

M.A. ENGLISH : SEMESTER II

COURSE CODE : ENG 212

LESSON No. 1

POETRY-II LITERARY AND INTELLECTUAL UNIT-I

**BACKGROUND OF POETRY FROM THE
PRE-ROMANTIC TO THE PRE-RAPHAELITE POETS**

Pre-Romantic Poetry

STRUCTURE

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1.1 INTRODUCTION

Towards the end of the Neo-classical period, opposition to Pope's school of poetry was more or less steadily growing. The writers' interest in Nature and in the romantic past marked this opposition. Dr. Johnson's forceful personality held the new tendencies in check for the time, but signs of the change became more and more pronounced as the century advanced to its close. In the last quarter of the century, four poets, each, in his own way, heralded the opening of the second romantic age in English literature. These were Cowper, Crabbe, Blake and Burns.

1.2 OBJECTIVES

The objective of this lesson is:

- To give the learners an insight to the pre-romantic poetry.
- To familiarize the learners with the major poets and their works.
- To acquaint the learners with the women writers of the age.

1.3 MAJOR POETS OF PRE-ROMANTIC PERIOD

1.3.1 William Cowper

William Cowper (1731-1800), one of the most-loveable of English poets, came of a good aristocratic family. He was educated at Westminster school whence he went to study law and was called to Bar. His family influence was great, but his prospects in Government service were marred by constitutional morbidity which developed into suicidal mania. Though a couple of years in a lunatic asylum cured him, the blight of melancholy hovered over him all his life. He had to leave London and retire into the country where he passed the rest of his life in the care and company of friends. Most devoted of whom, Mrs. Mary Unwin, the widow of a clergyman, he celebrated in the sentimental verses "To Mary". It was at her

suggestion that he wrote the eight satires - *Table Talk*, *The Progress of Error*, *Truth*, *Expostulation*, *Hope*, *Charity*, *Conversation* and *Retirement* – all in heroic couplets, which together with some shorter poems appeared in 1782. The shorter poems of this volume included the well known *Boadicea* and *Verses supposed to be written by Alexander Selkirk*. Another woman, Lady Austen, suggested the “sofa” in his room as the subject for his next work by way of diversion for the melancholy poet, and the result was *The Task* in blank verse, one of the most companionable of poems in English language. The same lady told him the story of the London linen-draper immortalised in the ballad of *John Gilpin*. The volume containing these two as well as *Tirocinium*, a forceful attack on public schools of the day, appeared in 1785. After this date he produced a translation of Homer, which is dull though dignified, and a number of shorter poems which appeared after his death. These include the famous *On the Loss of the Royal George*, and *To Mary*. His last poem, *The Castaway*, a cry of utter despair was written shortly before his death. Later editions of his poems contained the tender *On the Receipt of My Mother’s Picture*. His close association with Mary Unwin came to an end with her death in 1796. Thereafter the poet lingered in physical and mental misery from which he was released by death in 1800.

Every schoolboy essay on country life contains Cowper’s line from *The Task*: “God made the country and man made the town.” Cowper comes nearer to Wordsworth even than Thomson in his love of Nature, but he weaves no theory or religion about it. He expresses his simple gratitude for the healing influences on Nature on his troubled spirit:

The tide of life, swift always in its course,
May run in cities with a brisker force,
But nowhere with a current so serene,
Or half so clear, as in the rural scene.

Cowper, a Calvinist, was deeply religious in the true sense as is shown by his generous sympathies with the meanest of God’s creatures:

I would not enter on my list of friends
(Though graced with polished manners and fine sense
Yet wanting sensibility) the man
Who needlessly sets foot upon a worm,
I would not have a slave to till my ground,
To carry me, to fan me when I sleep,
And tremble when I wake, for all the wealth
That sinews bought and sold have ever earn'd.

Cowper's concern for India – India that had been trampled by Warren Hastings and other empire builders – is touchingly shown in these lines:

Is India free? And does she wear her plumed
And jewelled turban with a smile of peace,
Or do we grind her still?

Cowper's satires are a far cry from Pope's. In fact there are so many didactic poems containing gentle admonitions not unmixed with playful humour and occasional wit –

The solemn fop; significant and budge;
A fool with judges, amongst fools a judge.
His wit invites you by his looks to come.
But when you knock, it never is at home, (*Conversation*)
How much a dunce that has been sent to roam
Excels a dunce that has been kept at home. (*The Progress of Error*)
Absence of occupation is not rest,
A mind quite vacant is mind distress'd (*Retirement*)

He was too gentle for satire. It is in *The Task* that the real poetic quality of Cowper is shown to the best advantage. He is, however, best known by his shorter poems which are familiar to us in school anthologies. They are

the instinctive and spontaneous effusions of a real poet. Their simplicity, naturalness and easy grace constitute their perennial charm. Only those who have never known a mother's affection can charge Cowper with sentimentality in the poem on his mother's picture. The charge may be justified to some extent in regard to the poem on Mary, but even here it must be remembered that Cowper and Mary were at one time engaged to be married and that the union was prevented only the recurrence of the poet's malady. In fact, the sad circumstances of the poet's life should always be remembered in judging his works.

Historically Cowper was no innovator or revolutionary in poetry. Though it was he who said that Pope –

Made poetry a mere mechanic art,
And every warbler has his tune by heart.

Yet he did not disdain to write in couplets, however, rugged and enjambed he deliberately made them. Even his style which is simpler and more natural than that of Pope and his school is not entirely free from its generalising tendency and set poetic diction. It is only in regard to his love of the country and his humanitarianism that he can be said to be looking forward to the romantics. Odd mixture of old and new as he was, he inclined, on the whole, rather to the old than to the new. Judged by bulk, range, and poetic quality Cowper belongs to the great English poets of the second order.

Cowper is known today mainly for *The Task*. A deeply contemplative poet, Cowper structures his poem around the seasons. He also provides some extremely fine portraits of nature, and argues that nature is evidence of God's existence. Here is a particularly fine piece of description of winter morning:

'Tis morning; and the sun, with ruddy orb in a blaze,
Ascending, fires th' horizon: while the clouds,
That crowd away before the driving wind,
More ardent as the disk emerges more,

Resemble most some city in a blaze,
Seen through the leafless wood. His slanting ray
Slides ineffectual down the snowy vale,
And, tinging all with his rosy hue,
From ev'ry herb and ev'ry blade.

1.3.2 George Crabbe

George Crabbe (1754-1832) belonged to the school of Pope in form and style, and was, predominantly satiric and didactic in spirit and substance. But he differed from that school in the greater humanity of his subject. He took the bold step of identifying himself with the poorer classes and describing their life realistically. He showed a pronounced individuality of character by setting himself squarely against the tradition, dear to the writers of pastorals, of painting romantic and idealised pictures of village life. According to him, the happiness and innocence of the villagers such as that described by Goldsmith more recently in his *Deserted Village* was romantic fiction and travesty of truth.

Son of an exciseman, Crabbe was born at Aldborough in Suffolk on the bleak east coast of England, was apprenticed to a surgeon, practised medicine for a time and finally went to London to seek his fortune in literature. There he met with disappointment and endured dire poverty. When almost in destitute he sought and obtained the patronage of Burke and Lord Thurlow. He took orders and passed the rest of his life in ease and comfort, serving as minister first in his own parish and then at other places.

His first poem, *The Library*, is dull and unimportant, full as it is of trite reflections on books and reading; such for example, as that old and weighty authors are no longer read, that fashion rules even the wisest, that our nicer age prefers light and frivolous reading, etc. it was his second poem, *The Village* (1783), corrected and revised by Johnson, which made his name and fixed his character as a poet. Having seen the hard life of villagers with his own eyes, he describes their poverty and misery, their struggles and

squalor and vice in minute details. Protesting against the falsehood of romantic fancy, he pleads for truth in poetry:

No; cast by Fortune on a frowning coast,
Which neither groves nor happy valley boast;
Where other cares than those the muse relates,
And other Shepherds dwell with other mates;
By such examples taught, I paint the Cot,
As truth will paint it and as bards will not.
Nor you, ye poor, of Letter'd scorn complain,
To you the smoothest song is smooth in vain;
O'ercome by labour and bow'd down by time,
Feel you the barren flattery of a rhyme?
Can Poets smooth you, when you pine for bread,
By winding myrtles round your ruin's shed?
Can their light tales your weighty griefs o'erpower,
Or glad with airy mirth the toilsome hour?

After twenty years' silence *The Parish Register* in which he reviews the life of his parish during the whole year. This was followed by *The Borough* descriptive of the life of a country town. The last to be published in his life-time were *Tales in Verse* and *Tales of the Hall* in which he included people of the upper classes. The *Tales* show him a competent narrator, recalling Chaucer, though he has neither Chaucer's humanity nor humour. The tone, indeed, of his later works, was softened to some extent, but his pessimism persisted to the last.

Either by temperament or because of the sufferings of his youth, Crabbe dwelt on the seamy side of life. Byron's description of him as "Nature's sternest painter, yet the best" is, on the whole, not unjust. He excels only when he is describing life or natural scenes in their harsh aspects. Though anti-romantic by temperament, he links himself with Wordsworth and other romantics by his

sympathy with the rustics and by his interest in nature. He does not, like Wordsworth, glorify the villagers, or praise nature. He was a man of his century in using nature only as a background for scenes of life and character. In manner too, he was of the 18th century. He wrote in the couplet of Pope, but his couplets are neither elegant nor melodious.

Here and there we may come across a quibble of epigrammatic point, but by and large the verse is pedestrian. In fact, Crabbe is the most mediocre of the poets of his class. Neither by his matter nor by his manner does he offer any refreshment to the human spirit. His pessimistic inspiration could not transfigure his subject. All of us have our share of sorrows, but we do not go to poetry just to add to that burden. It is only when poetry transfigures the ills of life that they become bearable. Crabbe and other so-called realists may call it poetic illusion, but what else is life itself if not illusion. We are such stuff as dreams are made on. . .

The following extract illustrates how the inmates of the parish poor-house are treated by the parish doctor:

But soon a loud and hasty summons calls,
Shakes the thin roof, and echoes round the walls;
Anon, a Figure enters, quaintly neat,
All pride and business, bustle and conceit;
With looks unalter'd by these scenes of woe,
With speed that, entering, speaks his haste to go;
He bids the gazing throng around him fly,
And carries Fate and Physic in his eye;
A potent Quack, long vers'd in human ills,
Who first insults the victim whom he kills;
Whose murd'rous hand a drowsy Bench protect,
And whose most tender mercy is neglect.

1.3.3 William Blake

William Blake (1757-1827), the third of this group, was a fanatical revolutionary in poetry. He went far beyond the most determined of the romantics in his worship of imagination and repudiation of logic, science, and reason. Neither in matter nor in manner is there anything of the eighteenth century in Blake's poetry. He was an eccentric and from all accounts was never wholly sane. Londoner by birth he was the son of an Irish hosier, and a painter and engraver by profession. He had little schooling and while yet a child saw mystic visions such, for example, as "God peeping through the window," "Angels in a Tree", and "Ezekiel sitting under a green bough."

Blake's poetry was never published in the ordinary sense, but appeared as a commentary for his engravings. Only his earlier poetry is of interest to the average reader, for his later poetry, devoted to prophetic visions, is so obscure as to turn away the most determined enthusiast. Though basically a Christian, he had developed a religion of his own with a special mythology for symbolism. This, complicated in itself, was further complicated by incoherent expression. Blake's education had been inadequate and was not equal to the demands of symbolism. Such glimpses as one can get of his meaning tend to show that he was fanatically opposed to all authority or restrictive codes. Beyond this, it is neither possible nor necessary to follow him. Luckily his earlier poetry is the very reverse of obscure. It is simple, direct and charmingly musical. It consists of short songs or lyrics and is contained in three volumes: *Poetical Sketches* (1783), *Songs of Innocence* (1789), and *Songs of Experience* (1794). All these poems are the products of genuine inspiration. They are the spontaneous utterances of the Poet's heart and he who is not touched by them must indeed be over-sophisticated or dull of soul. Written in short rhyming lines and regular stanzas, they charm the ear by their fairy music.

The *Poetical Sketches* are little pictures or songs in the manner of the Renaissance poets. The *Songs of Innocence* sing of childhood and express through the mouth of babes and sucklings Blake's own feelings of tenderness

and piety, beauty and joy of the world. They are in the nature of lullabies or nursery rhymes rather than philosophic poems of childhood such as those of Wordsworth or Isaac Watts. Childhood speaks through Blake as it has spoken through no other poet. The *Songs of Experience* are the counterparts of the *Songs of Innocence*, reflecting as they do the contrasted mood brought on by bitter experience. The divine grace and goodness of the *Songs of Innocence* gives place to the disenchanting picture of the evil of the world. The French Revolution had opened Blake's eyes to the tyranny that stalked the world. The famous song "Tyger Tyger burning bright" is included in this collection. As lamb is the symbol of innocence, so the tiger is the symbol of tyranny.

Though he escaped from eighteenth century completely and was the greatest anticipator of the Romantic revival, Blake can hardly be said to have exercised any influence on his contemporaries. He was derided as an eccentric and insane. It was only later that he was recognised as a mystic visionary. Like a mad man he lived in a world of his own, that of imagination and mystery. To him the unseen, the unreal alone was real. Wordsworth said the right thing about him in his remark that the madness of Blake interests us more than the sanity of other men.

Blake is arguably the greatest English poet after Milton. He had visions even as a child and was deeply interested in philosophy and the contemporary theological debates. An extremely well-read man especially in mysticism and occult philosophies, Blake's poetry heralds a whole new era. His poetry also appropriates and reworks myths, traditions and symbols from various sources—Swedenborgian mysticism, Christianity, Renaissance art, European and English poets and religious poetry. Blake's poetry must be read with his visuals to get a more complete sense of his vision. Blake held some extremely radical views for his age. He believed that the Devil was the real hero of Milton's *Paradise Lost*. He also argued that God was both good and evil and that Heaven and Hell will eventually merge to generate redemptive forces. His poetry often combines both these contrary states of human soul: innocence and experience as well as evil and virtue. Blake is also a poet who anticipates

the Romantic emphasis on poetic imagination. His “Auguries of Innocence” opens with famous lines:

To see a world in a grain of sand
And a heaven in a wild flower,
Hold infinity in the palm of your hand
And eternity in an hour.

Blake sees the world in terms of a conflict between nature and culture, innocence and corruption, imagination and rationality. His dislike of organization and systemization is revealed in his dark images of control (the beades in “Holy Thursday”) and discipline. They can be read as his criticism of industrial England’s increasing modes of social control. London, in Blake’s famous poem of the same title, is described as “chartered”. As a result, the speaker in the poem hears only anguish among its citizens:

In every cry of every man,
In every infant’s cry of fear,
In every voice, in every ban,
The mind-forged manacles I hear.

“The Sick Rose,” a well known Blake poem, describes the corruption of beauty and innocence. His poems contained critiques of social systems, praise and awe at the power of God and controversial views. His prophetic books, especially *America* (1793), *Europe* (1794) and *Jerusalem* (1804-20) are about liberty, the primacy of passion and the separation of holiness, symbolized by Jerusalem, from England. Blake worries that imagination is at an end and Los, the spirit of the imagination in *Jerusalem*, has no work to do any more in materialist England and he sits jobless at his anvil. In *The Song of Los* (1795), imagination has been replaced by rational laws and religion.

All of Blake’s themes were expressed in difficult symbolic modes. For instance, Enitharmon in *The First Book of Urizen* represents pity. But in *Europe*, she symbolizes tyrannical power. Blake’s visuals, enormously thought-provoking, add to the glorious power of his thought.

1.3.4 Robert Burns

Robert Burns (1759-1796), the last and greatest of this group was a Scot, and though neither a conscious innovator nor a revolutionary, made as complete a break with the 18th century as Blake. Though he had a great respect for Pope and produced some English poetry in the artificial manner, the fact of his writing mainly in Scottish dialect, phrase, and metres – all so distinct from English – separated him entirely from the stream of 18th century tradition. He was, like Blake, a born poet, but with a gift of poetry far more comprehensive, various, intense and human, which has given him a place among the great poets of the world. Though unique in some ways, Blake could at least be classed, if not compared, with other mystics in English poetry – Herbert, Crashaw, Vaughan and Wordsworth. Burns is unique in the real sense of the word, and can neither be classed nor compared with any poets of equal poets.

Born at Alloway in Ayrshire, he was elder of the two sons of a poor farmer of Calvinistic faith. He had intermittent but fairly good education. Quite early in his life, he developed a taste for literature as well as wine and women. Unable to stave off poverty and with love-troubles on hand, he decided to emigrate to Jamaica. From taking this desperate step he was saved by the success of his *Poems Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect* published at Kilamarnock, (1786). In religion and politics he was liberal. He had quite early forsaken the strict Calvinistic faith which for him meant only hypocrisy and tyranny. He sympathised with the Revolutionists in the early stages of French Revolution and incurred the wrath of the government and the aristocracy. When, however, he saw through the aims of France which threatened invasion, his patriotic spirit rose and his patriotic songs echoed through the country. He enlisted as a volunteer in the Dumfries militia and was buried with military honours.

In the plethora of criticism that has been produced on Burns, the real quality of his genius is apt to be confused. Let it, therefore, be understood right at the start that his genius was essentially lyrical. It is chiefly by his songs that he is known and admired in the world over. The second quality of his genius is his riotous good humour. This is best shown in his famous poems

“Tom O’Shanter”, “The Jolly Beggars” and “Holy Willie’s Prayer.” Burns is one of the great humorists of the world. Those who have only read or heard of his immorality would hardly think of him as a moralist, and yet he is a moralist too in a modest way. He made no secret of his moral delineations. His transgressions filled him with remorse. Any apparent condonation of sin, such for instance as suggested in “The Rigs of Barley” or “The Jolly Beggars” must be read in the light of “The Bard’s Epitaph” which concludes with this advice: “Know, prudent, cautious, self control is Wisdom’s root.” He knew what was good in principle, but, alas, like most mortals, was unable to live up to his knowledge. the “Epistle to Dr. Blacklock” concludes with these lines:

But to conclude my silly rhyme
(I’m scant o’ verse, and scant o’ time)
To make a happy fire-side clime
To weans and wife
That’s the true pathos and sublime
Of human life.

That he lives up to this ideal was the testimony of his widow, and the same lesson is enforced in “The Cotter’s Saturday Night”. It is a commonplace of criticism that Burns’ strength lies in his portrayal of Scottish life and character. That he was able to give artistic expression to the cherished thoughts, feelings and aspirations of a whole people was no mean achievement. There had been no great poet in Scotland since Dunbar. The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries had been practically barren. The rigour of the Scottish Kirk which discouraged secular literature in favour of that of the good life may perhaps partly account for this. But the Scottish folk-songs were not killed, and in the 18th century some aristocratic families attempted from patriotic motives to revive vernacular poetry. Apart from minors, the work of only two poets, Allan Ramsay and Robert Fergusson, can be said to have some intrinsic worth.

Burns thus had before him the capital of a rich national heritage in a floating mass of poems, folk-songs and ballads. He was fired with the ambition

to celebrate his country in song as Blind Harry had done in his *Wallace*. He brought to bear on his work a poetic gift of the highest order and produced, in his comparatively short life, poems which fixed the character of Scottish poetry as distinguished from English. His speciality having been discussed, a few general characteristics of his poetry may now be noticed. The more obvious of these are a feeling for nature, humour, and above all, humanity. A feeling for nature has always been a strong point with the Scottish poets and Burns is no exception. His careful observation and delicate appreciation of natural scenes may be seen in “Thou Lingering Star”, “The Banks of Doon”, “To a Mouse”. “To a Mountain Daisy” and so many others. His outstanding triumphs in humour in “Tam O’Shanter”, “The Jolly Beggars” and “Holy Willie’s Prayer” have already been mentioned. To these may be added the milder satirical piece “The Address to the Unco Guid”. Burns was not a satirist properly so called, but he had the satiric vein which is best exhibited in “Holy Willie’s Prayer”. Burns’ humour is good-natured and is, on that account, more effective in this poem, which is an attack on hypocritical religion and self-righteousness. The most important characteristic of Burns’ poetry, however, is his wide-ranging humanity. He sympathises not only with all humanity but with all living creatures. He has pity for the mouse whom he has rendered homeless and the tiny daisy he has inadvertently uprooted with his plough. He has nothing but kindness and understanding for reprobates, be the jolly beggars or other human derelicts. He has experienced life to the full and communicated his experiences, both physical and mental, with unabashed frankness and sincerity. His joys and sorrows, hopes and despairs, raptures and heart-aches, hatred of tyranny and oppression, feeling of brotherhood of man, pricks of conscience, reverence for God – in these we find reflected the feelings of our common humanity.

Burns’ style, like Burns the man, is perfectly plain. But this style he acquired with great pains and patience. He did not, like Pope, boast of lispings “in numbers, for the numbers came.” In his fragmentary autobiography he says: “I firmly believe that excellence in the profession is the fruit of industry, labour,

attention and pains,.. and laboured elegance. The rough material for fine writing is certainly the gift of genius but I firmly believe that the workmanship is the united effort of pains, attention and repeated trial.”

1.4 MINOR POETS

With the exception of some brilliant satires the minor poetry of pre-Romantic period is worthless and hardly worth detailed notice. Erasmus Darwin, grand-father of the great Charles, wrote *The Botanic Garden* which has the interest of fantastic in that he clothed the dry facts of science in the most elaborate “poetic diction.” This provoked the equally fantastic but witty parody *The Loves of the Triangles* by the *Anti-Jacobin*. Poetry reached its lowest ebb in “The Della Cruscans,” a silly school of poets founded towards the end of the century and named after the “Academia della Crusca” of Florence which had been established in the sixteenth century with the object of purifying the Italian language. Hence its name which signifies chaff or bran that was to be separated from the grain. Its symbol was accordingly a sieve. The absurd sentimentalists and stilted affectations of style which characterised the English Della Cruscans were ridiculed by Gifford in his satires *Baviad* and *Maeviad*. (Bavius and Maevius, insignificant poetasters of Rome, were satirised by Virgil).

In the literary battles between the two political parties, the Whigs produced two famous satires – *The Rolliad* (1784-85) written by several hands, and *The Lousiad* (1785) written by John Wolcott or Peter Pindar. *The Rolliad* is a series of satires on Pitt and the Tory party. *The Lousiad* is a satire on the personal habits of George III who discovering a louse in his bed ordered all his domestic servants to have their heads shaved. Wolcott was an able but unscrupulous journalist who attained great popularity by his extremely witty and vitriolic attacks in his “Odes” and “Epistles” etc. on George III, Pitt, Paine, Johnson, Boswell and other notable personalities of the day. In a critique on his bombastic style Dr. Johnson is described as one who:

Uplifts the club of Hercules – for what?

To crush a butterfly or brain a gnat.

On the Tory side Walcott found his match in William Gifford (1756-1826) editor of the *Anti-Jacobin* (1797-98), a weekly paper started by the Tories to ridicule the reformers and political agitators of the times. His satire on Wolcott, *Epistle to Peter Pindar*, provoked him to a personal assault on Gifford. The *Anti-Jacobin* lasted a little over a year, and Gifford later became the first editor of *The Quarterly Review* founded by Sir Walter Scott, Southey and others as a rival to *The Edinburgh Review*. He was a fanatical hater of all reformers and opponents of the government and became notorious for his highly prejudiced criticisms of the romantics. His ferocious article on *Endymion* is said to have hastened Keats' death.

