedom, comparative despair, the reality of the threat and the disaster is not his. There is a tendency for the Western poet to become isolated and turn inwards, whereas the poet of the East is in tune with the rhythms of his people in a much more direct and dynamic way.

Theme of Death

Another recurrent theme in the poetry of Ted Hughes is death. Hughes examines its various facets, ranging from death in war to the death of an animal and brings out the sorrow as well as the fulfilment of a process that death generally means for him. In his early poetry he writes of the death of the "Six Young Men" and contrasts their holiday mood with their premature death; in "Grief for Dead Soldiers" he poignantly brings out the ironical contrast between the remembering of war heroes and the grief and despair which they leave behind for the widows and orphans. In "The Pig" he speaks of the death of an animal and discusses it without any sentimentality and pathos. In "Bishop Nicholas Ferrar" he celebrates the death of a martyr for a cause.

The shadow of death lengthens itself on many poems in Wodow and Crow. Again, an elegiac tone enters the Moortown poems. In the five sections of "Stations" Hughes explores the mystery of death. In the first of these he looks simultaneously with pathos and ironic wit at a dying man:

> Suddenly his poor body
> Had Its drowsy mind no longer
> For insulation.
> Before the funeral service foundered
> The lifeboat coffin had shaken to pieces
> And the great stars were swimming through where he had been.
> Grief of the wife of the dead man is vividly captured:
> For a while
> The stalk of the tulip at the door that had outlived him.
> And his jacket, and his wife, and his last pillow
> Clung to each other,

"The Green Wolf" similarly paints a realistic and grim picture of death

> Your neighbour moves less and less, attempts less.
> If his right hand still moves, it is a farewell
> Already days posthumous.
> But the left hand seems to freeze,
> And the left leg with its crude plumbing,
> And the left half jaw and the left eyelid and the words,
> all the huge cries
> Frozen in his brain his tongue cannot unfreeze—
> While somewhere through a dark heaven
> The dark bloodclot moves in.

His later poetry reveals Hughes's own attempt to write about a world where people do indeed actually die. And he writes with a greater realism and less sentimentality and pathos; for, like the Sufis, Hughes has begun to treat death as a process of life itself. In

this respect he is quite close to American poet Wallace Stevens who described death as the culmination of life.

Hughes' Poetic Vision

As the above discussion of Hughes' major themes will have shown, Ted Hughes is primarily concerned with material reality not simply the reality of a superficial urbanity but the one that governs larger questions of life and death, Nature and the animal world, and above all, the inner world of man. Instead of shutting his eyes to the metaphysical and spiritual questions about life, Hughes tries to go to their bottom. Like Blake he shows a fourfold vision which progresses from a knowledge of the surfaces seen from a singular and therefore one-sided perspectives to the mature philosophic perspective which goes to the heart of the matter. One of his recent books of poetry is most suitably entitled What is the Truth?

Significantly, during the past thirty years during which Hughes has remained a poet thoroughly dedicated to the art of poetry, he has shown clear signs of a maturing vision. Beginning as a watcher and keeper of animals in his childhood, he is at first fascinated by their energy and then, in later poetry, finds a kinship between this animal energy and the vast reservoirs of inner energy that mankind has suppressed.

No wonder, then, that Hughes has become a major poet during the last thirty years and been appointed the Poet Laureate.

14.5. "DAFFODILS"

Remember how we picked the daffodils?
Nobody else remembers, but I remember.
Your daughter came with her armfuls, eager and happy,
Helping the harvest. She has forgotten.
She cannot even remember you. And we sold them.
It sounds like sacrilege, but we sold them.
Were we so poor? Old Stoneman, the grocer,
Boss-eyed, his blood-pressure purpling to beetroot
(It was his last chance,
He would die in the same great freeze as you),
He persuaded us. Every Spring
He always bought them, seven pence a dozen,
'A custom of the house'.

Besides, we still weren't sure we wanted to own
Anything. Mainly we were hungry
To convert everything to profit.
Still nomads-still strangers
To our whole possession. The daffodils
Were incidental gilding of the deeds,
Treasure trove. They simply came,
And they kept on coming.
As if not from the sod but falling from heaven.

Our lives were still a raid on our own good luck.
We knew we'd live forever. We had not learned
What a fleeting glance of the everlasting
Daffodils are. Never identified
The nuptial flight of the rarest epherma-
Our own days!
We thought they were a windfall.
Never guessed they were a last blessing.
So we sold them. We worked at selling them
As if employed on somebody else's
Flower-farm. You bent at it
In the rain of that April-your last April.
We bent there together, among the soft shrieks
Of their jostled stems, the wet shocks shaken
Of their girlish dance-frocks-
Fresh-opened dragonflies, wet and flimsy,
Opened too early.

We piled their frailty lights on a carpenter's bench,
Distributed leaves among the dozens-
Buckling blade-leaves, limber, groping for air, zinc-silvered-
Propped their raw butts in bucket water,
Their oval, meaty butts,
And sold them, sevenpence a bunch-

Wind-wounds, spasms from the dark earth,
With their odourless metals,
A flamy purification of the deep grave's stony cold
As if ice had a breath-

We sold them, to wither.
The crop thickened faster than we could thin it.
Finally, we were overwhelmed
And we lost our wedding-present scissors.

Every March since they have lifted again
Out of the same bulbs, the same
Baby-cries from the thaw,
Ballerinas too early for music, shiverers
In the draughty wings of the year.
On that same groundswell of memory, fluttering
They return to forget you stooping there
Behind the rainy curtains of a dark April,
Snipping their stems.

But somewhere your scissors remember.
Wherever they are.
Here somewhere, blades wide open,

April by April
Sinking deeper
Through the sod-an anchor, a cross of rust.

14.5.1. Summary of the Poem

Memories can be a blessing or a curse. In either case, the mind tends to hold onto them tightly, possessive of their evocative power. William Wordsworth and Ted Hughes explore the impact of memories in their poems each entitled 'Daffodils.' This essay will critically compare and contrast these poems and discuss how the poets achieved dramatically different results reflecting on the same subject.

Wordsworth's "Daffodils" is well ordered, written in four stanzas of six lines each. The meter – iambic tetrameter – is regular and dependable. The rhyme scheme is equally reliable, consistent throughout as an ABABCC pattern. On the other hand, Hughes' much lengthier 'Daffodils' has an irregular and unpredictable meter; it changes line by line. Additionally, this volatility is reflected in the varying lengths of the seven stanzas. Unlike Wordsworth's 'Daffodils,' Hughes' poem does not rhyme.

In Ted Hughes' 'Daffodils' the narrator is sharing a memory, also. However, the reader is uncomfortably eavesdropping as the narrator bitterly berates his dead wife. Hughes' choosing the same title as the much earlier and more pleasant poem of Wordsworth's is ironic and misleads the reader. Hughes', it would seem, is looking to upset the familiar. He connects a delightful, descriptive word 'daffodils' with death – and not just any death, but the death and indictment of a beloved. The irony continues in the first lines of his poem beginning with the seemingly innocent question 'Do you remember how we picked the daffodils?' and degenerates into his hurtful revelation that even her own daughter has forgotten her.

Hughes uses several techniques, elements, and figurative language to develop this cruel monologue of condemnation, regret and retribution. As mentioned earlier, the stanzas are of an unpredictable length with the second stanza being the longest and providing much of the background. But by far, the most effective technique is the narrative's structure of longer phrases punctuated by shorter ones. The short phrase, "We sold them," is repeated several times. It has a finality and force about it not unlike a knife thrust – intended to inflict pain, in this case, painful memories. Hughes' use of alliteration – 'treasure trove,' 'flower –farm' as well as assonance and consonance – 'daffodils were incidental gilding of the deeds' give the piece its poetic quality and excruciating beauty. Hughes' use of metaphors and personification, while it is like Wordsworth's technique in that he likens the daffodils to dancers, is entirely different in purpose. Hughes employs these techniques to establish the innocence and vulnerability of the daffodils – 'soft shrieks of their jostled stems,' 'girlish dance frocks,' 'baby-cries,' 'ballerinas'. The narrative unfolds with a sense of rising anger at the dead lover and expanding details of the desecration of the daffodils. It peaks in stanza three as the narrator describes the 'raw butts' of the daffodils. These heavenly flora have now been reduced to the ugly, the defiled.