1.5 WOMEN POETS

Until roughly 1960, five male writers constituted the "Romantic" canon and women poets from this period have not been studied or anthologized. It was only in 1980's that even Mary Shelley was studied within this paradigm. We need to keep in mind the severely patriarchal culture in and against which women authors of this period wrote. Isobel Armstrong in her prescient essay "The Gush of the Feminine: How Can We Read Women's Poetry of the Romantic Period?" (1995) suggests that reading these writers as embodying the feminine would be highly reductive. She argues that women Romantic writers used two strategies for writing: using a traditional "feminine" discourse which they then used to analyse and think, and challenging male forms of thought that devalued woman's knowledge and experience.

1.5.1 Anna Letitia Barbauld

Anna Letitia Barbauld (1743-1825) published her *Works* in 1825. Her poems are full of personal "signs" – names of people, places and events – even though (and unlike Wordsworth) she does not invite attention to herself. Ironically, we only get a glimpse of the "I" within the wealth of personal detail. She wrote some truly funny burlesque poems, though a sense of dissent is

visible in most of them. “The Groans of the Tankard” is a poem about the abuse of a drinking tankard, spoken by the tankard itself. Here is Barbauld’s description of hunger, with the right mix of seriousness and the burlesque:

‘Twas at the solemn, silent, noon-tide hour,
When hunger rages with despotic power,
When the lean student quits his Hebrew roots
For the gross nourishment of English fruits,
And throws unfinis’d airy systems by
For solid pudding and substantial pye,
When hungry poets the glad summons own,
And leave spare fast to dine with Gods alone...

The satire is beautifully phrased and conveys a nice mix of theology and social criticism. In other poems such as “Corsica” and “the Times”, she supports rebellion (even revolution):

It is not in the force of the mortal arm,
Scarcely in fate, to bind the struggling soul
That gall’d by wanton power, indignant swells
Against oppression; breathing great revenge,
Careless of life, determin’d to be free.

It is also important to note the powerful woman Barbauld creates in “Corsica” who is personified as both Virtue and Liberty and described as possessing a “tow’ ring form ... with an ampler port/and bolder tone,” anticipates the “virago” figure of later feminism. Other poems that showcase Barbauld’s support for rebellion and her anger against establishment authoritarianism include “The Invitation” and “To Dr Aikin...”. Thus, contrary to established views of women’s writing, Barbauld’s work does not emphasize merely the personal or domestic. She comes across as a keen observer of contemporary life and as a thinker on the crucial issues of her day. However, this is not to suggest that

she only wrote political poems. Poems such as “Verses Written in an Alcove” – in the form of an invitation to another woman (Elizabeth Rigby or ‘Lissy’ in the poem) for a romantic tryst in the alcove at night, a theme echoed in “A Summer Evening’s Meditation” – and the six “Songs” are deeply sensual and come close to being erotic.

1.5.2 Felicia Hemans

Felicia Hemans(1793-1835) published her *Records of Woman* in 1828. Her poems document women’s lives with a mixture of dramatic and sentimental verse. In “Madeline”, a young Frenchwoman leaves her mother to go to America with her new husband. In America, her husband dies and the woman is on her deathbed. She has visions of her mother coming to care for her. In a queer mix of reality and fantasy, the mother is indeed at her bedside. A poem that captures the thus-far ignored mother-daughter bond, “Madeline” is a powerful counterpoint to male relationships. The surreal, even utopian, informs Hemans’ poetry, as in “The Better Land”, which once again locates a strong mother-child bond:

‘I hear thee speak of the better land,
Thou call’st its children a happy band;
Mother! Oh, where is that radiant shore?
Shall we not seek it, and weep no more?
Is it where the flower of the orange blows,
And the fire-flies glance through the myrtle boughs?’
- ‘Not there, not there, my child!’

‘Is it where the feathery palm-trees rise,
And the date grows ripe under sunny skies?
Or midst the green islands of glittering seas,
Where fragrant forests perfume the breeze,
And strange bright birds on their starry wings,
Bear the rich hues of all glorious things?’

- Not there, not there, my child!
 'Is it far away, in some region old,
 Where the rivers wander o'er sands of gold?-
 Where the burning rays of ruby shine,
 And the diamond lights up the secret mine,
 And the pearl gleams forth from the coral strand? –
 Is it there, sweet mother, that better land?'
 -Not there, not there, my child!

 'Eye hath not seen it, my gentle boy!
 Ear hath not heard its deep songs of joy;
 Dreams cannot picture a world so fair –
 Sorrow and death may not enter there;
 Time doth not breathe on its fadeless bloom,
 For beyond the clouds, and beyond the tomb,
 -It is there, it is there, my child!'

Florence Nightingale is said to have copied out this poem for a cousin. Love stories are central to Hemans' poems like "The Vaudois' Wife", "Thekla at her Lover's Grave" and "The Image in the Heart." Heterosexual love, domestic affections and motherhood are the subjects Hemans deals with best. She has very few references to contemporary political issues. However, Hemans does engage in another kind of politics – that of gender. In "The Forest Sanctuary", for instance, two sisters, Theresa and Inez, are to be burned at the stake as heretics. Interestingly, Hemans describes the sisters in terms that have often been used to define male heroism. In a reversal of gender roles, Hemans describes the sisters as possessing "fire", "energy" and abilities to raise a "storm" – images that Blake uses to describe Urizen and Shelley deploys to mark Prometheus. This reversal is a crucial element in Hemans' proto-feminist poetry, whereby she posits a "heroism of the woman."

It is therefore important to realize that a Wordsworth or a Shelley was writing in a context where women also wrote and received a certain measure of critical and public attention, but eventually failed to be included in the canon. Many of the themes we see in the canonical Romantic poets are visible in Hemans and Barbauld, who, give them a gender twist as it were.

1.6 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

Q1: Write a short note on William Cowper as a poet.

Ans. William Cowper (1731-1800), one of the most-loveable of English poets, came of a good aristocratic family. He was educated at Westminster school whence he went to study law and was called to Bar. His family influence was great, but his prospects in Government service were marred by constitutional morbidity which developed into suicidal mania. Though a couple of years in a lunatic asylum cured him, the blight of melancholy hovered over him all his life. He had to leave London and retire into the country where he passed the rest of his life in the care and company of friends. Most devoted of whom, Mrs. Mary Unwin, the widow of a clergyman, he celebrated in the sentimental verses "To Mary". It was at her suggestion that he wrote the eight satires - *Table Talk, The Progress of Error, Truth, Expostulation, Hope, Charity, Conversation and Retirement* – all in heroic couplets, which together with some shorter poems appeared in 1782. The shorter poems of this volume included the well known *Boadicea* and *Verses supposed to be written by Alexander Selkirk*. Another woman, Lady Austen, suggested the "sofa" in his room as the subject for his next work by way of diversion for the melancholy poet, and the result was *The Task* in blank verse, one of the most companionable of poems in English language. The same lady told him the story of the London linen-draper immortalised in the ballad of *John Gilpin*. The volume containing these two as well as *Tirocinium*, a forceful attack on public schools of the day, appeared in 1785. After this date he produced a translation of Homer, which is dull though dignified, and a number of

shorter poems which appeared after his death. These include the famous *On the Loss of the Royal George*, and *To Mary*. His last poem, *The Castaway*, a cry of utter despair was written shortly before his death. Later editions of his poems contained the tender *On the Receipt of My Mother's Picture*.

Q2: How can Blake be called the greatest poet after Milton?

Ans. Blake is arguably the greatest English poet after Milton. He had visions even as a child and was deeply interested in philosophy and the contemporary theological debates. An extremely well-read man especially in mysticism and occult philosophies, Blake's poetry heralds a whole new era. His poetry also appropriates and reworks myths, traditions and symbols from various sources- Swedenborgian mysticism, Christianity, Renaissance art, European and English poets and religious poetry. Blake's poetry must be read with his visuals to get a more complete sense of his vision. Blake held some extremely radical views for his age. He believed that the Devil was the real hero of Milton's *Paradise Lost*. He also argued that God was both good and evil and that Heaven and Hell will eventually merge to generate redemptive forces. His poetry often combines both these contrary states of human soul: innocence and experience as well as evil and virtue. Blake is also a poet who anticipates the Romantic emphasis on poetic imagination. His "Auguries of Innocence" opens with famous lines:

To see a world in a grain of sand
And a heaven in a wild flower,
Hold infinity in the palm of your hand
And eternity in an hour.

Q3: Why was Blake misunderstood by his contemporaries?

Ans. _____

Q4: Briefly describe the thematic concerns of “The Task.”

Ans. _____

Q5: Write a short note on Burns as a poet.

Ans. _____

Q6. Why pre-Romantic poetry was satiric in tone?

Ans. _____

Q7: Briefly describe the minor poets of pre-Romantic period.

Ans. _____

Q8: What were the thematic concerns of Women poets of pre-Romantic region?

Ans. _____

Q9: Which poem by Felicia Hemans describes the ignored mother-daughter bond and how?

Ans. _____

Q10: How was pre-Romantic poetry different from Neo-Classical poetry?

Ans. _____

1.7 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

1. William Blake's *Songs of Innocence* came out in
 - a) 1776
 - b) 1789
 - c) 1787
 - d) 1800

2. Which of the following was Blake's first volume of poems?
 - a) *Songs of Experience*
 - b) *Songs of Innocence*
 - c) *The Book of Thel*
 - d) *Poetical Sketches*

3. Blake's dictum that Milton was "a true poet and of the Devil's party without knowing it" appears in
 - a) *Milton*
 - b) *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*

- c) *Jerusalem*
 - d) *Europe*
4. *The Task* is written by
- a) Robert Burns
 - b) William Cowper
 - c) George Crabbe
 - d) William Blake
5. Which poem was copied by Florence Nightingale for a cousin of her?
- a) Madeline
 - b) The Better Land
 - c) Jerusalem
 - d) The Vaudois' Wife
6. "Verses Written in an Alcove" is a poem by
- a) Felicia Hemans
 - b) Anna Baubauld
 - c) Wordsworth
 - d) Robert Burns
7. Which of the following works is not written by William Cowper
- a) *The Task*
 - b) *The Castaway*
 - c) *Conversations*
 - d) *The Sick Rose*
8. Robert Burns was born in
- a) 1759
 - b) 1761

- c) 1756
 - d) 1758
9. George Crabbe's *The Village* was published in
- a) 1783
 - b) 1794
 - c) 1781
 - d) 1782
10. Felicia Hemans explores the theme of mother-child bond in
- a) Madeline
 - b) The Better Land
 - c) The Invitation
 - d) The Image in the Heart

1.8 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

- Q1 How is Pre- Romantic poetry different from Neo-Classical poetry?
- Q2 Describe the contribution of William Cowper as a pre-Romantic poetry.
- Q3 What were the thematic concerns of women writers of pre-Romantic period?
- Q4 Highlight the similarities and differences between *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience*.
- Q5 Discuss Robert Burns as a poet.

1.9 ANSWER KEY

- 1. b**
- 2. d**
- 3. b**
- 4. b**

5. b

6. b

7. d

8. a

9. a

10. b

1.10 SUGGESTED READING

Dahiya, B.S. *A New History of English Literature*. New Delhi: Doaba Publications.

Nayar, Pramod K. *A Short History of English Literature*. Bangalore: Cambridge University Press, 2009. Print.

Rogers, Pat. *The Oxford Illustrated History of English Literature*. New York: OUP, 1987. print

The Routledge Companion to Romantic Age.

M.A. ENGLISH : SEMESTER II

COURSE CODE : ENG 212

LESSON No. 2

POETRY-II LITERARY AND INTELLECTUAL UNIT-I

**BACKGROUND OF POETRY FROM THE
PRE-ROMANTIC TO THE PRE-RAPHAELITE POETS**

Romantic Poetry

STRUCTURE

- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Objectives
- 2.3 Background
- 2.4 Features of Romantic Poetry
- 2.5 Major Poets of Romantic Movement
 - 2.5.1 William Wordsworth
 - 2.5.2 Samuel Taylor Coleridge
 - 2.5.3 Lord Byron
 - 2.5.4 PB Shelley
 - 2.5.5 John Keats
- 2.6 Minor Poets of Romantic Period
 - 2.6.1 Robert Southey
 - 2.6.2 Walter Savage Landor
 - 2.6.3 George Crabbe
 - 2.6.4 John Clare

- 2.6.5 Thomas Campbell
- 2.6.6 Thomas Moore
- 2.6.7 Leigh Hunt
- 2.6.8 Thomas Hood
- 2.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 2.8 Self- Assessment Questions
- 2.9 Multiple Choice Questions
- 2.10 Examination Oriented Questions
- 2.11 Answer Key
- 2.12 Suggested Reading

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The period between 1780 and 1830 is popularly known as the Romantic Age. The Romantic poets are perhaps the most anthologized and studied poets in English literature. Poets such as Wordsworth and Coleridge are considered to be the founding figures of Romanticism and a whole of new way of thinking. However, a closer examination of the contexts reveals that the poets were not ‘inventing’ concepts or ideas, but responding to events and situations around them. Furthermore, elements of Romanticism are visible well before Wordsworth and his visionary company. For instance, William Blake was already working with ideas and images that looked forward to the Wordsworth-Coleridge collection, *Lyrical Ballads*.

2.2 OBJECTIVES

The objective of the lesson is to:

- Acquaint the learners with the socio-cultural background of Romantic period.

- Familiarize the learners with the major trends of the age.
- Make the learners aware of the major poets and their works

2.3 BACKGROUND

Reform was underway in England during 1780's. Social movements for causes such as the abolition of slave trade, poor relief, education of the poor, amelioration of the prison conditions and numerous other efforts were on to 'improve' England. There was also rising social discontent. People wanted greater representation in the parliament. Meanwhile, things were rapidly spiralling towards a crisis in France. In the summer of 1789, the fall of the Bastille prison heralded the French Revolution, an event that had a profound impact on English society, ideas and politics. PA Brown's *The French Revolution in English History* (1918) extensively documents this influence. It also energized new forms of thinking in the realm of literature.

Edmund Burke responded with horror at what he thought was an unacceptable event in France in his *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790). However, others saw the events as a source of hope for the English, since the revolution symbolized, at least in the early stages, freedom, democracy and equality. Thomas Paine's *The Rights of Man* (1791-92) became a cult text, secretly distributed among radicals, even as he was indicted for treason and was forced to flee to France. Joseph Priestly, the noted chemist, wrote a detailed argument, in the form of letters to Edmund Burke, in favour of reform. In 1793, William Godwin published *Political Justice*, a tract that renounced sentiment and passion in favour of reason and education. The notion of an "enlightened self-interest" became a commonly accepted view of many of the radicals. Godwin argued that education could bring about the moral stance in human beings. Welfare and civic humanism, philanthropy and care of the poor became central tenets for politicians making laws and debating social issues.

However, as the Revolution's violence increased in quantum leaps over the next few years, reactions against it hardened in England. Supporters of the Revolution were targeted and Priestley's laboratory was set on fire by a mob pleading for 'Church and King'. England slowly drifted into a war with France and an 'Anti-Jacobin' movement began in England. Actions against radical newspapers were common. In 1803, William Blake was put on trial for sedition, and, in 1811, John and Leigh Hunt were prosecuted for exposing the cruel practice of flogging in the army. In 1812, Daniel Easton was prosecuted for reprinting Paine's *Age of Reason* (1795). The Luddite riots of 1811 further alarmed the conservatives who responded with harsher laws such as the Frame-Breaking Bill (1812) that made it illegal to damage productive machinery. The movement for reform became associated in the minds of people with pro-revolution radicalism and social anarchy.

The writings of William Cobbet, Robert Owen and others, slowly forced social and parliamentary reform. Working class education opened up. The writings of Jeremy Bentham and the Utilitarians pleading for the 'greatest good of the greatest number' became an influential ideology in the first decades of the nineteenth century. Reforms came in the form of emancipation of the Roman Catholics (1829) and the Reform Bill of 1832 which shifted political power to "the boroughs – with many centres given franchise – and the middle class" (Nayar 185).

The intellectual context of romantic writers included political liberalism, radicalism, socialism and notions of equality that spread with and during the French Revolution. An important strand of thinking that influenced many writers was Evangelicalism. This was socially a reform movement that drew on theology for its purposes. It sought to revitalize English society through a reiteration of moral values and codes. However, other diverse ideas circulated across Europe during this period, and were equally influential in England. A central theme in the intellectual climate of the time was the role of instinct and emotion. This resurgence of interest

in the unconscious workings of the human mind, its many sentiments and emotions and the role of instinct was a rebellion against the previous age's insistence on order, reason, intellectualism and logic. Romanticism, as this anti-intellectualist strand came to be known, revived an interest in and enthusiasm for the abnormal, the quaint, the disorderly and the mystics. Experiences that could not be rationalized were central to the work of poets like Blake. Irrational and instinctive responses to scenes and events figure prominently in Wordsworth. The workings of the mind – visions, fears superstitions and strong passions – became the keystone of the Romantic poetry of the last decades of the 18th century. This turn to the life and work of the mind often took on expositions and critical debates about one particular term in the writings of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley and Keats: Imagination. Imagination, stressed the world of dreams and visions over that of reality and the phenomenal world. These writers saw these visions as uncontaminated by the world of the senses and as providing a greater pleasure than anything in reality. The Romantics preferred to dwell on the imagination and the mind as an escape from the realities of the 'real' world.

While Wordsworth and others stressed the positive side of this unconscious, others became interested in the darker side of the human personality. If Wordsworth saw instinct and the unconscious as contributing to happiness and pleasure, the 'Dark Romantics' were obsessed with the evil, destructive and sinful aspects of the same unconscious. Poetic dream-visions were considered standard components of the poet's mental make-up. What used to be termed madness in the earlier age was revered as poetic genius now. Madness and poetry, melancholia and art went together in the Romantic conception of the poet. Blake's fearsome visions translated into some of the most powerful poems in English language. The drug-induced images of De Quincey and Coleridge became art. Keats praised the powers of intoxication. However, it was not enough to demonstrate poetic madness. The poets also had another role to perform - that of the

prophet. The two central images of the romantic poet are thus of the poet and the prophet. When P.B Shelley called poets the “unacknowledged legislators of mankind”, he was gesturing at this grand function of the poet.

The return to instinct and the everyday was also accompanied by a search for the primitive and the natural. The concept of the ‘noble savage’, uncontaminated by education, social mores and intellectual rationalizations, was heroic for the Romantics. The peasant and the child became symbols of such a state of purity as personalities that took joy in simple things without rationalizing about themselves and as minds that still possessed a sense of wonder. Likewise, other cultures – specifically, non-European and Oriental- became symbols for a pure, wonderful primitivism. Rustic and local imagery abounds in the writings of the period. Children and nature are icons of Wordsworthian ‘naturalness’. Simple pleasures like walking through the countryside, listening to farmers’ or yeomen’s songs and looking at the local ruin excite the emotions in the poetry of Romantic age. Romanticism, thus, marks a critical revolt against the rationalizing, industrializing scientism of the Enlightenment.

Thus it can be said that the Romantic Movement was a deliberate and sweeping revolt against the literary principles of the Age of Reason. Just as Dryden and Pope had rejected the romantic tradition of the Elizabethans as crude and irregular and had adopted classical or more correctly neo-classical principles of French literature in their writings, so now Wordsworth and Coleridge, in their turn, rejected the neo-classical principles in favour of the romantic. In doing so they were simply reverting to the Elizabethan or the first romantic age in English literature.

The chief cause of the movement was a desire to enlarge the bounds of poetry by freeing it from the shackles of Neo-classicism. The neo-classic creed laid down definite rules for the writing of poetry. These may be stated as follows:

1. Write only what is rational, choosing your subjects from everyday life – axioms, truths, mottoes, which have been uttered by wise

men of the past. Avoid flights of fancy and imagination. Avoid also passion and enthusiasm as unbecoming of a gentleman. They are not 'good form'.

2. Embellish your subject with a style that is elegant and polished. For this confine yourself to one regular, smooth metre – that of the closed couplet – and to polished language – language, that is to say, which has been hallowed by poetic custom. Don't stray beyond this stock of 'poetic diction.' Within these limits you may show your skill as much as you please.

The Romantics felt that these rules, artificially and unnecessarily restricted the freedom of the poet. They believed that genuine poetry was a free and spontaneous utterance of the poet's imagination and not mere embellishment of other people's thoughts. They believed further, that the poet was free to follow his own fancy in the matter of language and versification.

2.4 FEATURES OF ROMANTIC POETRY

- The principle concern was nature, landscape and beauty.
- The poems often represented the working-out of poetic theory itself.
- Dreams, childhood and innocence were common themes
- The influence of the French Revolution and other political events was visible.
- Concern with the inner self; the poems are mainly explorations of the poet's mind.
- Heavy symbolism.
- Influenced by theories of association and drugs.
- Adapted myths and images from several non-European cultures.
- A revelatory or prophetic tone is seen in many poets.
- Obsession with death and unconscious states.

2.5 MAJOR POETS OF ROMANTIC PERIOD

2.5.1 William Wordsworth

The best known of the Romantic poets is surely William Wordsworth (1770-1850). In a long poetic career, Wordsworth tried many genres and styles. Wordsworth's main theme can be summarized in a phrase: man and nature. He wrote poems with a message (which are called didactic poems). His *Prelude* (1850), an autobiographical poem, is subtitled 'growth of a poet's mind'. His friendship with Samuel Taylor Coleridge resulted in the classical volume of the age: *Lyrical Ballads* (first version in 1798). Wordsworth also took the role of poet-as-prophet very seriously. In his *Prelude*, he wrote:

Prophets of Nature, we to them will speak
A lasting inspiration . . .

Disappointed with the French Revolution and angered at the industrialization of London, Wordsworth returned to Grasmere and the Lake District. Many of his poems reflect his critique of modernization and the city life. *The Excursion*, an ambitious poem that combines many of his lasting preoccupations, declares the poetic vocation in no uncertain terms:

Of truth, of Grandeur, Beauty, Love and Hope,
And melancholy subdued by Faith;
Of blessed consolations in distress;
Of moral strength, and intellectual Power;
Of joy in widest commonality spread;
Of the individual mind that keeps her own
Inviolable Retirement, subject there
To conscience only, and the law supreme
Of that Intelligence which governs all.

Like Blake, Wordsworth believes that imagination is being sidelined in contemporary London:

Little we see in Nature that is ours;
We have given our hearts away

Or in his description of London when he says the ‘mighty heart [of London] is lying still’, playing on the word ‘lying’, he suggests that the centre of English commerce lies and cheats even when asleep (Composed upon Westminster Bridge, September 3, 1802’). In his famous ‘Immortality Ode’, he mourned the death of imagination and innocence and of the child’s sense of wonder:

Whither is fled the visionary gleam?
Where is it now, the glory and the dream?
This happens as the child grows into an adult, a process that ends innocence:
Shades of prison house begin to close
Upon the growing boy.

He spoke nostalgically of the rural way of life in famous poems like “The Leech Gatherer”, “The Solitary Reaper”, “Simon Lee” and “Michael”. Social themes of vagrancy, poverty and unemployment figure in “The Ruined Cottage”, “The Pedlar” and the Salisbury Plain poems. He shows how nature is a teacher in poems like *Prelude* and pleads for respect for nature. Contemporary politics is the theme in Book XIV of Wordsworth’s *Prelude* (A reworking of his earlier poem, “The French Revolution”) in which he declared, full of enthusiasm for the events in Paris:

Bliss it was in that dawn to be alive
But to be young was the very heaven.