In the last stanzas, the narrator recounts the final blow: the loss of their wedding scissors, the instrument of desecration that renders the greedy and powerful ones powerless. Like Wordsworth's, the poem's last stanzas contain a beautiful metaphor. This one tells of the glorious retribution of the daffodils, 'on that same groundswell of memory, fluttering

they return to forget you stooping there behind the rainy curtains of a dark April snipping their stems.'

There is another interesting layer of Hughes' 'Daffodils' to briefly explore. Just as Wordsworth likens the daffodils to heavenly bodies (stars), Hughes uses the term 'falling from heaven' to describe the daffodils. Hughes takes it a step further than Wordsworth, however and seems to intentionally cling to spiritual allusions. The poem's language includes 'fleeting glance of the everlasting,' 'last blessing' and a 'cross of rust.' With little imaginative effort, it is possible to compare this poem to the biblical Fall of Man: Eve succumbs to the temptation of the serpent (Old Stoneman?) and in turn corrupts Adam. Later, Adam, when confronted by God, blames "the woman." God is not sympathetic to his tale of seduction just as the complicit narrator in this poem may find an unsympathetic reader.

In conclusion, the beautiful rhythm and simplicity of Wordsworth's poem and the equally beautiful complexity of Hughes', both inspired by the daffodil, reach the reader at deep emotional levels. However, the nature of these emotions is, in fact, very different. Where Wordsworth celebrates the joyful impact that beauty and its memory can have on the human psyche, Hughes wrenches psychological pain out of every image, holding onto bitterness and blame. Ultimately, Hughes' 'Daffodils' reminds us that some things are better off forgotten.

14.5.2. Critical Appreciation of "Daffodils"

The author, Ted Hughes, was introduced in an article entitled *Flowered Memories An Analysis of Ted Hughes "Daffodils"*. It says, Edward James Hughes was English Poet Laureate from 1984 to his death in 1998. Famous for his violent poems about the innocent savagery of animals, Ted Hughes was born on Mytholmroyd, in the West Riding district of Yorkshire, which became the psychological terrain of his later poetry (The Literary Encyclopedia).

Hughes married the American Poet, Sylvia Plath. In 1963, Plath died and was said to have committed suicide. The couple was blessed with two children who were still at a young age when Plath died.

The Author and "Daffodils"

February 1998 marked the end of Hughes silence when Birthday Letters, a collection of 88 poems written over 25 years, was published. Among these 88 poems is "Daffodils".

"Daffodils" is composed of 66 lines. The poem is written conversationally in a simple manner. It is described as a free verse just like the other poems in the *Birthday Letters*. In this poem, the author uses the first person point of view and uses the words to directly address his deceased wife, Sylvia Plath.

> Remember how we picked the daffodils
> Nobody else remembers, but I remember.

In these first two lines of the poem, Hughes was reminiscing the days that he had with his wife. Even with these first two lines, it is evident that the author recollects with a note of sadness and longing for the gone days. He moved on with a happy picture of his family, with their daughter, as they were harvesting daffodils. But the crisp line "She has forgotten" ended the brief happy tone of his nostalgia.

The reminiscence of the author went on when he recollected that they sold the flowers for sevenpence a dozen. He then paused and blurted out his feelings that what they have done was like a sacrilege. This realization by the author can be explained by his background as a hunter. In an article entitled "The Biography of Ted Hughes", he was presented as a country man and a hunter. Furthermore, he was considered as a nature poet and his writing is considered a continuation of his earlier passion which is hunting.

Despite the recognition that the selling of the flowers was a form of irreverence to nature, Hughes continued to give us a picture of their life before and their financial condition that somewhat justified their act. He asked himself, Were we so poor This line is not more of a question but an introduction to the instances that he enumerated to substantiate his claim that they were poor. He remembered that they were hungry then to the point that they were pushed to convert everything to profit. Poverty and empty stomach were the first reason he gave that led them to sell the daffodils.

They simply came,
And they keep on coming.

These lines gave way to the second reason why they decided to sell the daffodils. He was looking at the time when they both believed that the daffodils will never go away. They see the daffodils as a windfall.

But the second stanza did not just end with this belief. It was made clear in the same stanza that there was a realization of their innocence. The persona realized that the daffodils were a fleeting glance of the everlasting. It is at this point in the poem that there was recognition, I believe, of the Creator that controls the life both of the daffodils and other creations. Never thought they were a last blessing, I believe, speaks of the end of the relationship shared by the persona and the person he was talking to as well as their activity of selling the flowers they harvested as a family.

In the same stanza, the persona also showed how they viewed their union as husband and wife. We knew we live forever, they believed. However, in the same manner that he acknowledged their mistaken view of the lifespan of daffodils, the persona admitted that like the daffodils their marriage and even their individual lives will come to an end.

After the persona honestly laid down their misconceptions as a couple, he then looked back to the time when they had to go through the tedious communal act of harvesting the daffodils and of selling them for sevenpence a bunch.

His reminiscence of the time when they harvested the flowers brought a bittersweet memory that the can move a reader to tears. The memory of working together in harvesting the flowers reminded him of their communal activities. He vividly described how the persona and his wife bent together to gather the daffodils. He went on giving us a picture of the daffodils that they gathered. These were sweet memories of a couple a husband and a wife who had the chance of doing a task together, of helping each other. However, a bitter memory is sandwiched by the happy thoughts. In between the recollection of the harvest days, he remembered that in the rain of April, it was her last April. It was the end of the days when they could work together as a couple. It was also the end of their business of selling the daffodils.

Despite that painful recollection, the persona continued with his reminiscence of the days when they worked together as a couple to prepare the flowers for market. He remembered

the details of this activity clearly from the piling, grouping then finally selling the flowers.

From the innocent and happy reminiscence of their early days as a couple, the author moved on with a description of an upcoming gloomy day that led to the end of their task as husband and wife. This end was brought about by the fast growth and thickening of the flowers, faster than they could harvest them. This signifies the overwhelming tasks that burdened the couple and may have turned an innocent survival activity into a complex venture. The activity which can be considered as a bonding time of the family had become a heavy task that led to their alienation. When he finally said that they lost their wedding present, the scissors, it marked the end of a simple, poor yet happy life as a couple and as a family.

> We sold them, to wither
> The crop thickened faster than we could thin it.
> Finally we were overwhelmed
> And we lost our wedding present scissors.

These four lines are worth noting because, I believe, they served as a turning point in the lives of the persona, his wife and their family of Hughes, Plath and their children. This spoke of a sad picture of a disintegrating family. The essential ties that bound them- the activity of harvesting and selling daffodils together and the role of the scissors were, at this point in time, lost. These may have represented the crises that the couple faced that led to their separation.

Before the poem ended, a deep longing is apparent in Hughes. He lets us into his mind which still thinks of his wife as he sees the flowers every day. In this second to the last stanza, he was talking to Plath in a way that a very lonely person who was left behind by a departed loved one relates. He talks as if he believes that Plath was looking and listening to him at that very moment even with the full knowledge that she is somewhere else, a place beyond his reach. He talks of the same bulbs, the same flowers that blossomed every March. This picture of continues growth and cycle of the daffodils, from the time the flowers blossomed until the time they are harvested, tell us of his continues survival despite the death of Plath. The last stanza ended with a picture of a buried scissors which signifies the death of Plath and the end of their relationship. But even when the flowers harvested by her every April forgot about her, the second to the last stanza continues to tell us of Hughes memories with Plath and their life together that will never fade.

Lessons and views from "Daffodils"

This poem has a way of letting us into the lives of the couple and allowing us to look at them during their happy days and even during the time when circumstances and problems in life caused their family to disintegrate. It is a romantic piece of art in a way that a husband, piece by piece, brings together the private memories of their union, from the mundane tasks to the enormous burdens and responsibilities.

Just like many of the families in our society today, the relationship of Plath and Hughes was broken when the bond that brings couples together is severed by overwhelming responsibilities and the increasing complexities of modern life. Usually the bonds that

bring families together are the simple task that bring them joy and fulfillment and not necessarily the lucrative ventures.

The use of everyday activities and familiar sceneries in our immediate surroundings has a powerful way of conveying emotions in a romantic way. The daffodils that regenerates every time, loudly speaks of a man continues thoughts of his wife and how he misses the life that they shared together.

The Daffodils speak of a man who desired no harm to happen to his wife, a man who, together with his wife, suffered from a broken relationship as a result of overwhelming problems and responsibilities, and a lonely man who sorely misses the wife that he cared about.

14.6. "HAWK ROOSTING"

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

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

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

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

The allotment of death.
For the one path of my flight is direct
Through the bones of the living.
No arguments assert my right:
The sun is behind me.
Nothing has changed since I began.
My eye has permitted no change.
I am going to keep things like this.