In the *Lyrical Ballads*, which produced a manifesto for the new poetry, Wordsworth declared that rural themes were to be his central concern because that was where ‘true’ human nature existed. Authenticity of expression can be attained only when the poet uses the language of everyday speech of the farmer and the rural community. Poetic themes must be rooted in the life of the

community (as the famous 'Preface' to *Lyrical Ballads* emphasizes). While a degree of idealization of rural England is clearly visible in Wordsworth, it does not exclude the theme of suffering. Wordsworth is honest enough to admit that suffering, poverty and malice were integral to rural England (in poems like "The Thorn" and "The Idiot Boy"). Old age is a preoccupation in his poems like "Old Cumberland Beggar", "Simon Lee" and numerous others. Wordsworth believed that old people have a better chance of a decent life in England than in "Poor Houses". Ruins and cottages populate the landscape of Wordsworth's poetry, from the well-known "Tintern Abbey" to "The Ruined Cottage". While ruins were central to the aesthetic of the picturesque in 18th century England, they became reasons for Wordsworth to reflect on the human condition. A central feature of Wordsworth's poetry is its intense self-absorption. People, nature, ruins and events are not important in and of themselves. They are important in terms of their effect upon the observing poet. What emotions do they induce? What thoughts arise when seeing them? Wordsworth uses the sights to reflect on his own mind and emotional state (and this is why he is almost a solipsist poet), while later expanding it to reflect on the general nature of human life. The "I" is thus central to most of his poems, and, arguably, he uses it more than any other poet in English.

2.5.2 Samuel Taylor Coleridge

Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834) initially wrote under the influence of earlier religious poets and William Cowper. Nature is central to Coleridge too as the extraordinary beauty of images in "This Lime-Tree Bower my Prison", "Frost at Midnight" (a poem that captures silence as no other poem in English does) and other poems reveal. But nature is also a cruel teacher, as the Ancient Mariner finds out in the Gothic poem of the same name. Here the Mariner's guilt, "instead of the cross, the Albatross/about my neck was hung", is the heart of the poem. The afflictions visited on him are at least partly externalizations of his own guilt at killing the bird. Yet, the poem is also about unpredictability. It also has some particularly fine descriptions of travel, the sea and nature:

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 horned Moon, with one bright star
Within the nether tip.

The poem effectively captures loneliness and despair, perhaps better than any other work of Coleridge.

Coleridge took the East as his theme in “Kubla Khan”, another ‘fragment poem’ (a particularly ‘Romantic’ genre, as Marjorie Levinson’s 1986 study *The Romantic Fragment Poem* has argued). Inspired by descriptions of India in contemporary travelogues, stories of a lost paradise and by images that appeared to him in a drug-induced stupor, the poem is a stunning prophetic vision of the Orient (though one cannot ignore the colonial stereo typing of the East). “Kubla Khan” combines utopianism with despair, morality with eroticism, demonic energy with stately calm in a brilliant juxtaposition of images. The prophet-poet’s description in the poem recalls Thomas Gray’s “The Bard”. Coleridge writes:

And all who heard should see them there,
And all should cry, Beware! Beware!
His flashing eyes, his floating hair!
Weave a circle round him thrice,
And close your eyes with holy dread,
For he on honey-dew hath fed,
And drunk the milk of Paradise.

Coleridge is at his best with images and themes that both frighten and fascinate. His “Christabel”, “Kubla Khan” and “Ancient Mariner” have this disturbing quality about them, almost as though Coleridge is writing the

poetic equivalent of the Gothic novel. Such poems are also dramatic while his other poems are quietly reflective.

Coleridge, like Wordsworth, saw the human heart and nature as constituting an “organic whole”, (in our life alone does nature live,” he writes in “Dejection: An Ode”). In many of his poems, especially in “The Eolian Harp” and “Dejection: An Ode”, Coleridge portrayed a mind and heart that was ‘open’ to the influences, sights and sounds of the world. His poems are journeys into the self and simultaneously into the external world:

I may not hope from outward forms to win
The passion and the life, whose fountains are within.
Here he is also reiterating the power of human imagination to
mould nature.

2.5.3 George Gordon, Lord Byron

Lord Byron (1788-1824) has become associated with a particular kind of male personality: the brooding, handsome hero. It was an unusual kind of mass cultural iconization of a literary personality. He was the largest selling poet in the first decades of 19th century. He produced some energetic, if uneven poetry. His first major achievement was his savage critique on the literary culture of his time, *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* (1809). The biting satire lampooned even Wordsworth and Coleridge – dismissing them all in the phrase “the scribbling crew”. Byron’s role as an iconoclast was decided with this volume:

I shall publish, right or wrong.
Fools are my theme, let satire be my song.

His contempt for poets like Robert Southey resulted in some exceptionally brilliant satires such as “The Vision of Judgement.” *Manfred*, *Cain* and other dramatic poetry created the image of the guilt-ridden hero, thus launching the “Byronic” as an icon. With *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage*, Byron declared his poetic talents. A poem with a huge canvas – from Greek civilization to the

Ottoman Empire and the decay of aristocracy and feuds – attracted instant attention. It also expresses Byron's views on civilization, art and nature:

In Venice Tasso's echoes are no more,
And silent rows the songless gondolier;
Her palaces are crumbling to the shore,
And music meets not always now the ear:
Those days are gone- but Beauty still is here.
States falls, arts fade – Nature does not die
This is how he describes Venice.

Don Juan (1819-24) firmed up his reputation. The hero of the long poem is a young man who wanders across Europe and has a series of erotic and other adventures. Byron puts in a heavy dose of the dramatic, with ship-wrecks, cannibalism and Juan's own 'mishaps'. The poem has an emotional range from the comic to the pathetic. Some of his more popular works are "She Walks in Beauty" and "When We Two Parted", frequently anthologized worldwide. He was, however, also astute enough to see the problems of being described as a poet of the passions. In a famous 1821 letter to Thomas Moore he writes:

I can never get people to understand that poetry is the expression of excited passion and that there is no such thing as a life of passion any more than a continuous earthquake or an eternal fever. Besides, who would ever shave themselves in such a state?

His Turkish tales (*The Corsair*, *The Bride of Abydos*, *Lara* and *The Giaour*) are clearly influenced by the age's interest in non- European cultures and histories.

2.5.4 Percy Bysshe Shelley

P.B Shelley (1792-1822) started as a rebel - dismissed from Oxford for publishing a pamphlet titled, *The Necessity of Atheism* (1811) – and sought to keep up this reputation throughout his life. He rejected religious and

moral sanctions of the society of his time. He was also enthused by radical ideologies and the idea of political revolution. His poem on the Peterloo Massacre, *The Mask of Anarchy* (1819), is a good example of his view of the monarchy and authoritarian rule in England. *Queen Mab* (1813) and *The Revolt of Islam* (1818) also spoke of the possibility of social change from despotism to democracy. His most famous dramatic verse occurs in *Prometheus Unbound* (1820). *The Cenci* (1819) had strong Gothic overtones with its theme of incest and evil.

Shelley is better known for his great odes and shorter poems. His “Adonais” (1821), a praise of John Keats, written in the form of an elegy upon Keats’ death and perhaps matched in sense of mourning and poetic praise only by WH Auden’s “In Memory of W.B Yeats”. Describing Keats as “The Sire of an immortal strain”, Shelley writes:

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;

“Hymn to Intellectual Beauty”, “Mont Blanc”, “Ode to the West Wind”, “To the Skylark” and “Ozymandias” are some of his best known works. They combine a deep appreciation of nature while reflecting on the social order (for example, the pestilence that “West Wind” speaks about is also social and moral corruption). *Epipsychidion* was Shelley’s infamous praise of bigamy:

True love in this differs from gold and clay
That to divide is not to take away.

Despite his gloomy views of contemporary human civilization, Shelley is also a poet of hope, as “West Wind” demonstrates: “if winter comes, can spring be far behind?” In poems like “Skylark” and “West Wind” he suggests that art can be a palliative for the ills of society. He prays that he be given the power of poetic prophecy in “West Wind” :

Make me thy lyre, even as the forest is:
What if my leaves are falling like its own!
The tumult of thy mighty harmonies
Will take from both a deep, autumnal tone,
Sweet though in sadness. Be thou, Spirit fierce,
My spirit! Be thou me, impetuous one!

2.5.5 John Keats

John Keats (1795-1821) was the last of the great Romantic poets, until WB Yeats appeared on the scene. Extremely well read, Keats combined a fervour for the role of poetry with erudition in European mythology, intense self-reflection and a love for nature. His finest Odes are a combination of all these elements, as a glance at “To Autumn” reveals. His narrative poems like *Endymion* (1818) and *Hyperion* (1820) have been far less popular. *Endymion* maps the four stages of experience – of nature, of art, of friendship and of love. *Hyperion* took stories from the Renaissance, and Greek and Roman history in his narrative about the Titans. A certain Miltonic tone is clearly visible in the poem. *Lamia* and *Isabella* are narrative poems that have Gothic elements and an obsession with death. Sickness and death fill *Isabella*. *Lamia* has a snake-woman at the centre of the narrative. It is a poem about dreams and reality – a continuing obsession with Keats. There are some superlative sensual images in *The Eve of St Agnes* (1820), a poem about love and family feuds, especially when Keats describes Madeline.

Keats’ own disease-ridden life resulted in some fine meditations on death and art, especially in ever-popular poems such as “Ode to a Nightingale” and “Ode on a Grecian Urn”. Human mortality and the permanence of art are the twin poles of Keats’ work. In “Ode on Melancholy”, Keats contemplates the twin states of joy and sorrow and the impermanence of beauty:

She dwells with Beauty – Beauty that must die;
And Joy, whose hand is ever at his lips
Bidding adieu, and aching Pleasure nigh,
Turning to poison while the bee-mouth sips

Keats is a poet of sensuality, fully aware of the sights, sounds and smells of the world and this is best captured in “To Autumn”:

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

He is also aware of the limitations of the body and the pervasive decay that haunts all humans even as they lead full lives. His solution to decay was to appreciate beauty as long as it was available and possible. His great dictum, from the “Grecian Urn” was:

Beauty is truth, truth beauty, - that is all
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.

Keats' poetry also images the poet as prophet and as an intensely aware, if doomed, figure, especially in his famous “Nightingale Ode” where the bird's clear song is contrasted with the poet's numbness and inability to sing effectually.

2.6 MINOR POETS OF ROMANTIC PERIOD

Among the minor poets – though by no means were they minor during their own time – are Thomas Moore, Walter Savage Landor and Robert Southey.

2.6.1 Robert Southey

Robert Southey (1774-1843) is best known as the victim of Byron's Satire in the latter's *The Vision of Judgement*. His Gothic poems *The Curse of Kehama* (1810) and *Thalaba the Destroyer* (1801) are perhaps better known for their "orientalising" than for stylistic finesse. The elaborate footnotes where he provides explanations and references reveal deep reading, though the poetic content of the work is open to question.

2.6.2 Walter Savage Landor

Walter Savage Landor (1775-1864) wrote a fairly popular Oriental work in his Egyptian narrative poem, *Gebir* (1798). An unusual poem, *Gebir* is Romantic for its ascent/descent, motif, magic and sensuality. It is also an extremely violent poem. "Rose Aylmer" is his most quoted poem, mourning the death of a beloved while also painting a particular picture of the British race:

What avails the sceptre race,
Ah what the form divine!
What every virtue, every grace!
Rose Aylmer, all were thine.
Rose Aylmer, whom these wakeful eyes
May weep, but never see,
A night of memories and of sighs
I consecrate to thee.

2.6.3 George Crabbe

George Crabbe (1754-1832) was a poet of rural England. Like John Clare, he was much affected by the changes in the countryside. *The Village* (1783), his best known work, echoes Goldsmith and Clare. Later poems like

The Borough (1810) extended his themes. Crabbe portrayed the lower working classes without rendering them into beautiful objects. A “dark” poet of the age, Crabbe saw society entirely in terms of its exploitative mechanisms. Nature, described as serving with a “niggard hand” seems to be the setting for suffering in Crabbe and not something to admire and appreciate as it is for Wordsworth. He is, therefore, a poet who must be seen as a voice against the prevalent Romantic idealization of the peasant:

Fled are those times, when, in harmonious strains,
The rustic poet praised his native plains:
No shepherds now...

2.6.4 John Clare

John Clare (1793-1864) was a poet who combined the theme of rural poverty with psychological studies. There are extraordinary descriptions of the rural countryside, the seasons and the labour on farms. Like Crabbe, he disliked the romanticization of nature – in fact he complained that Keats described nature as “she appeared to his fancies” rather than as she was in actuality – and preferred to point to the suffering and pains of rural life. For instance, in *The Shepherd’s Calender* (1827), he described the weary thresher rather than the joyful one. Clare’s poetry suggests a freshness and honesty that is absent in Wordsworth’s more adored work. Clare’s poems do not possess either the artistic finish of Wordsworth or the complex symbolism. He prefers to record what may appear to be his naive delight in flowers and farms, but these have a greater sense of authenticity and immediacy what Wordsworth’s carefully crafted and obviously stylized visions of rural England.

2.6.5 Thomas Campbell

Thomas Campbell (1777-1844) wrote poems in praise of England in *The Battle of the Baltic* and used America as a setting for his *Gertrude of Wyoming* (1809). *Lochiel’s Warning* was a poem about the Jacobite Rebellions and *ye Mariners of England* was an effort at patriotic lyric.

2.6.6 Thomas Moore

Thomas Moore (1779-1852) combined sentiment with frivolity in works such as *The Fudge Family in Paris* (1818), though his *Lalla Rookh* (1817) was a Romantic poem in the complete sense – with its extravagance of description and its orientalist setting.

2.6.7 Leigh Hunt

Leigh Hunt (1784-1859) celebrated the downfall of Napoleon in *The Descent of Liberty: A Mask* (1815). *The Story of Rimini* (1816) was a tragic poem and Hunt experimented with narrative poetry again in *Hero and Leander*, and *Bacchus and Ariadne* (1819) and in “Abou ben Adhem”, an Oriental poem.

2.6.8 Thomas Hood

Thomas Hood’s (1799-1845) work involved the extensive use of the grotesque and the macabre poems like *The Dream of Eugene Aram*, *The Hunted House* and *The Plea of the Midsummer Fairies*. These works are the poetic equivalent of the Gothic novel and were presumably intended to instil horror. In his *Odes and Addresses to Great People* (1825), he tried his hand at satire. Social reform was Hood’s agenda in *The Lay of the Labourer*, *The Workhouse Clock* and *The Song of the Shirt*.

2.7 LET US SUM UP

The Romantic period in Europe saw the end of the dominance of the Renaissance tradition. It saw the fragmentation of consciousness away from the cultural authority of classical Rome. One result was the rediscovery of local cultures, and a flowering of vernacular literatures. Romantic literature is strong in many of the vernaculars of Europe, and is indeed most clearly seen in the literatures which it more or less creates, notably German and Russian. In this sense it draws on one of the strands of meaning in the complex word ‘romantic’ which derives from Old French *romans*, meaning a vernacular language descended from Latin.

The Romantic period saw changes in philosophy, politics and religion, as well as in the arts of literature, painting and music changes which the English Romantic poets both articulated and symbolized. In Philosophy, the Romantic period saw a reaction against the rationalism of the eighteenth century. It was a reaction against a view of the physical world increasingly dominated by science, and of the mental world by theories of Locke. The Romantic poets rebelled against the emphasis on the material and on 'common sense' which had dominated the preceding period. The two generations of English Romantic poets were each affected by it. The older generation, Blake, Wordsworth, and Coleridge, were young men in 1789 and were fired with revolutionary ideas. The younger generation of poets, Byron, Shelley and Keats were less fortunate. They grew up in a society dominated by the repression of a series of Tory governments apprehensive that every request for freedom might open the floodgates of revolution.

2.8 SELF- ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

Q1: What were the rules laid by neo-classical creed for writing poetry?

Ans. Following were the rules laid by neo-classical writers for writing poetry:

- 1) Write only what is rational, choosing your subjects from everyday life – axioms, truths, mottoes, which have been uttered by wise men of the past. Avoid flights of fancy and imagination. Avoid also passion and enthusiasm as unbecoming of a gentleman. They are not 'good form'.
- 2) Embellish your subject with a style that is elegant and polished. For this confine yourself to one regular, smooth metre – that of the closed couplet – and to polished language – language, that is to say, which has been hallowed by poetic custom. Don't stray beyond this stock of 'poetic diction.' Within these limits you may show your skill as much as you please.

Q2: What was poetry according to Wordsworth?

Ans. Poetry, according to Wordsworth, was record of "emotion recollected in tranquillity." Moments of inspired perception produced an emotion which

recollected after sometime revealed its spiritual significance. In other words, it was only when the original perception had faded away that the emotion to which it had given rise emerged.

Q3: What is the theme of Coleridge’s “Kubla Khan”?

Ans. _____

Q4: How did French Revolution influence the Romantic Writers?

Ans. _____

Q5: Why is *Lyrical Ballads* called the manifesto for the new poetry?

Ans. _____

Q6: What were the major themes of Lord Byron’s poetry?

Ans. _____

Q7: Comment on Keats as a sensuous poet.

Ans. _____

Q8: Why was Shelley expelled from the college?

Ans. _____

Q9: Write a short note on Southey as a poet.

Ans. _____

Q10: Which is the most quoted poem of Walter Savage Landor? What is its theme?

Ans. _____

2.9 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

1. *The Prelude* of Wordsworth was published in
 - (a) 1850
 - (b) 1805
 - (c) 1815
 - (d) 1801

2. Which of the following poems of Coleridge was conceived in a dream?
 - (a) "Christabel"
 - (b) "The Ancient Mariner"
 - (c) "Dejection: An Ode"
 - (d) "Kubla Khan"

3. "To generalize is to be a fool" comes from
 - (a) Johnson
 - (b) Pope
 - (c) Byron
 - (d) Blake

4. Which one of the following is not among early Romantic poets?
 - (a) Wordsworth
 - (b) Coleridge
 - (c) Southey
 - (d) Keats

5. "Dejection : An Ode" was originally intended as a letter in verse to:
 - (a) Wordsworth
 - (b) Sara Fricker
 - (c) Sara Coleridge
 - (d) Sara Hutchinson

6. The first poem in *Lyrical Ballads* is
 - (a) Tintern Abbey
 - (b) Rime of the Ancient Mariner
 - (c) Christabel
 - (d) The Idiot Boy

7. The subtitle of *The Prelude* is
 - (a) Growth of a Poet's Mind
 - (b) Reflections of an Age Past
 - (c) Emotions Recollected in Tranquillity
 - (d) Beliefs of a Poet

8. The Romantic period in literature coincided with:
- (a) Glorious Revolution
 - (b) French Revolution
 - (c) Bloodless Revolution
 - (d) Renaissance
9. Water, Water, Everywhere, Not a single drop to drink. These lines are found in:
- (a) Westminster Bridge
 - (b) Rime of the Ancient Mariner
 - (c) Tintern Abbey
 - (d) Kubla Khan
10. Which of the following is not a feature of Romantic poetry?
- (a) Dreams, childhood and innocence
 - (b) Nature
 - (c) Rules formulated by classical writers
 - (d) Rustic life
11. Who launched the newspaper, *The Watchman*, for converting humanity?
- (a) Blake
 - (b) Coleridge
 - (c) Shelley
 - (d) Byron
12. Which of the following poems of Byron is considered his greatest?
- (a) "The Prisoner of Chillon"
 - (b) *Don Juan*
 - (c) "Beppo"
 - (d) "The Vision of Judgement"

13. Shelley wrote *Adonais* on the death of
- (a) Keats
 - (b) Byron
 - (c) Scott
 - (d) Coleridge
14. “Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thoughts” comes from
- (a) Keats
 - (b) Shelley
 - (c) Hardy
 - (d) Arnold
15. Keats’ *Hyperion* is written in the epic style of
- (a) Homer
 - (b) Virgil
 - (c) Milton
 - (d) Spenser

2.10 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

1. What are the salient features of Romantic Poetry?
2. Why was Romanticism influenced by French Revolution?
3. Give a social and political background of English Romantic movement?
4. Why is Coleridge known as the ‘bard’ of Romantic movement?
5. “Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful emotions recollected in tranquillity” Elaborate.
6. What are the salient features of the poetry of Byron and Shelley?

2.11 ANSWER KEY

- | | |
|-------|-------|
| 1. a | 2. d |
| 3. d | 4. d |
| 5. c | 6. a |
| 7. a | 8. b |
| 9. b | 10. c |
| 11. b | 12. b |
| 13. a | 14. b |
| 15. c | |

2.12 SUGGESTED READING

Dahiya, B.S. *A New History of English Literature*. New Delhi: Doaba Publications.

Nayar, Pramod K. *A Short History of English Literature*. Bangalore: Cambridge University Press, 2009. Print.

Rogers, Pat. *The Oxford Illustrated History of English Literature*. New York: OUP, 1987. Print.

M.A. ENGLISH : SEMESTER II

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LESSON No. 3

POETRY-II LITERARY AND INTELLECTUAL UNIT-I

**BACKGROUND OF POETRY FROM THE
PRE-ROMANTIC TO THE PRE-RAPHAELITE POETS**

Victorian Poetry

STRUCTURE

- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Objectives
- 3.3 The Victorian Age
- 3.4 Victorian Temper
- 3.5 Features of Victorian Poetry
- 3.6 Early Victorian Writers
 - 3.6.1 Alfred Tennyson
 - 3.6.2 George Meredith
 - 3.6.3 Robert Browning
 - 3.6.4 Elizabeth Barrett Browning
 - 3.6.5 Matthew Arnold
 - 3.6.6 Arthur Hugh Clough
 - 3.6.7 James Thomson
 - 3.6.8 Edward Fitzgerald
- 3.7 Self-Assessment Questions

- 3.8 Multiple Choice Questions
- 3.9 Examination Oriented Questions
- 3.10 Answer Key
- 3.11 Suggested Reading

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The poetry of the Victorian era was a continuation of romanticism. It has beauty and variety enough, but is less inspiring than the poetry of the preceding age. The dominant figures were Tennyson and Browning, a pair in strong contrast to each other. Tennyson, the greater and most popular poet of his day, is now considered outmoded like everything Victorian, while Browning a lesser artist but independent of his times, has gone up in esteem on the strength of his bolder and more optimistic philosophy.

Although the literary scene during the Victorian literature was dominated by novel, its achievement in poetry was not less significant. The period may not have produced as great as poets as were begotten by the preceding period of Romanticism, it did produce a number of poets who not only carried on the poetic tradition in English but also made significant contribution to it. Just as in Romantic period there were two generations of poets, in the Victorian period, too, there were the Early Victorians and Later Victorians. Among the early Victorians the most prominent poets were Alfred Tennyson (1809-92), Robert Browning (1812-89) and Matthew Arnold (1822-88). The Later Victorians were called pre-Raphaelites, more important among whom were Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-82), William Morris (1836-96) and A.C Swinburne (1837-1909).

3.2 OBJECTIVES

The objective of this lesson is:

- To acquaint the learners with the social, intellectual and literary background of Victorian poetry.

- To familiarise the learners with major trends and writers of the Victorian period.
- To highlight the major works of the writers belonging to early and later Victorian poets.

3.3 THE VICTORIAN AGE (1850-1900)

The Victorian age in literature is roughly taken to be between 1830 and 1890, approximately coinciding with the long reign of Queen Victoria. This was the age of industrialization, empire and reform. Mass movement of people from the country to London changed its demographics drastically. Poverty and exploitation increased. Family life was significantly altered. Slums sprang up in and around London and pollution made its appearance. The Chartist uprisings and increasing social unrest raised fears of a revolution similar to the recent one in France. The middle class tried to retain an old-world morality in times when moral codes were too lax. Part of the moral debate surrounded sexual codes, marriage, religious beliefs and family life. Debates about faith were invariably driven by developments in science that questioned and broke down established ideas. The Church of England faced a crisis as people were divided along the 'high' and 'low' lines – a crisis driven in part by the conversion of Cardinal John Henry Newman to Catholicism. Darwinism altered the prevailing views of life, divinity, humanity and creation in the latter decades of the century.

Many writers of the mid Victorian age were involved in what eventually came to be known as the 'condition of England' debates. These debates over morality, poverty, education, industrialization and reform are clearly the contexts of the 'social problem' novel in Victorian literature. The individual and the family were at the centre of most novels.

The major political parties of the Whigs and the Tories became the Liberals and Conservatives. Numerous acts and the debates around them heralded an age of reform. After much parliamentary debate, the act to abolish slavery was passed in 1833. An Act prohibiting child labour was

also passed in 1833. The Factory Act of the same year took account of workers' demands and factory working conditions. Workhouses for the poor and the unemployed were regulated after the Poor Law of 1834. All through the century, there were debates about the condition of both the urban and the rural poor.

Trade-unionism became more powerful as workers banded together against the powers of the capitalist industry owner. Writers like Richard Cobden and Richard Jefferies wrote extensively about the degradation of the workers and the land due to over-exploitation under capitalism. There were major debates about the wisdom of the free trade system, especially after the Irish famine of 1845. The Corn Laws were repealed in 1846 due to mounting pressure.

There was a larger reading public created during this period, with circulation libraries, newspapers and cheap novels. Circulating libraries created a demand for three-decker (multi-volume) novels and many writers produced serialized fiction. The theatres remained popular and places like Covent Garden and Drury Lane saw a change in their audiences as more members of the middle class began to acquire high cultural tastes. Darwinism altered the basic thinking of the age and was to affect human intellectual history as never before.

3.4 THE VICTORIAN TEMPER

A term that is often used to describe Victorian attitudes, "Victorian temper" refers to the multiple strands of ideology and thinking that prevailed during the period. Political and social thought was divided between the Conservatives and the Liberals. The Conservatives favoured social hierarchy and had a taste for older art and thinking while the Liberals believed in a utilitarian philosophy of individual and collective action.

The Victorian temper is also marked by a great divide between the believers and the agnostics. Among the believers are Cardinal Newman and John Ruskin. The agnostics included figures like George Eliot, Charles Dar-

win, Thomas Hardy and the Pre-Raphaelites. Others like G.M Hopkins swerved between faith and non-belief. There were also liberal Christians like Charles Dickens and the great evangelicals working in the colonies.

The Victorian temper was marked by social hypocrisy about sexuality. The clash between faith and science was prominent in the intellectual debates of the age. The Victorian temper was marked by a fascination for technology and scientific developments. In terms of the arts, the Victorian temper was caught between ideas of the moral function of art and drive towards a pure aestheticism.

3.5 FEATURES OF VICTORIAN POETRY

- Victorian poets relied on classical and traditional forms and ideas.
- Some use of archaic form, especially by Tennyson.
- Used classical allusions.
- Use of local, colloquial speech and dialect, especially in Clough.
- Experimented with language, using earlier forms of versification.
- Anxiety over religion, science and tradition.
- Classicism, medievalism and aestheticism influenced several poets.
- Melancholia and a concern with the past.
- Crisis of faith in most of the major poets.
- Memory and the past figure prominently.

The Victorian age produced some of the best known poets in the English language. The influences on these poets were many: from medievalism to the industrial revolution and from Darwinian theories to the expanding British empire. The poetry produced was thus diverse, with many genres, themes and styles.

3.6 EARLY VICTORIAN WRITERS

3.6.1 Alfred Tennyson

Alfred Tennyson (1809-92), the third son of a Lincolnshire clergyman,

was educated at Louth Grammar School and Trinity College, Cambridge. He is the most significant poet of Victorian period in terms of output and influence. Tennyson's career spanned most of the Victorian age and the nineteenth century. He was influenced by the English Romantics, who held sway during his college days at Cambridge. *Poems, Chiefly Lyrical* (1830) demonstrates this influence. Sections of *Recollections of Arabian Nights* and *Mariana* also show Romantic touches. Tennyson was also an extremely erudite poet, with a wide breath of classical learning. The death of his close friend Arthur Hallam resulted in one of the most famous poems in the English language, *In Memoriam*, published in the year he succeeded Wordsworth as England's Poet Laureate (1850). This elegy, steeped in spirituality and emotional turmoil, is a good example of the meditative poem, of which Tennyson is undoubtedly one of the masters. *In Memoriam* is also important because it stands as a good instance of the Victorian crisis of faith: caught between traditional belief (religion and spirituality) and the new science (Darwinism, geology, and industrialism). Tennyson suggests that science and poetry see Nature in different yet equally valid ways. At a time when nature was being systematically studied, explored and exploited, poets such as Tennyson sought to revive a kind of Romantic awe for Nature's beauty. Eventually, Tennyson preferred tradition to new belief systems. His "Maud (1853) was an interesting experiment in what is known as "monodrama", where the entire poem is a series of episodes presented through soliloquies. Emotional and fragmented, these poems came to be associated with what is derogatorily termed the "spasmodic school". The poems were used to reveal the condition of the speaker's mind – with all its emotional upheavals, madness and passions. In his famous "Tears, Idle Tears" (1847), he writes:

Tears, idle tears, I know not what they mean,
Tears from the depth of some divine despair
Rise in the heart, and gather to the eyes,
In looking on the happy Autumn-fields,
And thinking of the days that are no more.

In “Mariana”, Tennyson captures the tormented soul with the refrain

“My Life is dreary,
He cometh not”, she said;
She said, “I am weary, weary,
I would that I were dead.”

Poems like “The Lady of Shallot” are good examples of Tennyson’s power of description. The poem is famous for its death-scene:

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 Shallot.

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 Shallot.

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.

Tennyson's greatest project was the poetic equivalent of the historical novel. In the time of uncertainty over tradition, he turned to the medieval ages and the result was *Idylls of the King* (1859). Incorporating the Arthurian legends and the Holy Grail myth, *Idylls* presents the most sustained Victorian attempt at allegory. The poem has some powerful passages, especially those dealing with the battle scenes and death of Arthur as seen in the following lines:

For friend and foe were shadows in the mist
And friend slew friend not knowing whom he slew;
[.....]
And shouts of heathen and the traitor knights,
Oaths, insult, filth, and monstrous blasphemies,
Sweat, writhings, anguish, labouring of the lungs
In that close mist, and cryings for the light,
Moans of the dying, and voices of the dead.

Last, as by some one deathbed after wail
Of suffering, silence follows, or thro' death
Or deathlike swoon, thus over all that shore,
Save for some whisper of the seething seas,
A dead hush fell; but when the dolorous day
Grew drearier toward twilight falling, came
A bitter wind, clear from the North, and blew
The mist aside, and with that wind the tide
Rose, and the pale King glanced across the field
Of battle: but no man was moving there;

Tennyson's "Tithonus", "The Lotos Eaters" and "Ulysses" returned to Greek and Roman legends. In Greek mythology, Tithonus was the brother of Priam, King of Troy. He was so beautiful that Eos or Aurora, the goddess of dawn fell in love with him. At his request the goddess made him immortal,

but he forgot to request eternal youth. The result was that he became old and shrivelled, a mere shadow. Life became unbearable, he prayed the goddess to restore him to earth and he was turned into a grass hopper. In Tennyson's poem he bewails his 'cruel immortality', 'this gray shadow', once a man.' He envies the fate 'Of happy men that have the power to die'. It is foolish to desire immortality in the flesh:

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?

"The Lotos Eater" deals with the Greek mariners who decide to stay on in the land of the lotus-fruit typify the class of people who are content to rest on their oars-people who think they have toiled enough and are entitled to spend their remaining days in slothful ease. They rationalise their attitude by arguing that 'Death is the end of life; ah, why/ Should life all labour be? There is no true joy but calm!'

In "Ulysses" the aged Ulysses "Cannot rest from travel; I will drink life to the lees". He thinks it would be vile to hoard his life "for some three suns" when his aged spirit still yearns for knowledge and adventure. Every hour can bring 'new things'. "Strong in will", he exhorts his companions, old and tired as they are, "to strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield." True joy, he finds, is in constant endeavour.

Among his later poems, *The Princess* (1847) is most charming. This poem deals with women's rights and their higher education. Starting in a mock heroic style, it ends on a serious note. This poem is also called "A Medley". Fantasy, romance, humour, pathos, suspense, drama, serious thought – all are woven together to make a tale that is as heart-warming as it is instructive. Tennyson's thesis about man-woman relationship is that:

The woman's cause is man's; they rise or sink
Together, dwarf'd or godlike, bond or free
For woman is not undeveloped man,
But diverse; could we but make her as the man,
Sweet love were slain: his dearest bond is this,
Not like to like, but like in difference.
The question of equality or inequality is irrelevant,
Seeing either sex alone
Is half itself, and in true marriage lies
Nor equal, nor unequal; each fulfils
Defect in each

In short, man and woman have distinct individualities and are complementary to each other.

In Memorium (1850) is in the memory of Tennyson's friend Arthur Henry Hallam. It was written at intervals between 1833 and 1850. It is not one poem but a series of short poems reflecting the poet's varying mood of grief over a period of seventeen years. It has two strains, one personal and one universal, which keep merging one into the other. The poet's grief for his dead friend and his desire to meet him in the flesh is gradually transformed into a sense of mystic or spiritual union – a realization, that is to say, that Hallam has become one with nature and God, any Tennyson can find him everywhere.

Tennyson, is not only a great poetic artist but also an influential sage and spokesman of Victorian era. The characteristic form of his poetry is the Idyll and its characteristic matter faith.

3.6.2 George Meredith

George Meredith wrote a substantial volume of poetry, though only his *Modern Love* (1862) has stayed popular. In Meredith the poet philosophy comes first. To preach this he sacrifices poetic beauty. He could write lovely lyrics and there are passages of bewitching beauty in some

of his Nature poems in *Poems and Lyrics of the Joy of Earth* (1883), and *A Reading of Earth* (1888). Outside these, his most famous work is *Modern Love*, a series of fifty sonnets of sixteen lines each, telling, in Meredith's obscure manner, the tragic story of passionate married love leading to quarrels, misunderstandings, jealousy and infidelity, and ultimately ending in separation and the death of wife by poison. Meredith's sharp perception of human psychology is testified by the following lines which have become proverbial:

In tragic life, God wot
No villain need be! Passions spin the plot.
We are betrayed by what is false within.

3.6.3 Robert Browning

Robert Browning (1812-89), whose career paralleled Tennyson's was also influenced by the classical poets as well as the English Romantics. His first major work *Paracelsus* appeared in 1835. This work is full of classical allusions and obscure imagery, a tone that solidifies with *Sordello* (1840). In his later works, Browning discovered his favourite style, the dramatic monologue. His collection *Dramatis Personae* (1864) showed the influences of contemporary scientific theories. Between 1868 and 1869, he published *The Ring and the Book*, which established his reputation as the greatest poet of his age after Tennyson. The monologues here thematize questions that are characteristic of the age: knowledge, truth, evidence and faith.

Dramatic monologues enable Browning to explore the construction of the self. They are in the form of ironic gazes directed inwards. Browning's most famous poems are fine portraits as well. "Fra Lippo Lippi" has the brash, irreverent and naughty bishop, exposing the hypocrisy of monasteries and religion. "Andrea del Sarto" is a monologue by a painter whose career is going downhill. These poems, like most of the Browning's works, also showcase Victorian concerns like the limits of human knowledge and

ambition, fate and destiny, loveless relationships and faith. “Andrea del Sarto” has Browning’s famous query:

A man’s reach should exceed his grasp
Or what’s a heaven for?

In “My Last Duchess”, Browning’s conversational style explores the Duke’s cool, ironic look at his life and love:

She had
A heart – how shall I say? – too soon made glad,
Too easily impressed; she liked whate’er
She looked on, and her looks went everywhere.

The woman subject does not speak at all and is spoken for. This was a common theme in Browning, where the male speaker speaks on the behalf of the woman, even describing her emotional states (“Poryphyria’s Lover” is another famous example).

Browning’s lyrics are concerned with love and faith – two themes that figure in almost all his works. In “Two in the Campagna” the speaker asks:

Let us, O my dove,
Let us be unashamed of soul,
As earth lies bare to heaven above!
How is it under our control
To love or not to love?

His characterization – of lovers, husbands and others – is powerful and the use of the dramatic monologue enables him to engage with the mental and emotional states of his characters. His *Childe Roland*, published in his *Men and Women* in 1855, returned to medieval themes of heroism, quest and romance. Highly figurative, dramatic and experimental, with a brooding, nightmarish landscape, this poem about a knight’s quest and suffering is surreal in parts and recalls the romances of an earlier era:

... grey plain all round:
Nothing but plain to the horizon's bound.
I might go on; nought else remained to do.

The image of heroism is what concludes the poem. Trapped, with his end in sight and facing a huge power that threatens to overwhelm him, the knight takes out his slug-horn and blows at the tower:

What in the midst lay but the Tower itself?
The round squat turret, blind as the fool's heart
Built of brown stone, without a counterpart
In the whole world.
[.....]
Names in my ears
Of all the lost adventurers my peers, -
How such a one was strong, and such was bold,
And such was fortunate, yet each of old
Lost, lost! One moment knelled the woe of years.
There they stood, ranged along the hillsides, met
To view the last of me, a living frame
For one more picture! In a sheet of flame
I saw them and I knew them all. And yet
Dauntless the slug-horn to my lips I set,
And blew. "*Childe Roland to the Dark Tower came.*"

This poem is often treated as an allegory of Victorian heroism in the face of spiritual uncertainty.

3.6.4 Elizabeth Barrett Browning

Elizabeth Barrett Browning (1806-61), six years older than her husband, was regarded in her time as the greatest woman-poet of En-

gland. Today she is better known by the romantic circumstances of her marriage and elopement with Robert Browning. Their love-story, so often told, is now a classic of romance in real life since Rudolph Besier's play, *The Barrets of Wimpole Street* (1930). Like, Browning, she produced her best work *Sonnets from the Portuguese* (1850) under the influence of love. The sonnets, forty four in number, reflect the whole course of their love and courtship. The puzzle of "the Portuguese" is explained by the fact that Browning used to call her "my little Portuguese" from her poem "Catarina to Comoens." Before her marriage, she had attained fame by a volume of short lyrics including *Cowper's Grave* (1838) and *The Cry of Children* (1844). *Cowper's Grave* is remarkable for its tender pity and Christian piety. *The Cry of Children* is a strong protest against the employment of children in coal-mines and factories. She overcame an early Romantic influence, especially that of Byron, to turn to social themes of class and women. Of the poems written during the remaining ten years of her life, *Aurora Leigh* (1857), is most important. It is a modern romance in blank verse. Almost epic in length, it deals in an outspoken manner with the social problems of the time, especially problems of Victorian women. The opinions expressed by *Aurora Leigh*, an orphan who marries her cousin, a blind and impoverished philanthropist, are those of the author herself. Her *Aurora Leigh*, though rather loosely structured, is full of intense moments. Suffering and poverty as well as exploitation and courage mark Elizabeth Browning's most famous work:

I was just thirteen,
Still growing like the plants from unseen roots
In tongue-tied Springs, - and suddenly awoke
To full life and life's needs and agonies,
With an intense, strong, struggling heart beside
A stone-dead father.

The poem also captures the degree of social control being exerted by the elite and the powerful over the lower classes:

The lord-lieutenant looking down sometimes
From the empyrean to assure their souls
Against chance-vulgarisms, and, in the abyss
The apothecary, looked on once a year
To prove their soundness of humility.

Unlike her husband and the other Victorians, Elizabeth Browning saw the obsession with the past as unhealthy and argued that the poet needs to “represent the age.”

3.6.5 Matthew Arnold

Matthew Arnold (1822-88), next great poet after Tennyson and Browning, was a classicist and pessimist. He exhibits remarkable control over diction in his mature poetry. Deeply philosophical and reflective, Arnold’s major works are his shorter poems.

Arnold is sometimes called the third great Victorian poet, along with Alfred Tennyson and Robert Browning. Arnold was keenly aware of his place in poetry. In an 1869 letter to his mother, he wrote:

My poems represent, on the whole, the main movement of mind of the last quarter of a century, and thus they will probably have their day as people become conscious to themselves of what that movement of mind is, and interested in the literary productions which reflect it. It might be fairly urged that I have less poetical sentiment than Tennyson and less intellectual vigour and abundance than Browning; yet because I have perhaps more of a fusion of the two than either of them, and have more regularly applied that fusion to the main line of modern development, I am likely enough to have my turn as they have had theirs.

Stefan Collini regards this as “an exceptionally frank, but not unjust, self-assessment. ... Arnold’s poetry continues to have scholarly attention lavished upon it, in part because it seems to furnish such striking evidence for several central aspects of the intellectual history of the nine-

teenth century, especially the corrosion of 'Faith' by 'Doubt'. No poet, presumably, would wish to be summoned by later ages *merely* as an historical witness, but the sheer intellectual grasp of Arnold's verse renders it peculiarly liable to this treatment."

Harold Bloom echoes Arnold's self-characterization in his introduction (as series editor) to the *Modern Critical Views* volume on Arnold: "Arnold got into his poetry what Tennyson and Browning scarcely needed (but absorbed anyway), the main march of mind of his time." Of his poetry, Bloom says,

"Whatever his achievement as a critic of literature, society, or religion, his work as a poet may not merit the reputation it has continued to hold in the twentieth century. Arnold is, at his best, a very good but highly derivative poet.... As with Tennyson, Hopkins, and Rossetti, Arnold's dominant precursor was Keats, but this is an unhappy puzzle, since Arnold (unlike the others) professed not to admire Keats greatly, while writing his own elegiac poems in a diction, meter, imagistic procedure, that are embarrassingly close to Keats."

Sir Edmund Chambers noted, however, that "in a comparison between the best works of Matthew Arnold and that of his six greatest contemporaries... the proportion of work which endures is greater in the case of Matthew Arnold than in any one of them." Chambers judged Arnold's poetic vision by:

"its simplicity, lucidity, and straightforwardness; its literalness...; the sparing use of aureate words, or of far-fetched words, which are all the more effective when they come; the avoidance of inversions, and the general directness of syntax, which gives full value to the delicacies of a varied rhythm, and makes it, of all verse that I know, the easiest to read aloud."

He has a primary school named after him in Liverpool, where he died, and secondary schools named after him in Oxford and Staines.

His literary career, leaving out the two prize poems, had begun in 1849 with the publication of *The Strayed Reveller and Other Poems* by A., which attracted little notice and was soon withdrawn. It contained what is perhaps Arnold's most purely poetical poem, "The Forsaken Merman." *Empedocles on Etna and Other Poems* (among them "Tristram and Iseult"), published in 1852, had a similar fate. In 1858 he published his tragedy of *Merope*, calculated, he wrote to a friend, "rather to inaugurate my Professorship with dignity than to move deeply the present race of humans," and chiefly remarkable for some experiments in unusual – and unsuccessful – metres.

His 1867 poem, "Dover Beach," depicted a nightmarish world from which the old religious verities have receded. It is sometimes held up as an early, if not the first, example of the modern sensibility. In a famous preface to a selection of the poems of William Wordsworth, Arnold identified, a little ironically, as a "Wordsworthian." The influence of Wordsworth, both in ideas and in diction, is unmistakable in Arnold's best poetry. Arnold's poem, "Dover Beach" was included in Ray Bradbury's novel, *Fahrenheit 451*, and is also featured prominently in the novel *Saturday* by Ian McEwan. It has also been quoted or alluded to in a variety of other contexts. Though a love poem, it is more rhetorical than lyrical. It is so popular because it contains the most memorable expression of Arnold's grief at his loss of faith:

The sea of Faith
Was once, too, at the full and round earth's shore
Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furl'd
But now I only hear
Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,
Retreating, to the breath
Of the night-wind, down the vast edges drear
And naked shingles of the world.
Ah, love, let us be true
To one another! For the world, which seems

To lie before us like a land of dreams,
So various, so beautiful, so new,
Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help, nor pains;
And we are here as on a darkling plain
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and fight,
Where ignorant armies clash by night.

Some critics consider Arnold to be the bridge between Romanticism and Modernism. His use of symbolic landscapes was typical of the Romantic era, while his skeptical and pessimistic perspective was typical of the Modern era. The rationalistic tendency of certain of his writings gave offence to many readers, and the sufficiency of his equipment in scholarship for dealing with some of the subjects which he handled was called in question, but he undoubtedly exercised a stimulating influence on his time. His writings are characterised by the finest culture, high purpose, sincerity, and a style of great distinction, and much of his poetry has an exquisite and subtle beauty, though here also it has been doubted whether high culture and wide knowledge of poetry did not sometimes take the place of true poetic fire. Henry James wrote that Matthew Arnold's poetry will appeal to those who "like their pleasures rare" and who like to hear the poet "taking breath."

The mood of Arnold's poetry tends to be of plaintive reflection, and he is restrained in expressing emotion. He felt that poetry should be the 'criticism of life' and express a philosophy. Arnold's philosophy is that true happiness comes from within, and that people should seek within themselves for good, while being resigned in acceptance of outward things and avoiding the pointless turmoil of the world. However, he argues that we should not live in the belief that we shall one day inherit eternal bliss. If we are not happy on earth, we should moderate our desires rather than live in dreams of something that may never be attained. This philosophy is clearly expressed in such poems as "Dover Beach" and in these lines from "Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse":

Wandering between two worlds, one dead
The other powerless to be born,
With nowhere yet to rest my head
Like these, on earth I wait forlorn.

Arnold valued natural scenery for its peace and permanence in contrast with the ceaseless change of human things. His descriptions are often picturesque, and marked by striking similes. However, at the same time he liked subdued colours, mist and moonlight. He seems to prefer the 'spent lights' of the sea-depths in "The Forsaken Merman" to the village life preferred by the merman's lost wife.

In his poetry he derived not only the subject matter of his narrative poems from various traditional or literary sources but even much of the romantic melancholy of his earlier poems from Senancour's "Obermann". *Sohrab and Rustum* is a mini-epic in blank verse. The story is taken from the *Shah Nama* of the eleventh century Persian poet Firdausi. Rustum, a Persian hero, marries the daughter of a neighbouring king. But soon leaves the court in quest of adventure. While he is away his son Sohrab is born and grows up to become the hero of his grand-father's army. War breaks between the two countries and their armies encamp on the banks of the Oxus. A single combat between the champions of the two armies is arranged and Sohrab is mortally wounded by Rustum. The dying son is recognized by the father by a gold bracelet which he had given to his wife. They weep in each other's arms, Sohrab dies, and the war ends. Rustum goes back home stricken with grief and remorse.

The Scholar Gypsy, a pastoral poem, is based upon an old legend related by Joseph Glanvil, a seventeenth century clergyman in his *Vanity of Dogmatizing*, of a young student of Oxford who forced by poverty, left the University and joined the band of wandering gypsies. The scholar, though dead and buried two hundred years before is used by Arnold as a symbol to bemoan the fate of his own generation that suffers from "this strange

disease of modern man. With its sick hurry, its divided aims". The scholar has perennial youth and is still roaming the Oxford countryside, because he early escaped from the distracted life of civilization with its mental strife, half-belief, multifarious schemes, shocks and disappointments.

3.6.6 Arthur Hugh Clough

Arthur Hugh Clough (1819-61) suffered a spiritual crisis, which he sought to explain and explicate in much of his poetry. Science did not seem, to Clough, to offer much courage or stability either. His longer poems are: *The Bothie*, *Amours de Voyage* and *Dipsychus*. He also wrote many lyrics.

The Bothie a "Long-Vacation pastoral", his principal poem, describes a trip of Oxford students to the Highlands. There are descriptions of Highland scenery and a love-story in which Philip Hewson, an Oxford radical, marries Elsie, a Village girl and they emigrate to New Zealand where they settle down to farming. The poem is in harsh hexametres.