14.6.1. Summary of the Poem

"Hawk Roosting", included in the volume *Lupercal* is one of the best poems of Ted Hughes. The other poems included in that volume are "View of a Pig", "Wodwo", and

"Crow". In the poem "Hawk Roosting", one may view Ted Hughes' many sided, vivid, startling, and yet truthful observation. The hawk while 'resting' a top the wood with closed eye expresses his happy state and satisfaction. He thinks of his prey with sense of pride and authority. We will now analyze the poem as an animal poem, study of violence, depiction of Nature and its simple structure under the following heads.

"Hawk Roosting" is a monologue of a hawk, a bird of prey, attacking smaller birds and eating them to feed himself. Hughes's reputation as a poet of the world of animals to an extent relies on Hawk Roosting which is a hawk's eye view of the world. The egoistic hawk here asserts his point of argument that trees, air, sun and earth are there only for his convenience; that the purpose of creation was solely to produce him; that the world revolves at his bidding; and all other creatures exist only as his prey. This egoistical hawk says:

It took the whole of creation
To produce my foot, my each feather
Now I hold creation in my foot…….

Thus, the poem reveals to us the hawk's own peculiar point of view and his peculiar consciousness.M.L.Rosenthal, an eminent critic, says that no poet of the past has quite managed to internalize the murderous quality of Nature through such brilliantly objective means, and with such economy, as Hughes has done in Hawk Roosting. Simply the poem is about the egotism of a single minded concern with a violence which seeks no justification for itself. The hawk says that nothing has changed since his life began, that his eye has permitted no change, and that he is going to keep things like this:

Nothing has changed since I began
My eye has permitted no change
I am going to keep things like this.

Hawk is a merciless killer and it is his device the allotment of death. It is his whim to kill where he pleases because it is all his own. The hawk's whole business in life is "to tear off heads". His whole concern is to follow the path leading him directly through the bones of the living creatures.

... My manners are tearing off heads
the allotment of death.
For the one path my flight is direct
Through the bones of the living.

M.G. Ramanan has expressed the view that violent imagery in this poem is Hughes imperialistic sense of power and authoritarian politics. Hughes himself denies such accusation of fascist, dictatorial and the bloodthirstiness which prevail in Nature.

However, at a deeper level, the hawk becomes a mouthpiece of Nature itself. Tennyson spoke of Nature "red in tooth and claw"; and he felt very unhappy about the cruelty that he saw in Nature. He therefore asked: "Are God and Nature then at strife?" But Hughes does not feel the anguish which Tennyson felt. Here is Hawk Roosting Hughes tries to fuse both his admiration for Nature and his horror of Nature into a single response which might be described as 'awe'.

"Hawk Roosting" is in fact an amusing poem showing Hughes' sense of humour too. Hawk's false sense of pride, of power and of egoism is coupled with his extremely narrow outlook. Yet it is possible that Hughes is not laughing at Hawk rather clarifying

his boost. There may be no sophistry in his body, as he says; but there certainly is sophistry in his reasoning. Moreover, the thought content of the poem and its argument is simple. Farther, lucidity and simplicity in the use of language are by no means foreign to Hughes, poetic style which is a proven truth for "Hawk Roosting".

In conclusion, we may add that Hughes has attributed to the hawk a capacity to think and even to argue a case. The hawk, depicted as an egocentric bird, may even be regarded as symbolizing man himself because man is actually the most self-important, egoistical and arrogant creature in the whole of this universe.

14.6.2. Critical Appreciation of Hawk Roosting

This is a dramatic monologue in the character of a hawk. Hughes dramatizes the hawk's thoughts and attitudes to the majesty of creation, creating a character of self-focussed, god-like arrogance, of brutality and beauty.

The hawk, a bird of prey, is seen in Ted Hughes' poem "Hawk Roosting" resting on a branch of a tree. The poem is written in the first person as though the hawk is speaking, so it is a dramatic monologue. The hawk seems to see himself as the centre of the universe and creates an impression of arrogance, as though the world were made for him and his purposes.