Amours de Voyage is a series of amusing letters in hexametres telling the story of an English love-affair in Italy during the Italian revolution. The progress of the love-affair between Claude and Mary Travellyn is reported through letters. Claude writes too his friend Eustace, and Mary to Louisa, a friend of the family. Claude is half-hearted in love as in religion and politics. He is all sympathy for the Italian cause, but makes all sorts of excuses for not participating in the struggle:

Why not fight? – in the first place, I haven't so much as a musket;
In the next, if I had, I shouldn't know how to use it;
In the third, just at present, I'm studying ancient marbles;
In the fourth, I consider I owe my life to my country;
In the fifth, - I forget, but four good reasons are ample.
Meantime, pray let'em fight and be killed.
I delight in devotion.
So that I'llist not, hurrah for the glorious army of martyrs!

Dipsychus (double-souled) is a poem which deals with “the conflict between the tender conscience and the world.” This is represented by a debate between Dipsychus and Mephistopheles. The latter commends Commonsense whose motto is “to submit” to the ways of the world, although they are not too honest. After stout resistance, Dipsychus succumbs to the devil’s counsel and comes to grief. He rises to the position of Lord Chief Justice through a beautiful woman whom he deserts afterwards to marry another. At the height of his career the woman begs him to take her back, but he refuses. Pricked by conscience he gets a seizure and dies.

The basic similarities between Arnold and Clough may, at first sight, tempt one to dismiss Clough with the remark that he is a minor Arnold. But there are significant differences. Both suffered from spiritual unrest born of religious doubt, but while Arnold struggled through to a working philosophy of life, the conflict in Clough was much too strong for him to achieve any positive hold on life. Arnold speaks of God and religion with humility and reverence; Clough with a degree of levity that repels many. Finally Clough shows a sense of humour which is totally absent in Arnold. Though a much lesser poet, he represents even more emphatically than Arnold the conflict between religion and the intellectual developments of the time in which he lived.

This conflict is the very substance of his poetry. A sincere searcher after truth, he was bewildered by life, which seemed to have no meaning. We do not know whence we come and where we go. But we plod on, struggle on, and the joy of struggle is all we know.

3.6.7 James Thomson

James Thomson (1834-82) signed himself B.V to show his admiration for Shelley and Novalis, the German Romantic poet of 18th century. He painted a searing portrait of modernity in *The City of Dreadful Night*, which anticipates the dystopic visions of Eliot and other modernists. In the poem, the streets, river and the people appear to suffer a death-in-life state,

imaged as “the desert of life” by Thomson. The city itself seems to brood under the eyes of a huge statue – that of Melancholia. The most famous section of the poem is “As I came through the desert” which captures much of Thomson’s tone:

As I came through the desert thus it was,
As I came through the desert: All was black,
In heaven no single star, on earth no track;
A brooding hush without a stir or note,
The air so thick it clotted in my throat;
And thus for hours; then some enormous things
Swooped past with savage cries and clanking wings:
But I strode on austere;
No hope could have no fear.

Some critics call Thomson a “laureate of pessimism”. He wrote some fine lyrics also, which might save him from “dateless oblivion.”

3.6.8 Edward Fitzgerald

Edward Fitzgerald (1809-83) of Irish stock was a great friend of Tennyson and Thackeray. Tennyson dedicated his *Tieresias* to him and Thackeray when going to America in 1852. He was a man of means and lived in a country like a gentleman hermit passing his time in reading, yachting, gardening and cultivating friendships. He was a scholar of Greek, Spanish and Persian. His first publication was *Euphrantor*, a charming prose dialogue on youth. He translated eight dramas from Spanish and three from Greek. But what made him immortal was his free translation or adaptation of the quatrains or *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*. Whatever liberties he may have taken with the original, Persian scholars are agreed that he has substantially reproduced the doctrine of Omar, an eleventh century Persian poet. This doctrine is a mixture of scepticism, fatalism and hedonism, the last being the most important. For though life is short

and death certain, we can still make the most of what life has to offer. The poet's advice is to live for the day and not bother about tomorrow, "To take the Cash and let the Credit go."

The impact of the *Rubaiyat* on the Victorians was startling. It wakened them to the Oriental view of life, especially its fatalism, which is so foreign to the Western mind. Hedonism they knew, but it was never presented more charmingly. The slow, haunting music of the stanza and the perfect word and phrase make the poem an ideal companion for an indolent hour. Fitzgerald was only a translator, not a creator in the technical sense, but as Swinburne said, "His daring genius gave Omar Khayyam a place forever among the greatest English poets"-

Some for the Glories of This World; and some
Sigh for the Prophet's Paradise to come;
Ah, take the Cash, and let the Credit go,
Nor heed the rumble of a distant Drum!

3.7 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

Q1: What are the salient features of Victorian Poetry?

Ans. Salient features of Victorian poetry are:

- Victorian poets relied on classical and traditional forms and ideas.
- Some use of archaic form, especially by Tennyson.
- Used classical allusions.
- Use of local, colloquial speech and dialect, especially in Clough.
- Experimented with language, using earlier forms of versification.
- Anxiety over religion, science and tradition.
- Classicism, medievalism and aestheticism influenced several poets.
- Melancholia and a concern with the past.
- Crisis of faith in most of the major poets.
- Memory and the past figure prominently.

Q2: Write a short note on Victorian Temper.

Ans. A term that is often used to describe Victorian attitudes, “Victorian temper” refers to the multiple strands of ideology and thinking that prevailed during the period. Political and social thought was divided between the Conservatives and the Liberals. The Conservatives favoured social hierarchy and had a taste for older art and thinking while the Liberals believed in a utilitarian philosophy of individual and collective action.

The Victorian temper is also marked by a great divide between the believers and the agnostics. Among the believers are Cardinal Newman and John Ruskin. The agnostics included figures like George Eliot, Charles Darwin, Thomas Hardy and the Pre-Raphaelites. Others like G.M Hopkins swerved between faith and non-belief. There were also liberal Christians like Charles Dickens and the great evangelicals working in the colonies.

Q3: Who, among the early Victorian writers was a poet cum critic?

Ans. _____

Q 4: Why does Arnold call poetry a “Criticism of Life” ?

Ans. _____

Q5: Write a short note on Tennyson’s *Idylls of the Kings*.

Ans. _____

Q6: What is the theme of Arnold's *The Scholar Gypsy*?

Ans. _____

Q7: Among the Victorian writers, what is the place of Elizabeth Barrett Browning?

Ans. _____

Q8: Briefly describe the major works of Robert Browning.

Ans. _____

Q9: What is the theme of *Dover Beach*?

Ans. _____

Q10: Describe *Thyrsis* by Arnold as an elegy.

Ans. _____

3.8 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

1. The Victorian Age can be called the age of
 - a) Faith
 - b) Doubt
 - c) Revolution
 - d) Romance
2. Which is the best known poem of Tennyson?
 - a) *In Memoriam*
 - b) *The Princess*
 - c) *Idylles of the King*
 - d) *Enocj Garden*
3. Who is the most representative poet of the Victorian age?
 - a) Arnold
 - b) Browning
 - c) Swinburne
 - d) Tennyson
4. “Knowledge comes but wisdom lingers”
These lines appear in the work of
 - a) Shakespeare
 - b) Milton
 - c) Wordsworth
 - d) Tennyson
5. Which of the following is Browning’s earliest work?
 - a) *Pauline*
 - b) *Paracelsus*
 - c) *Pippa Passes*
 - d) *Bells and Pomegranates*

6. Who is known for his poetic excellence in “Dramatic Monologue”?
 - a) Tennyson
 - b) Browning
 - c) Arnold
 - d) Hardy
7. Who, among the following, is the author of *Dramatis Personae*?
 - a) John Donne
 - b) Robert Browning
 - c) T.S Eliot
 - d) Dylan Thomas
8. Which of the following works of Elizabeth Barrett Browning is best known and also autobiographical, covering her affair with Browning?
 - a) *An Essay on Mind: with Other Poems*
 - b) *Prometheus Unbound*
 - c) *The Seraphin and other Poems*
 - d) *Sonnets from the Portuguese*
9. The predominant mood in Arnold’s poetry is that of
 - a) Joy
 - b) Melancholy
 - c) Optimism
 - d) Pessimism
10. *Sohrab and Rustum* by Arnold is on
 - a) An Irish theme
 - b) An Indian theme
 - c) A Persian theme
 - d) A Puritan theme

3.9 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

1. Explain the chief trends of Victorian age.
2. Give an elaborate account of Tennyson as a poet?
3. What are the major themes in Arnold's Poetry?
4. Attempt a thematic analysis of *The Scholar Gypsy*
5. What does Mrs. Browning highlight in her *Aurora Leigh*?

3.10 ANSWER KEY

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. b | 2. a |
| 3. d | 4. d |
| 5. a | 6. b |
| 7. b | 8. d |
| 9. b | 10. c |

3.11 SUGGESTED READING

The Routledge Companion to Victorian Age.

Rogers, Pat. *The Oxford Illustrated History of English Literature.*
New York: OUP, 1987. print

M.A. ENGLISH : SEMESTER II

COURSE CODE : ENG 212

LESSON No. 4

POETRY-II LITERARY AND INTELLECTUAL UNIT-I

**BACKGROUND OF POETRY FROM THE
PRE-ROMANTIC TO THE PRE-RAPHAELITE POETS**

Pre-Raphaelite or Later Victorian Poetry

STRUCTURE

- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Objectives
- 4.3 Spasmodics
- 4.4 Later Victorian or Pre-Raphaelite Poetry Background
- 4.5 Pre-Raphaelites or later Victorian Poets
 - 4.5.1 Dante Gabriel Rossetti
 - 4.5.2 William Morris
 - 4.5.3 A.C Swinburne
 - 4.5.4 G.M Hopkins
 - 4.5.5 Christina Rossetti
 - 4.5.6 Robert Bridges
 - 4.5.7 W.E Henley
 - 4.5.8 Coventry Patmore
- 4.6 Women Poets

- 4.7 Self-Assessment Questions
- 4.8 Multiple Choice Questions
- 4.9 Examination Oriented Questions
- 4.10 Answer Key
- 4.11 Suggested Reading

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The Pre-Raphaelites were a group of poets influenced by the visual arts. It included the Rossetti, William Morris and A.C Swineburne and owed much to the paintings of the contemporary William Holman Hunt. Others associated, at least partially, with the group included the influential philosopher John Ruskin and the noted painters Edward Burne-Jones and John Everett Millias. They were all great admirers of Raphael, whom they saw as the high point of Renaissance art. The Pre-Raphaelites deliberately invoked medieval images and aesthetics in their work. They used symbolism in poetry especially from theology and religion. There was also a major strand that dealt with love, especially tragic love and mortality.

They were criticized for being too concerned with the body. Their poetry and paintings often portrayed voluptuous bodies. The Pre-Raphaelites attempted to combine a hard realism and heavy symbolism, seeking to make a comment on contemporary society while simultaneously suggesting a higher state of being.

4.2 OBJECTIVES

The objective of this lesson is to

- Acquaint the learners with a different kind of poetry that emerged during later period of Victorian age- the pre-Raphaelite poetry.
- Familiarise the learners with major writers of the period and their works.
- Give a glimpse of women writers of Victorian period.

4.3 SPASMODICS

The Spasmodic school flourished about the middle of the nineteenth century. It included J.P. Bailey, Sidney Dobell and Alexander Smith. They were called Spasmodics because they were supposed to have spasms or fits of romanticism reflected in their poetry. They attempted to out-do the romantic poets by excess of every kind – exuberant fancy, rich imagery, and verbosity. They were immensely popular in their time, though the sham was detected by quite a few of the discerning critics. Bailey attained great fame as the writer of *Festus*, a huge dramatic poem on the “Faust” legend. It was praised even by such men as Tennyson and Thackeray.

The term “Spasmodic” was coined by W.E Aytoun, a Scottish lawyer and man of letters. He parodied the Spasmodic School in his *Firmilian; or the Student of Badajoz, A Spasmodic Tragedy*. Firmilian, a student at the University of Badajoz, rejects as useless one after other the conventional studies in theology, law, medicine and philosophy, and takes to poetry. The god Pan advises him to live for himself alone, to gratify all his appetites undeterred by any scruples. Firmilian thereupon enters upon a career of crime and cruelty to learn at first hand the experiences of a murderer, so that in his tragedy on the subject of Cain, the first murderer, he may adequately paint the mental spasms that tortured him. Firmilian’s crimes lead to funny results.

Aytoun’s other popular works which enjoyed contemporary popularity are: *Lays of the Scottish Cavaliers* and *Bon Gaultier Ballads*. “Bon Gaultier” was the pseudonym adopted by Sir Theodore Martin, a lawyer, who collaborated with Aytoun in writing the ballads. The ballads are parodies of many poets and styles such as Tennyson, Macaulay, Mrs. Browning, etc.

4.4 LATER VICTORIAN POETRY OR PRE-RAPHAELITE POETRY

Background

“Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood” is a confusing term which refers to both art and literature in 19th century England. The reason for the confusion is a

claim, found in many critical accounts, that there were essentially two different movements of this name, appearing in succession. There have been at least a few attempts at classifying the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood as a circle of friends, artists, poets and theoreticians. Critics have divided the achievements of this short-lived movement into periods and formal stages of the members' artistic lives. Founded in 1849, the original Brotherhood included William Holman Hunt, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, John Everett Millais, William Michael Rossetti, James Collinson, Thomas Woolner, and F. G. Stephens. In addition to the formal members of the PRB, other contemporary personalities formed the so-called "Pre-Raphaelite circle," which included the painters Ford Madox Brown and Charles Collins, the poet Christina Rossetti, the artist and social critic John Ruskin, the painter-poet William Bell Scott, and the sculptor-poet John Lucas Tupper. In the later stages of the movement's existence, artists like J. W. Inchbold, Edward Burne-Jones, and William Morris joined the circle and, in the case of a few, greatly shaped the group's artistic life. The most prominent painter-poets of the group were D.G. Rossetti and William Morris, but there were at least a few non-painting poets of the epoch who adhered to the principles of Pre-Raphaelitism, among them Christina Rossetti, George Meredith and Algernon Charles Swinburne.

The most general accounts of the movement's development divide the history of the Brethren into the first generation – composed of the original members – and the second phase, beginning when Burne-Jones and Morris joined. Indeed, Pre-Raphaelitism, at least in painting, encompassed two stages: first, the "hard-edge symbolic naturalism" that began in 1849, and the second incarnation that developed in the later 1850s, mainly under the direction of D.G. Rossetti and his follower Edward Burne-Jones; this particular period is characterised by an emphasis on themes of eroticised medievalism and on painterly techniques that produced moody atmosphere. The second stage sees also a change in topics: more social, urban and historical themes appear, as in Brown's *The Last of England* and *Work* or

in Rossetti's *Found*; moreover, a compositional and structural shift emerges at this point in the artists' turning away from detail and narration. According to a distinguished Victorian researcher, George Landow, only this second-stage, or Aesthetic, Pre-Raphaelitism has relevance to poetry and exerts influence on literature, "[...] although the combination of realistic style with elaborate symbolism that distinguishes the early movement appears in a few poems, particularly in those by the Rossettis."

The Pre-Raphaelite organ, a short-lived periodical called *The Germ*, which survived for only four issues, contained significant literary works created by the members of the Brotherhood. D. G. Rossetti contributed a tale called *Hand and Soul* and seven important poems including "My Sister's Sleep" and "The Blessed Damozel"; Christina Rossetti, then eighteen, contributed seven more, including "Dream Land" and "Repining." The ephemeral existence of *The Germ* contributed to the lack of any formal statement concerning Pre-Raphaelite artistic ideals; certain minor declarations appeared in the individual members' memoirs, but no recognized programme of the Pre-Raphaelites' aims was recorded. Rossetti's already-mentioned short story *Hand and Soul* provided, however, a certain manifesto for the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. The text is the tale of a young painter deprived of creative powers, who is urged by his soul enclosed in the body of a beautiful woman to paint *her*, that is, to depict an incarnation of his own soul. Thus, Rossetti puts emphasis on the artist's only duty: to believe and stay faithful "to his own emotions and imagination and then express them."

Landow summarises the Pre-Raphaelite ideals, suggesting that "they hoped to create an art suitable for the modern age," obeying the following principles:

1. Testing and defying all conventions of art; for example, if the Royal Academy schools taught art students to compose paintings with
 - (a) pyramidal groupings of figures,

- (b) one major source of light at one side matched by a lesser one on the opposite, and
 - (c) an emphasis on rich shadow and tone at the expense of color, the PRB with brilliant perversity painted bright-colored, evenly lit pictures that appeared almost flat.
2. The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood also emphasized precise, almost photographic representation of even humble objects, particularly those in the immediate foreground (which were traditionally left blurred or in shade) – thus violating conventional views of both proper style and subject.
 3. Following Ruskin, they attempted to transform the resultant hard-edge realism (created by 1 and 2) by combining it with typological symbolism. At their most successful, the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood produced a magic or symbolic realism, often using devices found in the poetry of Tennyson and Browning.
 4. Believing that the arts were closely allied, the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood encouraged artists and writers to practice each other's art, though only D.G. Rossetti did so with particular success.
 5. Looking for new subjects, they drew upon Shakespeare, Keats, and Tennyson. The aims of the movement include the desire to revive the pre-fifteenth-century ideals of painting. In this endeavour, Raphael's name was used as a symbolic border point in the history of modern art; as Graham Hough stresses, the Pre-Raphaelites, knowing nothing about Raphael, did not really scorn him – it was rather a reaction against "Raphaelitism," the work of Raphael's imitators, which was to be scorned. Hence, Hunt makes a clear distinction between "pre-raphaelism" and "preraphaelitism."
 6. Going beyond the mark of Raphael fulfilled the need for simplicity, "naturalness", primitivism and archaism; still, the Pre-Raphaelites were not consistent in this desire, using also post-Raphaelite sources,

including, to name a few, Hogarth's, Flaxman's, Giorgione's and Titian's works. The second direction of the revolutionary drift comes from the Pre-Raphaelite reaction against Academism. The Pre-Raphaelites rejected all the principles that Sir Joshua Reynolds cherished; as mentioned in Landow's assessment, pyramidal, hierarchical groupings of figures were replaced by a heterogeneous, unrestricted amalgamation of individuals; even lighting covered the whole surface of a painting – sometimes even making it over-lit – instead of being suppressed and fractional. Additionally, Pre-Raphaelite paintings offer the viewer an explosion of colours which are bold and divergent. Finally, in many Pre-Raphaelite paintings, the artists abandoned traditional perspective, making the pictures almost flat (as in the case of Millais's *Isabella*).

These two revolutionary elements – fascination with pre-Renaissance art and anti-Academism – make Pre-Raphaelitism the most innovative and avant-garde artistic movement of the 19th century, whose ideals foreshadow the 20th century Modernist and Imagist creeds. Anthony Harrison, in his study of Christina Rossetti, summarises the major Pre-Raphaelite doctrines in the following way:

...the Pre-Raphaelites predictably etherealized sensation, displacing it from logical contexts and all normally expected physical relations with objects in the external world. With the Pre-Raphaelites the sensory and even the sensual become idealized, image becomes symbol, and physical experience is superseded by mental states as we are thrust deeply into the self-contained emotional worlds of their varied personae. Very seldom do we have even the implied auditor of Browning's dramatic monologues to give us our bearings, to situate a speaker's perceptions in the phenomenal world. The sensuality, obscurity and almost illogical imagery of Pre-Raphaelite poetry contribute to the overall uniqueness and novelty of this particular branch of Victorian literature.

4.5 PRE- RAPHAELITE OR LATE- VICTORIAN POETS

The second generation of the Victorian poets, like the second generation of the Romantics, was not burdened with any self-conscious task of pioneering a major change in the existing tradition. Also, they were not bothered, unlike their seniors, about the larger issues of life, like utilitarianism or industrialism; unlike the first generation, they did not participate in the national debate on culture and anarchy, faith and free thought, socialism and *laissez-faire*. On the contrary, these young poets turned their backs on the national scene and the larger problems of culture and civilization, and turned instead to the medieval era and focused all their energies on the pursuit of pure art and personal pleasure. As M.H Abrams sums up, “ In 1848, a group of English artists, including D.G Rossetti, William Holeman Hunt, and John Millais, organized the ‘Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood.’ The aim was to replace the reigning academic style of painting by a return to the truthfulness, simplicity, and spirit of devotion which these artists found in Italian painting before the time of Raphael and the high Renaissance. The ideals of this group were taken over by a literary movement which included D.G Rossetti (1828-82), he was a poet as well as a painter, his sister Christina Rossetti, William Morris (1834-96), and A.C Swinburne. Rossetti’s poem “The Blessed Damozel” typifies the medievalism, the pictorial realism with symbolic overtones, and the union of the flesh and the spirit, sensuousness and religiousness, associated with the earlier writings of the school. The familiar themes of the poetry of this group were love and sex, and the typical style was direct sensuousness and suggestive symbolism. Thus, medievalism and pictorial aestheticism became the chief traits of the Victorian poetry in its later phase.

4.5.1 Dante Gabriel Rossetti

One of the finest illustrations of the pictorial medievalism of the pre-Raphaelite poetry is Rossetti’s “The Blessed Damozel”, in which, as Harry Blamires interprets, “the transfigured beloved leans out from the ‘gold bar of Heaven,’ wishing for the earthly life left behind. If the three lilies in her hand

and the seven stars in her hair catch a note of idealized Dantesque symbolism, the sensuousness of other images brings us back to the colour and warmth of the real earth” (Dahiya 205). Another example of medievalism is Rossetti’s “The Bride’s Prelude,” which, though unfinished, is marked by a remarkable ease and grace. Note, for instance, the following:

Against the haloed lattice-panes
The bridesmaid sunned her breast;
Then to the glass turned tall and free,
And braced and shifted daintily
Her loin-belt through her cote-hardie.

The poem unfolds through the bride’s own narrative the story of her secret passion and the accompanying suffering, which is marked by an eerie and vibrant suspense. Another significant poem in this group is “Jenny,” in which the poet, with a prostitute’s hand on his knee, sits in her room and wonders why he is there. While Jenny falls asleep, he keeps musing on her charm and wantonness, till the break of the day, when he leaves her asleep, quietly leaving behind among her golden hair, gold coins. Rossetti’s most important achievement was his sequence of 101 sonnets called *The House of Life* (1870), which is marked by an emotional openness, perceptive realism, and romantic idealism, characteristic of the pre-Raphaelite style of poetry. Note the following lines from “Without Her”:

What of her glass without her? The blank grey
There where the pool is blind of the moon’s face.
Her dress without her? The tossed empty space
Of cloud-rack whence the moon has passed away.

The archaic words the artificial poetisation, the stylized simplicity are all typical of the work of these poets. The languorous rhythms, the dreamy atmosphere, the hypnotized mood of their poems replaced Arnold’s grand ideal of poetry (which was to substitute religion, to offer a criticism of life, to civilise and humanise the masses of mankind) a subjective

sensational-aestheticism, which rightly attracted the derogatory title of the “fleshy school of poetry.”

The best introduced to Rossetti’s poetry is *The Blessed Damozel*. Though his earliest poem, it embodies not only many of his own individual and characteristic qualities, but also the chief qualities, but also the chief qualities of the pre-Raphaelite school. “The Blessed Damozel” is a maiden who after death has become one of God’s choristers. Her lover is still living and pining for her. She leans from the gold bar of the rampart of God’s palace in Heaven which spans like a bridge. Looking down from the vast height she surveys the world and sees souls mounting up to God “like thin flames.” She speaks her longing to be united with her lover who hears her – even feels her bending over him. Their united prayers, she believes, will surely be granted; when in due course he comes to heaven she will unashamedly declare their love to Virgin Mary who will herself lead them to Christ. The damozel will then beg Him to unite them forever, so that they might live together in Heaven, as for a while, they had lived on earth:

The bless’d damozel leaned out
From the gold bar of Heaven;
Her eyes were deeper then the depth
Of water stilled at even;
She had three lilies in her hand
And the stars in her hair were seven.

Her robe ungirt from clasp to hem,
No wrought flowers did adorn,
But a white rose of Mary’s gift
For service meetly worn;
Her hair that lay along her back
Was yellow like ripe corn.

The poem startles the reader by the odd mingling of the sensual and the spiritual. It is, nevertheless, a triumphant success, not of course a religious

poem, but as a creation of beauty. Rossetti was a true descendant of Keats and *The Blessed Damozel* is a worthy companion of *The Eve of St. Agnes*.

In his mastery of the sonnet Rossetti ranks with Shakespeare, Wordsworth and Mrs. Browning. His sonnet sequence *The House of Life* in which he expresses his love for his wife is second only to Shakespeare in both quantity and quality. Together they form a shrine of love in which Rossetti's worship of that deity is seen at its best.

4.5.2 William Morris

Even a poet like William Morris (1834-96), who otherwise was an advocate of socialism, became a crusader against philistinism, under the influence of Ruskin. He fell prey to the influence of pre-Raphaelitism and wrote poems of escape from contemporary ugliness. That Morris uses poetry as an escape from reality is clear from his "The Haystack in the Floods," a poem included in his first volume of poems, *The Defence of Guenevere and Other Poems* (1858), which, though marked by smooth decorativeness, has lost the intensity of some of his earlier poems written before his conversion to pre-Raphaelitism. Following lines are an example of this:

Forget six counties overhung with smoke
Forget the snorting steam and piston stroke...

Obviously, here is a poetry of withdrawal from life, a poetry of escape from harsh realities, a poetry of defeat and despair. Unable to face the contemporary challenges of life, which the earlier generation bravely confronted, these younger poets withdrew into the cells of their own ego, made a cult of sensuousness, a religion of aestheticism, and drank the whole day the mana of their dreams or drenched themselves into the pool of flesh. Other notable works of Morris include *The Earthly Paradise* (1868-70), a collection of tales some classical, others medieval; *Poems By The Way* (1891); *Hopes and Fears for Art* (1882); *Signs of Change* (1888); *A Dream of John Ball* (1888); *News From Nowhere* (1891). Besides this he has translated Virgil's *Aeneid* (1875) and Homer's *Odyssey* (1887).

The title poem of *The Defence of Guenevere and other Poems* is most disappointing. In his attempt to make the poem dramatic, Morris makes Guenevere's speech too halting, too abrupt, for coherent defence. It is not melodious either and sounds like prose. *King Arthur's Tomb* tells of Guenevere's last meeting with Launcelot at the tomb of Arthur at Glastonbury. *Rapunzel* is a medieval story of magic, mystery and superstition. Rapunzel was the name of a witch who had imprisoned Guendolen, a beautiful maiden with long golden hair, in a lonely tower. The witches trod upon her hair in the witches' Sabbaths and delighted to swing on to its ends like bats. Prince Sebald having heard a minstrel's song about Guendolen wanders a whole year in his quest until he comes to the tower and rescues the lady of his dreams.

The Earthly Paradise is generally considered Morris's masterpiece. It consists of a Prologue and twenty-four tales in Chaucer's metres viz. Heroic couplet, octosyllabic couplet and rhyme royal. The Prologue tells us how a roving company of Vikings embark upon a voyage in search of the fabled Earthly Paradise and after many years of wanderings reach a nameless city inhabited by survivors of the ancient Greek civilization. They are hospitably received and there they settle down. The two groups meet twice a month at a feast when they tell tales, the Greeks telling tales on classical subjects and the wanderers on Norse subjects. Only one tale is told on each occasion alternately by one of the hosts and one of the wanderers. The tales are linked up by lyrics descriptive of the English landscape in different months of the year.

4.5.3 A.C. Swinburne

In sensual extravagance of the pre-Raphaelites, A.C. Swinburne (1837-1909) surpassed all. His three series of *Poems and Ballads* (1866, 1878, 1889) provoked the *Saturday Review* to call him "the libidinous laureate of a pack of Satyrs" with "a mind all aflame with the feverish carnality of a schoolboy over the dirtiest passages in Lempriere" (207). True to his role as a perverted prophet of paganism he hymned in "Dolores" the actress Adah

Isaacs Menken, known in her time as the “naked lady,” with an abandon of sexual acclaim, which parodies a litany to the Virgin:

Could you hurt me, sweet lips, though I hurt you?
Men touch them, and change in a trice
The lilies and languors of virtue
For the raptures and roses of vice.

Other notable works of Swinburne include *Songs Before Sunrise* (1871); *Tristram and Other Poems* (1882). No wonder then that Edward Fitzgerald (1809-93) translated, in this very phase of the Victorian era, the *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam* (1859), which captured the imagination of these young poets and abated their hunger for sensuousness and sensuality. Fitzgerald translated and adopted the original quatrains of Omar Khayyam, an eleventh century Persian poet and astronomer, and arranged them in a connected sequence. The perennial theme of the Persian poet is a pessimistic musing on man’s mortality and vanity of worldly glories, always concluding by calling his beloved to fill the cup and make merry while they can. Swinburne wrote introduction to Fitzgerald’s translation of Omar Khayyam’s verses, which added to the attraction of the Persian poet.

4.5.4 G.M. Hopkins

Although Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844-89), Thomas Hardy (1840-1928), Oscar Wilde (1854-1900), A.E Housman (1859-1936) and Robert Bridges (1844-1930) were born during the Victorian age and produced during the period a good deal of their poetical works, for different reasons they cannot be grouped with either of the two groups of poets who represented the two phases of the Victorian poetry in England. For instance, although a brilliant craftsman, Hopkins did not represent the interests of either of the two groups of poets. Besides, his poems were published long after his death, partly in 1918, and entirely in 1967. While Thomas Hardy remained a leading novelist among the later Victorians; he turned to writing poetry only after he had said goodbye to writing fiction; his first volume of poems *Wessex Poems* (1898)

was followed by *Poems of the Past and Present* (1901). Other volumes namely *Time's Laughing Stocks* (1909), and *Satires of Circumstance* (1914), *Moments of Vision and Miscellaneous Verses* (1917), *Late Lyrics and Earlier* (1922), *Winter Words* (1928), and *The Dynasts* (Part I, 1903; Part II, 1906; Part III, 1908) appeared long after the Victorian era had ended. Thus, as a poet he has greater affinity with a poet like Yeats, who was a transitional poet providing a link between the Pre-Raphaelites and the Modernists than with Rossetti and Morris. Hardy, in fact, had nothing in common with the Pre-Raphaelites; he had a good deal in common with the modern poets. Houseman also published his first volume *Shropshire Lad* in 1896, and the second volume *Last Poems*, in 1922. Thus, he too, belongs to the transitional period between the Victorian and the Modern. As for Robert Bridges, he also published poems during both Victorian and the Modern periods – 1873, 1879, 1880, 1890, 1929 – he, in fact, belongs neither to the Victorian group of poets nor to the Modernist group. Actually his work does not show any important aspect of the works of the representative poets of the two periods. Among his other works the better-known include the sonnet-sequence *The Growth of Love* (1876), the long poems *Prometheus The Forgiver* (1883) and *Eros and Psyche* (1885), *New Poems* (1899), *Poems in Classical Prosody* (1903), *October and Other Poems* (1920), and *New Verse* (1925).

4.5.5 Christina Rossetti

Christina Rossetti (1830-94), the painter-poet's sister, was almost as great as her brother. A devoted adherent of the Church of England, she was intensely religious and rejected two offers of marriage on religious grounds. One of her suitors was a Catholic; the other's religious views were heterodox. After the death of her father in 1854, she passed the rest of her life in London with her mother. She lived a secluded life devoting herself to religious exercises and works of charity. Her first published verses appeared together with her brother's in *The Germ* (1850). She wrote incessantly right to the end, though the quantity of her verse is not very large. Her published volumes include; *Goblin Market and Other Poems* (1862), *The Prince's Progress and Other*

Poems (1866), *The Pageant and other Poems* (1881), *Verses* (1890) and *New Poems* (1896), a posthumous collection. She was a skilled sonnet writer and wrote a sonnet sequence called *Monna In-nominata*. The sonnets are autobiographical and show a deep sense of loss resulting from her two attachments, especially the second.

Goblin Market is a fantastic tale with allegorical meaning. The goblins offer enchanting fruits in a mossy glen, and morning and evening Laura and Lizzy hear their cry “Come, buy our orchard fruits/ Come, buy, buy.” In spite of Lizzy’s warning Laura is tempted, and having no money buys the goblin fruits with a golden curl of her hair and eats them to her fill. She longs for more, but the goblins are nowhere to be found, though Lizzy continues to hear their cry. Sick with yearning, Laura dwindles and is at death’s door.

The compassionate Lizzy goes to the glen and flinging to the goblins a silver penny demands their fruits. The goblins invite her to eat with them which she refuses to do. The goblins thereupon beat her up, pull her hair and tear her gown. Holding her hands, they force the fruit against her mouth but she keeps her lips tightly closed and the fruit juice runs down her face and neck. Lizzy bears this ill-treatment without uttering a word. Worn out by her resistance, the goblins fling her back the penny, kick their fruit baskets and plates and vanish. Lizzy returns home and ask Laura to kiss her. As she kisses Lizzy’s juice smeared face, her lips are scorched and fire seems to burn in her body.

The fruits in this story are the worldly pleasures; Laura falls for them and is nearly ruined. Lizzy resists the temptation and by her sacrifice redeems her sister’s sin. In a larger sense the story can be regarded as representing the redemption of man by vicarious sacrifice like Christ’s.

The Prince’s Progress is also an allegorical fairy tale. The princess waits in her tower for the coming of her lover. The prince sets out to claim his bride, but loiters on the way, yielding to various temptations. When he arrives at last, he is too late for the bride is dead. Here is a stanza from the “Bride-Song” in the tale:

Too late for love, too late for joy,
 Too late, too late!
You loitered on the road too long,
 You trifled at the gate:
The enchanted dove upon her branch,
 Died without a mate;
The enchanted princess in her tower,
 Slept, died, behind the grate,
Her heart was starving all the while
 You made it wait.

The poetry of Christina Rossetti possesses most of the characteristics of the pre-Raphaelite poets, but she differs from them in one important aspect. Rossetti and Morris were indifferently religious, their attraction to religion being merely artistic, and Swinburne was definitely irreligious. Christina, on the other hand, was a devout Christian. Religion dominated her life and it dominates her poetry. Death and eternity run like a refrain through most of her poems. Deep feeling expressed in quiet, controlled, and cadenced speech is the most pleasing as well as the most characteristic of her qualities as a poet. Christina's quiet manner gives her poetry a vitality which a more forceful one could not have achieved. She followed her own natural instincts and escaped the usual temptation of women-writers to imitate 'masculinity.'

4.5.6 Robert Bridges

Robert Bridges (1844-1930), who gave up medical practice to write and eventually became Poet Laureate, is a good nature poet, especially in works like "London Snow" and "While yet we wait for the spring, and from the dry." An elegiac tone informs much of Bridge's mature work. A Romantic, Bridges' sonnets and other poems exhibit a remarkable control over rhythm and diction. In fact, his precision rather than content/theme makes him the poet that he is.

4.5.7 W. E. Henley

W.E Henley (1849-1903) is supposed to have been the inspiration for

RL Stevenson's "Long John Silver!" Henley is known more for his influential role as arbiter of British literary and artistic taste through his editorial and critical work in periodicals like *London* and *Pen*. Today, *In Hospital* is what remains of his poetry. The poem describes a hospital stay, and captures the reality of sights and sounds of the place. His most celebrated poem is, of course, "Invictis":

Out of the night that covers me,
Black as the Pit from pole to pole,
I thank whatever gods may be
For my unconquerable soul.
In the fell clutch of circumstance
I have not winced nor cried aloud.
Under the bludgeoning of chance
My head is bloody, but unbowed.

4.5.8 Coventry Patmore

Coventry Patmore (1823-96) was influenced by the Pre-Raphaelites. Marriage, love and faith are his themes in many poems. There is a touch of romanticism and gentle sensuality in his imagery that does not quite fit in with the Victorian mode. Sensual and highly symbolic, Patmore also used veiled sexual images in his works. From early life, he had a sense mission to celebrate conjugal love in narrative verse and leave to mankind a message on a subject which had been generally ignored by the other poets. This he achieved in *The Angel in the House* (1854-60), a poem which traces the courtship, the wedding, and the trivial incidents of the married life of Felix and Honoria, a dean's daughter. Patmore's enormous popularity was due to his poetic treatment of the drab realities of contemporary domestic and social life. The best parts of the poem are those which deal with the philosophy or psychology of love. Honoria during the period of courtship is leaving for a holiday in London:

She had forgot to bring a book,
I lent one, blamed the print for old;
And did not tell her that she took
A Petrarch worth its weight in gold.
I hoped she would lose it; for my love
Was grown so dainty, high and nice,
It prized no luxury above
The sense of fruitless sacrifice.

The poem was obviously autobiographical written in honour of his beautiful first wife, and yet Patmore had two more wives after her. In 1864, he became a convert to Roman Catholicism and in 1877 published *The Unknown Eros*, a collection of mystical odes in Pindaric or irregular metres couched in a highly ornamental language. The best known poem of Patmore is *The Toys* expressing remorse at beating his child.

4.6 WOMEN POETS

The Victorian age produced quite a large number of women writers of verse. The greatest of these were, of course, Mrs. Browning and Christina Rossetti whose work has already been considered. George Eliot wrote some verse, but it is slight and unimportant. Emily Bronte shows in her poems not a little of the fire and intensity which characterise her powerful novel *Wuthering Heights*. Ann Procter, was a Catholic much devoted to works of charity. She was a friend of Dickens and wrote grave poems and hymns. Some of her hymns have been adopted for common use. Jean Ingelow achieved great popularity in the 60's with her religious poetry, which is tender, graceful and moving. Today she is remembered by one poem *High Tide on the Coast of Lincolnshire* in 1571. Augusta Webster was a noted Greek translator. Her poetry shows the influence of Browning. Alice Meynell wrote essays as well as poems, and both of high quality. Her poems are remarkable for their simplicity

and restraint. Mary Coleridge, a great-grand niece of Coleridge wrote pretty lyrics some of which have melancholy charm.

4.7 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

Q1: Who were Spasmodics? Why were they called so?

Ans. The Spasmodic school flourished about the middle of the nineteenth century. It included J.P. Bailey, Sidney Dobell and Alexander Smith. They were called Spasmodics because they were supposed to have spasms or fits of romanticism reflected in their poetry. They attempted to out-do the romantic poets by excess of every kind – exuberant fancy, rich imagery, and verbosity. They were immensely popular in their time, though the sham was detected by quite a few of the discerning critics. Bailey attained great fame as the writer of *Festus*, a huge dramatic poem on the “Faust” legend. It was praised even by such men as Tennyson and Thackeray.

Q2: Write a brief note on Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood.

Ans. “Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood” is a confusing term which refers to both art and literature in 19th century England. The reason for the confusion is a claim, found in many critical accounts, that there were essentially two different movements of this name, appearing in succession. There have been at least a few attempts at classifying the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood as a circle of friends, artists, poets and theoreticians. Critics have divided the achievements of this short-lived movement into periods and formal stages of the members’ artistic lives. Founded in 1849, the original Brotherhood included William Holman Hunt, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, John Everett Millais, William Michael Rossetti, James Collinson, Thomas Woolner, and F. G. Stephens. In addition to the formal members of the PRB, other contemporary personalities formed the so-called “Pre-Raphaelite circle,” which included the painters Ford Madox Brown and Charles Collins, the poet Christina Rossetti, the artist and social critic John Ruskin, the painter-poet William

Bell Scott, and the sculptor-poet John Lucas Tupper. In the later stages of the movement's existence, artists like J. W. Inchbold, Edward Burne-Jones, and William Morris joined the circle and, in the case of a few, greatly shaped the group's artistic life. The most prominent painter-poets of the group were D.G. Rossetti and William Morris, but there were at least a few non-painting poets of the epoch who adhered to the principles of Pre-Raphaelitism, among them Christina Rossetti, George Meredith and Algernon Charles Swinburne.

Q3: Who were the Pre- Raphaelite Poets?

Ans. _____

Q4: What are the main characteristics of Pre- Raphaelite poetry?

Ans. _____

Q5: Write a short note on Rossetti as a poet.

Ans. _____

Q6: Attempt a thematic analysis of The Blessed Damozel.

Ans. _____

Q7: Highlight the major works of Christina Rossetti.

Ans. _____

Q8: Comment on the contribution of women writers of Victorian period.

Ans. _____

Q9: Discuss Hopkins as a Poet?

Ans _____

Q 10: What makes Pre-Raphaelite writers different from early Victorian writers?

Ans. _____

4.8 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

1. Who, among the following, was the leading poet Pre- Raphaelite Poet?
 - a) W.B Yeats
 - b) D.G Rossetti
 - c) William Morris
 - d) A.C Swinburne

2. The author of *The Blessed Damozel* is
 - a) D.G Rossetti
 - b) William Morris
 - c) A.C. Swineburne
 - d) Oscar Wilde
3. *A Pageant and Other Poems* was written by
 - a) Byron
 - b) Christina Rossetti
 - c) William Morris
 - d) D.G Rossetti
4. William Morris is best known by which of the following works
 - a) *News from Nowhere*
 - b) *Signs of Change*
 - c) *Earthly Paradise*
 - d) *A Dream of John Ball*
5. A.C Swinburne is known as poet of liberty owing to which work
 - a) *Poems and Ballads*
 - b) *Tristram and other Poems*
 - c) *Songs before Sunrise*
 - d) *Atlanta in Calydon*
6. Who, among the following, does not belong to Pre-Raphaelite group?
 - a) D.G Rossetti
 - b) Christina Rossetti
 - c) William Morris
 - d) Robert Browning

7. *The Angel in the House* is written by
- a) Coventry Patmore
 - b) Christina Rossetti
 - c) G.M Hopkins
 - d) Fitzgerald
8. Who gave up medical practise to write poetry?
- a) William Morris
 - b) Robert Bridges
 - c) W.H Henley
 - d) Coventry Patmore
9. Who is the writer of *Goblin Market*?
- a) Christina Rossetti
 - b) Robert Bridges
 - c) Swinburne
 - d) Patmore
10. *The Dynasts* is written by
- a) G.M Hopkins
 - b) W.H Henley
 - c) Rossetti
 - d) William Morris

4.9 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

- Q1: Who were Pre-Raphaelites? What are the chief characteristics of Pre-Raphaelite poetry?
- Q2: Comment on the contribution of D.G Rossetti in Pre-Raphaelite poetry.
- Q3: Explain the contribution of women writers in Victorian poetry.

Q4: Give a thematic analysis of *The Blessed Damozel*.

Q5: Highlight the main features of *The Goblin Market*.

4.10 ANSWER KEY

1. b 2. a

3. b 4. a

5. c 6. d

7. a 8. b

9. a 10. a

4.11 SUGGESTED READING

Bristow, Joseph. Ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Victorian Poetry*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000. Print.

Dahiya, B.S. *A Short History of English Literature*. New Delhi: Doaba Publication, 2004. Print.

Kitzan, Laurence. *Victorian Writers and the Image of Empire: The Rose Colored Vision*. Westport: Greenwood Press, 2001. Print.

M.A. ENGLISH : SEMESTER II

COURSE CODE : ENG 212

LESSON No. 5

POETRY-II

WILLIAM BLAKE

UNIT-II

Life and Work

STRUCTURE

- 5.1 Introduction
- 5.2 Objectives
- 5.3 Biography of the Poet
- 5.4 Introduction to the Age
- 5.5 Introduction to the Poem
- 5.6 Self-Assessment Questions
- 5.7 Examination Oriented Questions
- 5.8 Suggested Reading

5.1 INTRODUCTION

William Blake was an English poet, painter and print maker. He was a visionary and author of exquisite lyrics. His works have been used by people rebelling against a wider variety of issues, such as war, conformity and almost every kind of repression.

5.2 OBJECTIVES

In this lesson we shall discuss the social condition of the age and introduction to the poem. After reading this unit you will be able:

- a) Introduce the short biography of the poet

- b) Explain the social conditions and literary trends of Romantic age.
- c) Explain what poem is about.

5.3 BIOGRAPHY OF THE POET

William Blake, son of a Hosier James Blake, was born on 28 November 1757 at 28 Broad Street (now Broadwick St.) in *Soho*, London. He was the third of seven children, two of whom died in infancy. He attended school only to learn reading and writing. He left school at the age of 10 and was tutored by his mother Catherine Blake at home. Blakes were English Dissenters (Christians who separated themselves from English Church).

By all accounts Blake had a pleasant and peaceful childhood, made even more pleasant by his skipping any formal schooling. As a young boy he wandered the streets of London and could easily escape to the surrounding countryside. Even at an early age, however, his unique mental powers would prove disquieting. There are records that on one ramble he was startled to “see a tree filled with angels, bright angelic wings bespangling every bough like stars.” His parents were not amused at such a story, and only his mother’s pleadings prevented him from receiving a beating.

His parents did, however, encourage his artistic talents, and the young Blake was enrolled at the age of ten in Pars’ drawing school. The expense of continued formal training in art, however, was a prohibitive one, and the family decided that at the age of fourteen William would be apprenticed to a master engraver. At first his father took him to William Ryland, a highly respected engraver. William, however, resisted the arrangement telling his father, “I do not like the man’s face: it looks as if he will live to be hanged!” The grim prophecy was to come true twelve years later. Instead of Ryland the family settled on a lesser-known engraver but a man of considerable talents, James Basire. Basire seems to have been a good master, and Blake was a good student of the craft. Blake was later to be especially grateful to Basire for sending the young student to Westminster Abbey to make drawings of monuments Basire was commissioned to engrave. The vast Gothic

dimensions of Westminster and the haunting presence of the tombs of kings affected Blake's romantic sensibilities and were to provide fertile ground for his active imagination.

Blake met Catherine Boucher, an attractive and compassionate woman who took pity on Blake's tales of being spurned. After a year's courtship the couple was married on 18 August 1782. The parish registry shows that Catherine, like many women of her class, could not sign her own name. Blake soon taught her to read and to write, and under Blake's tutoring she also became an accomplished draftsman, helping him in the execution of his designs.

His first volume of poems was published under the title *Poetical Sketches* (1783). Blake introduced a technique called 'illuminated writing'. Blake's technique was to produce his text and design on a copper plate with an impervious liquid. The plate was then dipped in acid so that the text and design remained in relief. That plate could be used to print on paper, and the final copy would be then hand colored.

After experimenting with this method in a series of aphorisms entitled *There is No Natural Religion* and *All Religions are One* (1788?), Blake designed the series of plates for the poems entitled *Songs of Innocence* and dated the title page 1789. Blake continued to experiment with the process of illuminated writing and in 1794 combined the early poems with companion poems entitled *Songs of Experience*. The title page of the combined set announces that the poems show "the two Contrary States of the Human Soul."

Blake makes extensive use of symbolism in his poetry. Some of the symbols are straightforward; innocence is symbolized by children, flowers, lambs or particularly seasons. Oppression and rationalism are symbolized by urban, industrial landscape, by machines, by those in authority (including priests), and by social institutions. The symbolism in some of his later poems, such as the epic *Milton*, is less easy to interpret. Blake sometimes creates

a mythological world of his own. For example, the giant Los, who represents the human imagination, is set against his opposite Urizen, who represents the restrictions of law and order.

Politics was surely often the topic of conversation at the publisher Joseph Johnson's house, where Blake was often invited. There Blake met important literary and political figures such as William Godwin, Joseph Priestly, Mary Wollstonecraft, and Thomas Paine. According to one legend Blake is even said to have saved Paine's life by warning him of his impending arrest. Whether or not that is true, it is clear that Blake was familiar with some of the leading radical thinkers of his day.