In the first stanza Hughes introduces the hawk "in the top of the wood." This high position is an indication of superiority. The bird is very still and its eyes are closed. Hughes uses alliteration of the "k" sound several times in the poem, creating a harsh feeling. The sound exists in the word "hawk" itself, of course, and there are further instances of it in line 3 where "hooked" is repeated. In the fourth line "kills" continues the alliteration. This line describes the hawk imagining killing and eating its prey even while it is asleep. A picture of ruthlessness begins to build up. Interestingly, lines three and four are the only lines in the poem that rhyme.

The second stanza opens with the exclamation "The convenience of the high trees!" The hawk again refers to its high altitude, and the word "convenience" conveys the idea that its position is an ideal one. The bird can look down on the world below, and the impression is that the wood has been created to suit its needs. Hughes links lines 6 and 7 with enjambment to extend the idea that the hawk can fly with ease and make use of the light from the sun. They are "of advantage to me," once again emphasising the fact that the hawk considers nature to have been created for its own purposes.

The second stanza closes with the hawk's comment that, from the top of the tree, it can see "the earth's face" looking up and easily observe the details. Everything is just right for this bird of prey.

In the opening line of the third stanza, Hughes again uses alliteration with the hard "k" sound in "locked" and "bark." The hawk has a tight hold upon the branch, whose surface is "rough." Hughes uses enjambment once more to link lines 10 and 11, describing how features of the hawk's body were created. The word "Creation" is capitalised, thus making it synonymous with God. The fact that the hawk considers that it took "the whole of Creation" to make its feet and feathers gives the bird an arrogant air. In the final line of this stanza, the hawk sees that positions are now reversed; it holds Creation in one small foot, therefore having become all powerful.

The end of the third stanza and the beginning of the fourth are linked by enjambment, as the hawk shows that it is free to "fly up" and circle the world below at its leisure. Line 14 is an extremely telling one: "I kill where I please because it is all mine." The hawk considers that it has supreme power and owns the whole earth that it can see below. Its ruthlessness is apparent again in lines 15 and 16, as the hawk says it possesses no "sophistry" or subtle reasoning; it kills by "tearing off heads." There is no attempt to soften the blow of its hunting methods.

The fifth stanza continues the image of the hawk hunting with the brief phrase "The allotment of death." The hawk chooses what it kills, and it is brutal. Enjambment again links lines 18 and 19, describing how the hawk's passage takes it "Through the bones of the living." The stanza closes with the statement "No arguments assert my right," giving the impression that the hawk's methods of killing are unquestionable. It does not need to justify its actions.

The four lines of the sixth and final stanza are all end stopped, and read as concise, matter-of-fact sentences. They emphasise the idea that what the hawk says goes and cannot be contested. The hawk states "Nothing has changed," but this is no accident. The bird considers, in the penultimate line of the poem, that it has not allowed anything to change. The poem closes with the line "I am going to keep things like that," asserting the hawk's power over the whole of nature.

Hughes appears to be using the hawk in this poem as a symbol for power. A hawk would of course act instinctively and kill for the purposes of survival. The implications of "Hawk Roosting" are therefore that the poem is an extended metaphor for the behaviour of a tyrant or power-seeking ruler. Such a person would, as the hawk is in this poem, be self-centred and arrogant. An authoritarian despot would not allow himself or his methods to be questioned, and would see the world around him as being designed to suit his purposes. Ted Hughes, in "Hawk Roosting," paints a picture of a creature that is ruthless and self-involved, showing how a lust for power can take over a being and end in brutality.

Self Assessment Questions

1. Describe Ted Huges as a poet.

2. Give the critical appreciation of "Daffodils".

3. Give the summary of "Hawk Roosting".

14.7. SUMMARY

In this unit you were given an account of the life and works of Ted Hughes. You further examined Hughes as a poet and saw his unusual fascination with animals and nature. Two of Hughes' most representative poems "Daffodils" and "Hawk Roosting" were also taken up for a detailed study.

14.8. ANSWERS TO SELF-ASSESSMENT-QUESTIONS

1. Refer to the discussion given at 14.4.
2. Refer to the discussion given at 14.5.2.
3. Refer to the discussion given at 14.6.1.

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14.10. TERMINAL AND MODEL QUESTIONS

1. Give a biographical account of the life of Ted Hughes in your own words.
2. Summarize the poem “Daffodils” in your own words.
3. Give the critical appreciation of the poem “Hawk Roosting”.