Blake was also conscious of the effects on the individual of a rapidly developing industrial and commercial world. He saw the potential dangers of a mass society in which individuals were increasingly controlled by systems of organization. In his poem *London* he refers to these systems as a result of 'mind-forg'd manacles'. In *London* even River Thames has been 'Charter'd' (given a royal charter to be used for commercial purposes).

Another product of the radical 1790s is *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*. Written and etched between 1790 and 1793, Blake's poem brutally satirizes oppressive authority in church and state. The poem also satirizes the works of Emanuel Swedenborg, the Swedish philosopher whose ideas once attracted Blake's interests.

Very little of Blake's poetry of the 1790s was known to the general public. His reputation as an artist was mixed. Response to his art ranged from praise to derision, but he did gain some fame as an engraver. He received several commissions, the most important probably being his illustrations to Edward Young's *Night Thoughts*. In 1795 the publisher and bookseller Richard Edwards commissioned Blake to illustrate the then-famous poems of Young. Blake produced 537 watercolor designs of which 43 were selected for engraving. The first volume of a projected four-volume series was published in 1797. However, the project did not prove financially successful, and no further

volumes were published. After the disappointment of that project, Blake's friend and admirer Flaxman commissioned Blake to illustrate the poems of *Thomas Gray*. Blake painted 116 watercolors and completed the project in 1798. Blake was also aided by his friend Thomas Butts, who commissioned a series of biblical paintings. His commissions did not produce much in the way of income, but Blake never seems to have been discouraged. In 1799 Blake wrote to George Cumberland, "I laugh at Fortune & Go on & on."

In 1800, Blake moved to a cottage at Felpham, Sussex to take up a job of illustrator. There he illustrated the works of William Hayley, a minor poet. There he started his epic *Milton* (the title page is dated 1804, but Blake continued to work on it until 1808). The preface to this work includes a poem beginning "*And did those feet in ancient time*", which became the words for the anthem "*Jerusalem*".

Blake was commissioned for Dante's *Divine Comedy* in 1826 with the aim to produce the engravings of the latter. It was on this assignment Blake left the world leaving the assignment incomplete in 1827. He produced only seven of the engravings, even though, they have evoked praise. Blake's last years were spent at Fountain Court off the *Strand* (the property was demolished in the 1880s, when the *Savoy Hotel* was built). On the day of his death (12 August 1827), Blake worked relentlessly on his Dante series. Eventually, it is reported, he ceased working and turned to his wife, who was in tears by his bedside. Beholding her, Blake is said to have cried, "Stay Kate! Keep just as you are – I will draw your portrait – for you have ever been an angel to me." Having completed this portrait (now lost), Blake laid down his tools and began to sing hymns and verses. At six that evening, after promising his wife that he would be with her always, Blake died.

Social History

William Blake belongs to the transitional age in which the social and literary ideals were in the process of rapid transformation from Neo-classical to Romantic. Age of Blake can be concluded half in neo-classical and half in Romantic age. Although, Blake's most writing is thematized on Romantic

ideals. Some English literature histories consider him as transitional poet and some counts him as Romantic poet. This confusion exhibits the confusion of the age. The social conditions in the age of Blake were in transitional phase. The nation was transformed from an agricultural country to an industrial one. The laws of free market were developing and at the same time a shift in the balance of the power took place. Power and wealth were gradually transferred from the landholding aristocracy to the large-scale employers of modern industrial communities. An old population of rural farm labourers became a new class of urban industrial labourers. This new emerging class in the urban areas came to be called as working class. These workers were concentrated in cities and the new power of an increasingly large and restive mass began to make itself felt.

The industrial revolution created social change, unrest, and eventually turbulence. Deep-rooted traditions were rapidly overturned. Within a short period of time the whole landscape of the country changed. In the countryside, the open fields and communally worked farms were 'enclosed'. The enclosure movement improved efficiency and enabled the increase animal farming necessary to feed a rapidly expanding population; but fewer labourers were required to work on the land, and that led to an exodus to the cities of large numbers of people seeking employment. Increasing mechanization both on the land and in the industrial factories meant continuing high levels of unemployment. Worker in the rural areas could no longer graze the animals on which they partly depended for food and income. Acute poverty followed.

These developments literally changed the landscape of the country. Open fields were enclosed by hedged and walls; in the cities, smoking factory chimneys polluted the atmosphere; poor quality houses were built in large numbers and quickly became slums. The mental landscape also altered. The country was divided into those who owned property or land- who were rich – and those who did not – who were poor. A new world was born, which Benjamin Disraeli, who was both a novelist and Prime Minister of Britain under Queen Victoria, was later to identify as 'Two Nations'.

The industrial revolution paralleled revolutions in the political order. In fact, Britain was at war during most of the Romantic period, with a resultant political instability. Political movements in Britain were gradual, but in countries such as France and United States political change was both more rapid and more radical. The American Declaration of Independence (from Britain) in 1776 struck an early blow for the principle of democratic freedom and self-government, but it was the early years of the French Revolution, with its slogan of 'Equality, liberty and Fraternity', which most influenced the intellectual climate in Britain. In this respect the storming of the Bastille (it is a fortress in France used by French king as State prison) in 1789, to release political prisoners, acted as a symbol which attracted the strong support of liberal opinion.

Debate in Britain was, however, polarized between support for radical documents such as Tom Paine's *Rights of Man* (1791), in which he called for greater democracy in Britain, and Edmund Burke's more conservative *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790). Later in the 1790s, more measured ideals were floated by William Godwin in his writings. Godwin was the one of the important influences on the poets Wordsworth and Shelley, who advocated a gradual evolution towards the removal of poverty and the equal distribution of all wealth. Such a social philosophy caused much enthusiasm and intellectual excitement among many radical writers and more liberal politicians; but these ideas also represented a threat to the existing order.

The period from 1820 to 1832 was a time of continuing unrest. The unrest took place against a background of the cycles of economic depression which so characterize the modern world. The prevailing economic philosophy was that of *Laissez-faire*, meaning 'Leave alone'. The consequences were that the government did not intervene directly in economic affairs. It let the free market and private individual decisions control the course of events. During this time, the wealth of the country grew, although it had become increasingly concentrated in the hands of the new manufacturing and merchant classes.

This new middle class wanted to see its increased economic power reflected in greater political power. A general alliance arose between working-class reformers, liberal (called Whig) politicians and this new middle class, resulting in pressure on the Tory government for political reform. After many struggles, and with the threat of national disorder not far away, the first Reform Act was passed by parliament in 1832.

Literary History

In terms of literary history, Blake lived two contradictory literary ages i.e. Neo-classical age (1700 - 1798) and Romantic age (1798-1832). The Romantic age and Neo-Classical age are not simply two different attitudes to literature which are being compared but two different ways of seeing and experiencing life. Their way to perceive literature is totally opposite, so, the comparison between both the ages is valuable.

The Neo-Classical or Augustan age of the early and mid-eighteenth century stressed the importance of reason and order. Strong feelings and flights of the imagination had to be controlled (although they were obviously found widely, especially in poetry). The swift improvements in medicine, economics, science and engineering, together with rapid developments in both agricultural and industrial technology, suggested human progress on a grand scale. At the center of these advances towards a perfect society was mankind, and it must have seemed that everything was within man's grasp if his baser, bestial instincts could be controlled. The Neo-classical temperament trusts reason, intellect, and the head. The romantic temperament prefers feelings, intuition, and the heart.

The two ages may be contrasted in other ways:

- (1) The Neo-Classical writer looks outward to society; Romantic Writer looks inward to their own soul and to the life of the imagination.
- (2) The Neo-Classical writer concentrates on what can be logically measured and rationally understood; Romantic writers are attracted to the irrational, mystical and supernatural world.

- (3) The Neo-Classical writer is attracted to a social order in which everyone knows his place; Romantic writer celebrates the freedom of nature and of individual human experience.
- (4) The writings of Augustan age stress the way societies improve under careful regulation; Romantic literature is generally more critical of society and its injustices, questioning rather than affirming, exploring rather than defining.
- (5) The language and form of the literature of the two ages also shows these two different ways of seeing: The Augustans developed a formal and ordered way of writing characterized by the balance and symmetry of the heroic couplet in poetry and by an adherence to the conventions of a special poetic diction. The Romantics developed ways of writing which tried to capture the ebb and flow of individual experience in forms and language which were intended to be closer to everyday speech and more accessible to the general reader.

Contrast between the Augustan and Romantic ages are helpful but there are always exceptions to such general contrasts. For example, eighteenth century writers such as Gray, Collins and Cowper show a developing Romantic sensibility, and Romantic poets such as Byron were inspired by Augustan period models. Romanticism was not a sudden, radical transformation, but grew out of Augustanism.

One final introductory point can be made about the Romantic period. The English Romantic literature discussed in the following sections grew out of specific historical contexts. The industrial revolution led to an increasing regimentation of the individual. Small towns and villages, where everyone knew their neighbors, began to disappear. They were replaced by a more impersonal, mechanized society, fed and clothed by mass production. In this new world individuals lost their identity. The writers of this time wanted to correct this imbalance by giving greater value to the individual sensibility and to the individual consciousness. Their poetic revolution aimed at greater individual freedom.

5.5 INTRODUCTION TO THE POEM

The Marriage of Heaven and Hell

The Marriage of Heaven and Hell contains many of the basic religious ideas developed in the major prophecies. Blake analyzes the development of organized religion as a perversion of ancient visions: “The ancient Poets animated all sensible objects with Gods or Geniuses, calling them by the names and adorning them with the properties of woods, rivers, mountains, lakes, cities, nations, and whatever their enlarged & Numerous senses could perceive.” Ancient man created those gods to express his vision of the spiritual properties that he perceived in the physical world. So far, so good, but the gods began to take on a life of their own separate from man: “Till a system was formed, which some took advantage of, & enslaved the vulgar by attempting to realize or abstract the mental deities from their objects: thus began Priesthood.” The “system” or organized religion keeps man from perceiving the spiritual in the physical. The gods are seen as separate from man, and an elite race of priests is developed to approach the gods: “Thus men forgot that all deities reside in the human breast.” Instead of looking for God on remote altars, Blake warns, man should look within.

The critical debate surrounding *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* has been varied and heated over the last one hundred years and shows no sign of abating. Critics differ on the degree of irony Blake employed in some of his bolder statements, questioning when Blake is speaking ironically as the Devil and when he is speaking as himself. They disagree on whether Blake was an innovative revolutionary who mercilessly ridiculed dogmatic religion and rebelled against convention in both art and politics, or if he was merely one of many products of his revolutionary times.

Another area of intense critical debate involves the various influences on the author and, in turn, on the text. Swedenborg’s *Heaven and Hell* is the most obvious source and target of *The Marriage’s* satire and parody. Although Blake directs some barbs at Milton as well, critics seem to agree

that their tone is one of gentle irony as opposed to the vicious ridicule he reserves for Swedenborg. Other critics have suggested the writings of Boehme and Paracelsus as inspirations for *The Marriage*, as well as Lavater's *Aphorisms on Man*, Spenser's *The Faerie Queen*, and Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France*. In terms of form, *The Marriage* has been called "structureless," but it has also been compared to "the A B A of the ternary form in music"; in this structure, the development of a first theme is followed by the development of a second theme. The work then returns to the first theme (or some variation of it). Other scholars have claimed that the poem draws on dialectic, on a well-established satiric tradition, on the elementary school primer, and on the chapbooks and political tracts of the time. Still other critics insist that it stands alone in its structure and that there has been nothing like it before or since.

The major theme of *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* is a satiric attack on orthodoxy in general and on the Swedenborgians in particular, but it is also an extended description of the educational and developmental process by which the poet-prophet is created. In addition, it is a revolutionary prophecy, written against the historical backdrop of political upheaval in America and in France. *The Marriage* begins with a poem, "The Argument," in which Blake introduces his prophetic character Rintrah; it ends with another poem, "A Song of Liberty," in which Blake celebrates revolution and foresees a new age of political and religious freedom. Between these two poems is a series of prose doctrinal statements, each followed by a "Memorable Fancy," which comments on the preceding statement while parodying Swedenborg's "Memorable Relations" from the latter's *Heaven and Hell*. Throughout the work, Blake presents a series of contraries—Heaven and Hell, Good and Evil, Angel and Devil, Reason and Energy—but then appears to reverse the traditional values associated with each term, thus celebrating Energy, Evil, and even Satan himself. Most critics today reject such a reading as simplistic and insist that, rather than merely inverting the terms of the contraries, Blake was questioning both terms and

exploring the limitations of each. The “Proverbs of Hell” section contains some of the most outrageous and most widely-quoted passages of the entire text, among them: “The road of excess leads to the palace of wisdom,” “The tygers of wrath are wiser than the horses of instruction,” and “Sooner murder an infant in its cradle than nurse unacted desires.”

The Marriage of Heaven and Hell is structured around six sections, each bracketed by Blake’s illustrations rather than titled, and composed of a theological exposition followed, from the second section onwards, by a ‘Memorable Fancy’ (the first is followed by ‘The Voice of the Devil’). In a formal reversal mirroring Blake’s inversion of Christian morality, the body of the text is preceded by ‘The Argument’, which in works of verse is typically a piece of prose, but here is a free verse poem that sets the tone, rather than explicating, the prose that follows. Besides this oscillation between discursive exposition and mystical narrative, the text itself makes extensive reference to the work of other authors: including, besides Swedenborg, the theologians Paracelsus and Boehme, the philosophers Plato and Aristotle, the poets Dante, Shakespeare and Milton, and the prophets Isaiah, Ezekiel and Diogenes. The Book of Proverbs is the model for the celebrated central section of the text, ‘Proverbs of Hell’, which constitutes an extended excursus from the second ‘Memorable Fancy’. Finally, about two years after its first appearance, and as a further response to the unfolding of the French Revolution, Blake added the more explicitly political text he titled ‘The Song of Liberty’, whose numbered verses, echoing the format of the Bible, now conclude the book. Nine copies of *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* are known to have been released between 1793 and 1825. The copy reproduced here is from the first round of printings, which Blake made in 1790 from etchings which he and his wife, Catherine, then coloured by hand. In this copy (H), much of the latter was added in 1821, prior to Blake selling the book to an acquaintance.

5.6 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

1. Accompanying many of the poems of Blake was _____
 - a) Footnotes
 - b) Illustrations
 - c) Comic Books
 - d) Explanations
2. The major event in Europe during Blake's life was?
 - a) The French Revolution
 - b) The Battle of Agincourt
 - c) The Spanish Armada
 - d) War of Roses
3. William Blake started writing the poetry around the age of _____
 - a) 40-45
 - b) 10-15
 - c) 20-25
 - d) 65
4. In Blake's poetry, daytime/nighttime represents?
 - a) Hell/Heaven
 - b) Experience/Innocence
 - c) Innocence/Experience
 - d) Heaven/Hell
5. 'That Milton was of Devil's party without knowing it' was said by
 - a) William Blake
 - b) Dr. Johnson
 - c) T.S. Eliot
 - d) P.B. Shelly

True - False

1. *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* is a poem written in Victorian age. _____
2. *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* contains many of Blake's basic religious ideas. _____
3. Blake's first volume of poems was published under the title *Poetical Sketches*. _____
4. *Blake was commissioned for Homer while he died.* _____
5. *William Blake belongs to the transitional age.* _____
6. The Neo-Classical writer looks inward to their own soul and to the life of the imagination; Romantic Writer looks outward to society. _____
7. There were no poets with romantic sensibility in the Neo-classical age. _____
8. *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* is structured around six sections. _____
9. Swedenborg's *Heaven and Hell* is the most obvious source and target of *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*. _____
10. *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* is written as well as etched on the plates. _____

5.6 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

1. Explain the social condition of Romantic age.
2. Differentiate between the social and literary trends of Neo-Classical and Romantic age.
3. William Blake is rightly called as early romantic. Explain.

5.7 SUGGESTED READING

1. *The Routledge History of English Literature: Britain and Ireland* by Ronald Carter and John McRae.
2. *An Outline History of English Literature* by William Henry Hudson. Atlantic Publishers.
3. *The Stranger from Paradise: A Biography of William Blake* by Gerald Eades Bentley. Yale University Press.

M.A. ENGLISH : SEMESTER II

COURSE CODE : ENG 212

LESSON No. 6

POETRY-II

WILLIAM BLAKE

UNIT-II

Selection from the Marriage of Heaven and Hell

STRUCTURE

- 6.1 Introduction
- 6.2 Objectives
- 6.3 The Argument
- 6.4 The Voice of Devil
- 6.5 A Memorable fancy
- 6.6 Proverbs of Hell
- 6.7 Self-Assessment Question
- 6.8 Examination Oriented Question
- 6.9 Suggested Reading

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The Marriage of Heaven and Hell by William Blake is a book of writings and illustrations about good and bad composed in 1793. According to Blake both good and bad are necessary, interwoven parts of existence. If we shut ourselves off from the bad, we are also denying ourselves the good.

6.2 OBJECTIVES

In this lesson we shall analyse the poem from plate 2 to plate 11.

After reading this unit you will be able to know the detailed summary of the plates (2-11) which will help you to introduce Blake's concept of contraries.

Marriage of Heaven and Hell

Etched about 1790-1793

Plate 2

6.3 THE ARGUMENT

“Rintrah roars and shakes his fires in the burdened air; ...Hungry clouds swag on the deep.”

Blake's “Marriage of Heaven and Hell” is a singular work, projecting the merger of heaven and hell. Being an amalgamation of poetry, prose and a list of aphorism; the poem shows conversation of devils as a profitable one, conversation regarding the nature of revolution, the body and the soul. In the opening plates Blake suggests that good and evil isn't what we think of them. They simply reflect different kinds of energies and are equally important to keep the world going. The poem starts as if it is about religion but very soon it becomes clear that it is about the politics in psychology and in a whole way we understand ourselves in the world. Various sacred texts like the Bible, he says, are accountable for a lot of misinformation we have been provided with.

The title page of the poem shows at its top, a pair of lovers strolling and sitting under some leafless trees in a very calm and colorless scene but underneath them fierce flames are pouring upwards. And at the bottom, two soaring figures are kissing each other in a kind of twisted embrace. The conventional idea of this was that heaven is up above and the torments of hellfire down below. Blake's idea is that we need to rethink and revise the entire symbolism that heaven and hell have represented so far. May be the flames down below aren't all bad after all. This is how he puts his argument, since we got a little way into his text.

In its very advent, the argument laid down by Blake “Rintrah roars and shakes his fires in the burdened air; Hungry clouds swag on the deep”, represents Rintrah as a revolutionary wrath and gives a hint as to may be some sort of doom is impending.

The opening argument is a poem that is meant to mimic the book of Isaiah (which he eventually cites). It is a simulacra of the 35th chapter of Issaiah. “Rintrah” of line one, by the way, is one of Blake’s original mythological characters, and this is Rintrah’s first appearance. He basically is justified, prophetic anger. This first plate (Plate 2, since Plate 1 is the title illumination) is probably the most confusing; it’s the most poetic, while much of the *Marriage* is downright conversational. Man’s salvation is described in a joyful way using examples from nature. The “perilous path” in the Argument resembles the “highway of holiness” in Isaiah 35:8 NKJV.

The powerful opening of the poem suggests a world of violence: “Rintrah roars & shakes his fires in the burden’d air / Hungry clouds swag on the deep.” The fire and smoke suggest a battlefield and the chaos of revolution. The cause of that chaos is analyzed at the beginning of the poem. The world has been turned upside down. The “just man” has been turned away from the institutions of church and state, and in his place are fools and hypocrites who preach law and order but create chaos. Those who proclaim restrictive moral rules and oppressive laws as “goodness” are in themselves evil. Hence to counteract this repression, Blake announces that he is of the “Devil’s Party” that will advocate freedom and energy and gratified desire. In line 10, Blake writes “And a river and a spring”. This suggests Exodus 17:1-8 as well. The term “red clay” in line 13 is another name for Adam the protoplast. The “sneaking serpent” in lines 17-18 can also be found in Tiriël. The same story is told there, but from the serpent’s point of view:

Till I am subtil as a serpent in a paradise.

Plate 3

“As a new heaven is begun ... Good is Heaven. Evil is Hell”

Plate 3 describes the Swedenborgian attitude of conventional good angel, sterile and unimaginative, while the newborn terror is being born by Revolution with consequent liberation from restrictive morals. It announces Blake's doctrine of contraries. Blake here uses some convenient coincidences related to the some concerned dates. Swedenborg had predicted that the last Judgment would come in 1757, the year Blake was born.. This leads to the assumption that Blake started the Marriage in 1790. Interestingly, the number thirty-three can also be related to Jesus Christ, since he was thirty-three years old when he died, crucified by the Romans. Moreover, Blake was born in 1757 and probably thirty-three years old when he started writing the Marriage.

In the third plate where he states the doctrine of contraries and that without these contraries there lies no progression, he suggests that human thought and life need the stimulus of active and opposing forces to give them creative movement. In the light of this argument, he gives these qualities i.e., Good and Evil, meanings opposite to their usual acceptation.. According to Blake, for the full development of man, a man should go through all the Binaries (i.e. Good and bad, Heaven and Hell, Rational and Irrational, etc.) but without the conventional conceptions of the latter. The intention is to equalize both states, that is, contraries are to be seen as necessary parts to form a unity or perfection. Also, the one without the other would lack definition. Here Blake attacks the priesthood; according to him God never propounded such dichotomies rather these dichotomies have been propounded and constructed by the corrupt and ignorant priesthood of all the religions in which Heaven is good and Hell is bad; Reason is good and irrational energy is bad; Love is good and Hate is bad. Conventional morality, to which Blake mainly counts state and church confuse people by giving moral values to contraries. Here Blake also seems to attack on the age of reason i.e. Neo-Classical or Augustan age (1700-1798) where reason is considered as superior to emotions.

Further he announces how the wrong interpretation arises, stemming from the conventional moral codes. To him passive acceptance was Evil, active opposition was good. This is the key to the meaning of the paradoxes and inversions which Blake is suggesting. Angels and Devils change place, good becomes evil and heaven turns to be hell. The free usage of satire and paradox here provides some of the most explicit statements of Blake's mental attitudes, which he elaborates in the later Prophetic Books.

Beginning with 'As a new heaven is begun... the Eternal hell revives', plate 3 refers to the New Jerusalem announced by Swedenborg for the year 1757. The Eternal hell means the revolution in both France and America and the date refers more or less to Blake's birth, a convenient coincidence for him.

Here Blake seems taking the side of Evil and Hell, where he says 'good is passive that obeys Reason. Evil is the active springing from energy.' According to Blake, Hell is better place to Heaven, in Heaven one is supposed to live a uniform life, where one will follow all the protocols of God and on the contrary Hell or Evil is the symbol of active springing of energy. Here Blake takes us back to the Milton's *Paradise Lost* where Satan is the symbol of active springing of energy who resented God and proposed an independent life, "It is better to rule in hell". Similarly, Blake says all evil is not bad rather a man in a problem is creative and a man in comfort is passive and conventional.

Plate 4

6.4 THE VOICE OF DEVIL

"All Bibles or sacred codes have been the causes Energy is Eternal Delight."

In Plate 4 Blake specifies the three main errors of conventional religion with the contrary truths in favours of liberty and Energy, voiced by the devil, illustrated by the good and Evil angels in contest. Plate 4 starts off with the

explanation that writings, such as the Bible, Quran, Geeta, etc. were the main causes for false definitions concerning human existence. Here the Devil, often referred to as poet-devil by critics, lists the errors.

As a deliberate reversal, Blake here quotes Devil for God's purposes. This doesn't imply that he is in support of the Devil but it simply projects his opposition against the "perversion" of the organized church. The Bibles or sacred codes, related to the organization and codifying of the Church, are charged with teaching a false dichotomy of the Body (related to evil and energy and evil) and the Soul (related to passivity and reason and good); there is in fact, the Devil says, no such separation. The Devil says that the church teaches damnation for acting upon one's energies, but then says that the Body is just part of the Soul that is perceived by the five senses. The Devil says that energy is the only life, and that Reason is peripheral. Read it yourself if you don't believe me.

Here are some truths, in response, about Blake's methods in this Plate.

1. Blake speaks as the Devil.
2. Blake speaks against the teachings of the Church.
3. His principles do actually go against the church teachings.
4. Nevertheless, the propositions do read as very reasonable.
5. That's because, for one thing, it makes sense;
6. For another, it is explained in a "logical," methodical way.
7. So Christians should support it, though the Devil is speaking against Logic, he uses Logic to make his point.
8. So it seems like the Christians can learn something holy from it,
9. Meaning that Blake is speaking in support of the true spirit of Christianity, which doesn't make sense, because
10. Blake is speaking as the Devil.

This vicious circle makes it hard to grasp the real attitude Blake is projecting here.

Thus, it seems that this “devil” is reasonable—that is a non-evil—guy, misunderstood because of the Church’s mis-teachings, and is quite moral.

Blake’s answer to the errors is the idea of synthesis, that is, the unity of body and soul. It is not invented by him rather he might have taken the idea from Aristotle. Furthermore, he believed in pre-existence like the Platonists. S. Foster Damon in his book *William Blake: His Philosophy and symbols* gives further explanation of Blake’s thought. He says that “Blake believed that the material body was an illusion or error – a part of the soul, but not an essential part” (318.) What the Devil intends here is the abolishment of wrong doctrines and definitions concerning the body and soul relationship. Before he is able to attack dogma and its possibly invented falsities, he must firstly mention the conventionalized definitions which are non-sense in his eyes. Then it is time to present the contraries which are more likely to be true. The first error in this doctrine is that man consists of separate things, namely body and soul. The Devil explains that the Body is the outward portion of the Soul which can be discerned by the five senses. The second error to be destroyed is the belief that energy (evil) is only a product from the body, whereas good (reason) is a quality coming from the soul only. The Devil makes clear that there is no other life, spiritual as well as bodily, except from energy deriving from the body. Thus, reason must be understood as its restrainer that sets limits to it. The third error to be corrected is the punishment of God that every man has to expect because he follows his energies. Blake suggests completely the opposite, namely describes energy as “Eternal Delight” which therefore can be regarded as the true Paradise. Punishment and God seen as a tormentor is again a thought which is rejected by the Devil.

Plate 5-6

“Those who restrain desire do so ...the Devil’s party without knowing it.”

These plates deal with the superiority of active imagination over the passive reason, and proves Milton, as a poet, to be an unconscious witness to

this truth. Plate 5 throws light upon how reason can dominate and overtake one's desire if one is weak enough to let it happen. For instance, many Christians are told by birth they are told that everything they desire accumulates evil, so they should repress it. This makes a person's life miserable, a passive one-wondering why sinful people around them lead such a luxurious or happy life. They live their entire life consoling themselves that those who are sinners will eventually go to Hell and that they will go to the Heaven. Further he goes on to explain how Milton was a good poet ('at liberty') while writing about Satan in *Paradise Lost* but was considered a bad poet when he wrote about the Messiah, that Milton was "of the Devil's party without knowing it".

In this Blake is obviously attacking reason or the restrainer for governing desire. Moreover, he mentions man whose desire is weak; obviously those who are not able to desire properly are the one who wants to limit the desire of others. Blake surely means philistine (hostile to art and culture) who have no problem to restrict desire, because they have not much of it. Desire should rule over passion, reversing the polarity of reason over passion that had existed from the earliest Greek philosophers through the Enlightenment.

In the following, Blake continues by saying that the restrained desire becomes more and more passive, "till it is only the shadow of desire." Shadow in this case obviously means nothing else but the final state of restrained desire. Blake continues by announcing that the history of desire – which is usurped by reason – can be found symbolically in John Milton's *Paradise Lost* and the Book of Job. Blake explains that Milton's Messiah was the Devil, the archangel who is called Satan in the Book of Job and his children are Sin and Death. In the following, the Devil's account is presented who says that the Messiah fell and stole from the abyss to form his heaven. Injustice is described here: the Devil is accused for disobeying to God's law, something that Jesus Christ, according to the Devil, did also. Moreover, one gets to know that "after Christ's death", "he became Jehovah". Damon in his book *William Blake: His Philosophy and Symbols* argues that "after the crucifixion, the Church worshipped the old God of this world under Christ's

name” (318). Blake perhaps sees Christ’s crucifixion rather as an act of love and thus a release from worship than a continuation of it. However, the poet surely wants to say with other words that the church still worshipped the old God. The only difference was that they used or probably misused Christ’s name from that time on.

The plate 5-6 concludes with a note on Milton in which Blake declares “Milton . . . was a true Poet and of the Devil’s party without knowing it.” Here Blake is emulating Milton by showing that Milton lived in a religiously chaotic time, instead of that he wrote of God and angels without any rigidity. It doesn’t mean that Milton was not a religious man rather he was not a blind religious man. With this new outlook, Blake reads old works in different ways. In an era when reason was supposed to govern passion, when the order of life, the universe, and everything depended on staying in one’s place in the great chain of being, Satan was the villain of *Paradise Lost* and God the hero. But now, when passion should rule reason and people declared their independence, Satan appears to be the hero.

Without contraries: Heaven is what you get if you’ll control, restraint, the beach in it and stay within the boundaries and hell is the punishment which you get if you cross those boundaries. Evil or hell, he argues, is actually about freedom, about human expression in human individuality. Good is more popular as it involves control restraints and limits. But at the same moment he also mentions a sort of relationship between both of these. They are somehow part and product of human life. They aren’t necessarily completely in opposition, but there might exist a productive relationship between these contraries.

Blake here is freezing in religious terms, but the opposition, he talks about goes far beyond that. Practically, every philosophy before the Romantic period was hierarchical. Certain values were on the top while others were below. Generally reason on top and passions below. Even when writers suggested that reason is and ought to be slaves of the passions, what they meant are natural instincts and not violent passions like love or

hatred. Blake here is not trying to merely inverse the hierarchy by bringing passion on the top of reason but he is calling for a dynamic union of these oppositions that we all experience in our lives. Romantic thinkers like Blake have tried to suggest that human nature is dynamic and instead of trying to suppress parts of ourselves, as traditional psychology and ethics taught or trying to escape from our conflicts as Rousseau wanted to do with his reverie in the bosom of nature, we should acknowledge our conflicts and try to make them more productive.

Blake was a political radical and writing in the 1970s as he was in this work, there is a very immediate context of satanic rebellion. Blake deliberately rehabilitates the Satanic, but he certainly doesn't mean that cruelty is good. What he means is that energy and conflict are fundamental to human existence. Whereas, he believes that official religion and political thought define energy and conflict as wicked and that was in order to make people passive and subservient. So Blake remarks, those who restrain desire do so because there is this weak enough to be restrained. The restrainer of reason usurps its place and governs the unwilling. This can be linked to James Boswell's, 'afraid in his own desire and struggling to deny them' but in Blake's terms unwilling when he does that his deepest self is in pain. His composition is not meant to be didactic in its very approach but is meant to stimulate one's imagination.

Moreover, it is significant to recall the two key features focused upon by Blake throughout- satire and personal philosophy. Blake is neither flippant nor too serious; the *Marriage* has much wit and good humour mingled with the expression of deeply felt personal convictions.

Plate 6-7

6.5 A MEMORABLE FANCY

“As I was walking among the fires of hell, delighted with the enjoyments of Genius, ... is an immense world of delight, closed by your senses five?”

This is not surprising, when looking at the following plates, which leave the theoretical or conceptual paths behind and progress into something less abstract. These plates were partially inspired by Dante's *Divine Commedia* and Blake takes the listener deeper into his world now and presents to the reader his mental framework towards religion and philosophy; he also provides some information on his way of printing plates. Here Blake narrates his visit to hell where he collected some proverbs. The proverbs spoken in the hell are full of torments and insanity but to Blake these proverbs are full of wisdom and which according to him are much wiser than any religious sermon. It just depends on the man that how he perceives the proverb, whether in a fearful and incarcerated way, where man halts thinking and obeys it as a commandment of God or affirmative to Blake, in a courageous and freedom way, where man can question the proverbs of hell as well as heaven and lead himself to wisdom. This first *A Memorable Fancy* is nothing but an introduction to the *Proverbs of Hell* though. To stuffy religious outsiders, he says, Hell might look like it's full of torment, but it's actually a place where free thinkers can delight and revel in the full experience of existence.

In the next paragraph of the memorable fancy, it seems Blake is talking about the present world. He says when he came back on earth he saw 'a mighty Devil folded in black clouds, hovering on the sides of the rock; with corroding fires'. It seems Blake is symbolizing here the rising industrialization of which Blake was against. Might devil is a large factory which is smiting 'corroding fires'.

Plate 7

6.6 PROVERBS OF HELL

"In seed time learn, in harvest teach, in winter enjoy... Folly is the cloak of knavery. Shame is Pride's cloak."

This section covers the famous part of the poem. In this section, Blake illustrates proverbs which he has collected during his visit to Hell. A **proverb** is

a little catchy saying, usually one with a pithy moral that's supposed to help people remember to do right. The Bible has a whole book of Proverbs, and Blake knew that his 18th century audience would be familiar with them. He uses these little verses to turn the established world on its head, espousing his new vision. For example, while traditional Christian doctrine advised people to be humble and embrace poverty, Blake writes, 'The road of excess leads to the palace of wisdom.' These sayings are satirical or blasphemous, depending on who's doing the reading. The latter proverb means that one has to go through fire to reach the destination he desires. For instance, Lord Buddha himself find the middle way (wisdom) only after enjoying the pleasures as a prince, and then overstraining through the most extreme asceticism.

He further illustrates 'Prudence is a rich ugly old maid courted by Incapacity' in which he again tries to say that the man who cannot desire extremely wears the mask of sagaciousness and preach the society which only will multiply his own incapacity. This Blake justifies in his next line 'He who desires but acts not, breeds pestilence' which connotes as the so called sagacious personalities also desires but the energy in them to fulfill their desire is extinguished the only thing left in them is sloth and this sloth they are giving to the society.

'Dip him in the river who loves water' is a phrase through which Blake emphasizes the moral relativism in which there is no absolute good or evil. He refers here that one should submerge himself in the sea route of their aspiration and only then they can get a way to lead their life without any fear and constraint.

A fool interprets the same thing differently from a wise man and the person who is not having the courage to be rebellious can never bring change and can never be recognized in future. The person who is busy in achieving his desires has no time for sorrow and he leaves the dichotomy of good and bad and acts impulsively.

‘If the fool would persist in his folly he would become wise’. Here Blake satirizes the priesthood as well as and is also suggesting the society the nothing is bad it is only time which constructs the bad as bad but if society clings to the bad constantly, it will become good. This is what the priesthood did.

Plate 8

“Prisons are built with stones of Law, Brothels with bricks of Religion... The eagle never lost so much time as when he submitted to learn of the crow.”

In plate 8 also, Blake continues the proverb. In first proverb Blake inverted the idea of prisons and brothels. Prisons are the house for criminals and criminals are one who does not follow the law and are supposed to be punished and law is itself is constructed by priesthood. The brothels are also the product of religion; here Blake attacks on the religious clergy and on the subjugation of women. It is religion during Blake’s time that abandoned women were forced to the prostitution, as society never considered them. In the next proverbs Blake inverted the socially constructed vices i.e. pride, lust, wrath, nakedness as they are also made by God. Like pride in Peacock, lust in goat, wrath in tiger and nakedness of woman; this all is God’s creation.

In the next proverb, Blake asserts ‘Excess of sorrow laughs. Excess of joy weeps’ and ‘The roaring of lions, the howling of wolves, the raging of the stormy sea, and the destructive sword, are portions of eternity too great for the eye of man’. He illustrates this to show that the thinking of man is limited and he sees these things as the wrath of God but Blake here means that this again is from God’s creations and they cannot be imagined or perceived in a fearful manner.

Blake in the following proverbs again illustrates all these proverbs in his own way and justifies that God is not prejudiced to rank all these creation in a hierarchal way. It is again the hypocrisy and ignorance of the religious priests

who justifies every virtue and vice in the name of God and propagate and multiply these false beliefs. (Rest of all the proverbs is in prose form so there is no need to paraphrase them.)

In the end of the plate 8, Blake pleads to the people that there is no need to go to religious institutions rather man should believe himself and always remain prepare to talk to his baser self. Whatever man believes truthfully is right and whatever he not is wrong. He illustrates this with the proverb of Eagle and Crow where Blake asserts ‘The eagle never lost so much time as when he submitted to learn of the crow’.

Plate 9

“The fox provides for himself, but God provides for the lion... Joys laugh not! Sorrows weep not!”

The fox is known to be a cunning animal and does not seize to be a selfish being. Based on the human contemplation and comprehension, the fox portrays the dark side of existence. However, the lion expresses dark qualities like courage, bravery and the warrior spirit, which are often considered as noble traits. ‘Think in the sleep at night’ These lines demand the use of reason in one’s life. The distribution of certain actions that is necessary to sustain life in a proper way. And before an action, a preplan serves as foreground for future actions.

This world being a matter oriented place, solely works on the basis of action. The fields will not produce any crop, unless they will have been worked upon by men. The expectation of a certain reward is logical only when an action is performed priory. The efforts and endeavors to achieve an aim acts as prayer and those are indeed the actual prayers. The verbal recitation and chanting of words are not capable of producing any result.

‘The tigers of wrath.... of instructions’ These lines signify that the felicitous action done at the most required time. For instance, at the time of

warfare, when the lives of people are at stake, the reasonable thing for the soldiers is to save their people from enemy at any cost and not to indulge in any kind of instructions which seem vague aftermath. It is the time to reflect the ferocious emotions to protect the loved ones and not indulging in any kind of negotiations which could be fruitful earlier not after the attack. The most suitable act is to defend people from the foes.

‘Expect poison from standing water’ is the reference that one should not stop even after achieving his previous set goal because then only his progress stops. He should labour more and more because he does not know what enough is.

‘You never know what is enough’ Here again Blake talks of his philosophy of excess. He puts emphasis on the thing that that we should know any phenomenon or thing beyond its limits, then only we can reach at any conclusions. Without knowing the limits of things, we cannot reach at any particular conclusion.

He is further talking about the balance of things. Everything takes its own course of progression. If one thing lacks in one being, nature has provided the other important characteristic in it. For instance, the proverb “the weak in courage is strong in cunning” indicates that every being have adopted one or the other means of their survival. As the apple tree never asks for the means of growth to a beech tree. Nature has already embedded the skills in every being to survive. And one should be thankful to God in this context rather than complaining. One should learn to value whatever one has got and be contented.

One should learn to absorb the wisdom from the mistakes of others. If one does not learn anything from other’s mistakes, then he should commit mistakes themselves. For mistakes give us the chance to improve. If the great people in past had not made mistakes, they would not have reached the stage of their excellence. Although, it is not necessary that one should repeat the same mistake made by others, and go on further in the process of development and progression by using their mistakes as a ladder.

Blake again puts emphasis on the false priests who corrupt the minds of ignorant people who have good hearts. They are the caterpillars who choose the beautiful leaves to lay their eggs. These priests don't know that these people have found the God in their own way. They have Gods in their hearts rather than in their speech only. A flower, although may seem a petty creation but, if one goes in the depths of its creation, a world of wonders gets unraveled. On the stage, the perception of a person who is ignored will certainly differ from that of a person who has attained the knowledge of creation of that flower.

Here, the flower's creation is used as a metaphor to relate it with the amount of work required to attain a specified goal. A small piece of perfection requires an unimaginable time and effort. 'Damn braces...' This proverb signifies that no object of creation favor confinement or to be kept enslaved. If someone keeps them that way, then he/she is restricting the natural way of development of that creation, as nature has created everything free.

In their state of freedom, the living beings tend to grow naturally and without any hindrance. The freedom of a soul is necessary, so as to attain its true potential.

The ending proverb signifies again the philosophy of balance. Here Blake pinpoints that joy and sorrow are both states of mind. A person can remain happy in tough times and can be in a balanced state in times of mirth. Joys are to be felt, and not necessary be expressed as laughter. The sad times supply one with an opportunity to improve and rectify the faults or the consequences that led to the state of morose.

Plate 10

“The head Sublime, the heart Pathos, the genitals Beauty,... Enough!
or Too much.”

Nature has assigned particular trait to each and every object. It has also provided those with suitable habitat to sustain accordingly e.g. birds are

given with air and fish with water. But the man tries to find follies in the Nature's strength. For instance a crow wished everything would be black and the owl wished that everything would be white. So let them be in their own ways rather than putting them in apprehension.

“Exuberance is beauty...” Initially exuberance might bring to mind enthusiasm, it is a concept associated with evil. Blake tries to propose that what is good might not be good because what we feel is good is actually a worldly constructed good. Cheerfulness is associated with the happiness but sometime it also occurs with somber excitement. The poet expresses his view on the constructed facts and anticipates the other face of the facts. Like he says ‘if Lion would be advised by the fox, he would be cunning.’ Blake adds that the followers of crooked road are the actual genius who has actually took the risk to choose this road rather than choosing the road which is walked by everyone. Here Blake may be justifying his own position that genius is outlaw and dull is socially successful. Further Blake puts his iconoclastic view on truth in which he says that truth is not constructed or told which society accepts rather it is understood and should be subjective rather than objective.

Blake is contemptuous of people who do not act on their desires as reflected in the proverbs emphasis the importance of desire: desire should not be restricted; it should be embraced and followed. It is Blake's belief in desire that causes him to be anti-clerical, as rules and regulations limit the individual's capacity to follow his or her desire. This idea is also reflecting in the last proverb “Enough! or Too Much.” Where evil is bound in the “too much” of life, restraint and restrictions are good to certain extent. This is of course the traditional moral view to the devil; exuberance is not only right and good but also beautiful. It is the means by which life is made beautiful.

Plate 11

“The ancient Poets animated all sensible objects with... Thus men forgot that All deities reside in the human breast.”

They forget that god actually exist in human’s heart. Blake himself was deeply religious, but anti-clerical. He resented institution of any kind because of the rules and regulations associated with them. He expresses that ancient poets have associated the things created by nature with Gods which were later interpreted by prophets in their own way. This shows the pantheistic inclination of Blake in which he condemns the contemporary industrialization. According to him those poets were well learned and much profound. They had the broader knowledge of the phenomenon of nature and they tried to save the woods, rivers, mountains, lakes, cities, nations by attributing them with God like traits but the priests made their own system and helped the contemporary industrialization to flourish at the expense of nature. The abstract God is in the heart of every being but these false prophets have separated this God by imposing their rules and regulations for whole human kind. This gave rise to priesthood where the innocence of human kind other desires they aspired was put in chains. These priests have preached things in their own way rather than considering the real meanings of ancient poets and they insist that these are the wordings of Gods. They forget that god actually exist in human’s heart.

6.7 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

Mark True or False:

1. In the Argument part of the poem shows conversation of devils as a profitable one. _____
2. William Blake considers contraries as destructive entities. _____
3. William Blake believes that excess of everything is bad. _____
4. Blake objects to commit mistake. _____
5. William Blake was an atheist. _____

6.8 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

1. What general expectations does the Argument establish for the rest of *MHH*?

2. What is a “contrary”? How do contraries differ from simple opposites?
3. Whose perspective do the last four sentences flow from? Are they to be accepted at face value?
4. Does the Devil satisfactorily correct the Errors he says have been caused by “Bibles or sacred codes”?
5. In what ways has Milton misread the Bible, according to the narrator?
6. Why does the narrator nonetheless admire Milton? What does that admiration have to do with the doctrine of contraries?
7. Explicate three or more of the Proverbs and, if possible, relate them to one another. In what way might the proverbs be true, in spite of their apparent contradictoriness?
8. What is Blake’s warning about the poetic device of personification? i.e. “The ancient Poets animated all sensible objects with Gods or Geniuses...”

6.9 SUGGESTED READING

1. *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell in Full Colour* by William Blake. Dover publication.
2. *An analysis of William Blake’s “The Marriage of Heaven and Hell”* by Stefanos Vassiliadis. Grin Publication.

M.A. ENGLISH : SEMESTER II

COURSE CODE : ENG 212

LESSON No. 7

POETRY-II

WILLIAM BLAKE

UNIT-II

Selection from the *Marriage of Heaven and Hell*

STRUCTURE

- 7.1 Introduction
- 7.2 Objectives
- 7.3 A Memorable fancy
- 7.4 A Song of Liberty
- 7.5 Self-Assessment Questions
- 7.6 Examination Oriented Questions
- 7.7 Suggested Reading

7.1 INTRODUCTION

W. Blake in the *Marriage of Heaven and Hell and Hell* sets out to correct some of our incorrect notions. Blake tells us that good and evil aren't what we think they are. They are just different kinds of energies & both are needed to keep the world going.

7.2 OBJECTIVES

In this lesson we shall analyze the poem from plate 12 to plate 24. After reading this lesson learners will be able to know the detailed summary of the plates (12-24) and to understand Blake's mythological world.

Plate 12-13

7.3 A MEMORABLE FANCY

“The Prophets Isaiah and Ezekiel dined with me... for the sake ‘of present ease or gratification’”.

In plate 12 -13 titled ‘A Memorable fancy’, Blake in the process of explaining his visit to hell, presents the story of his dining with Isaiah and Ezekiel. Through the prophets Isaiah and Ezekiel, Blake symbolizes his entwined poet-prophet identity as he regards prophet as not someone who foresees the future but the one who reveals eternal truths. Blake, from his childhood believed in the visionary experiences and considered them as a natural phenomenon and the source of manifesting divine imagination in man. Blake was of the view that our inner vision leads to prophecy and the validity of whatever it reveals is eternal and this inner vision is availed if we liberate our senses and consciousness from the chains of reason. Thus, the working of his inner vision in this memorable fancy explains the instance of how he dined with these ancient poets – Isaiah and Ezekiel. The speaker asks them how they had the courage to assert that God spoke to them without getting afraid of being misunderstood. People who prophesize or have visions are often on the brink of being misunderstood by the common people and could be simply understood as imposing their personal thoughts on others rather than conveying divine wishes. Isaiah rejected this statement by confirming that he didn’t hear the voice of God or see God – not physically through his finite sensual perception. But he heard his own voice of honest outrage and in this honest indignation; he heard the voice of God and realized the presence of infinite in every finiteness. Blake outlines the contradictions and stresses that our senses are indeed gifts from God. Moreover, through the voice of Isaiah, he tries to persuade the readers to have the courage to voice their most desired and cherished desires and always be themselves. He implies that it takes courage to be an independent thinker and when a person is able to hear his voice of indignation, then only, he gets liberated and becomes fearless. This inner voice is the voice

of God and on realizing this Isaiah got liberated and without fearing the consequences, he just wrote. Then the narrator asked if being firmly persuaded that something is true makes it true. Isaiah replied that in poetic imagination, the things imagined or created with firm belief are as true as life. The belief has the power of shaking mountains but most people are incapable of this firm belief. Romantic projection is a romantic notion. Romantic believes that the visions he is having can be projected onto the world and they become reality. For the enlightenment period, the highest human and divine attribute is reason whereas for the romantic period, the highest human and divine attribute is creation, the combination of will and energy which are considered as the highest of romantic virtues. Then Ezekiel in the poem told about the erection of institutionalized religion and God by priests. Different nations had different explanations for the origin of the world and God, but he said, the people of Israel taught the world about the first principle of creation or the “poetic genius”. All other philosophies and religions of other countries are merely derivatives or tributaries of this fundamental source of creation. This was the reason of their abhorring the priests and their institutionalized religions which burgeons on reason and passivity ignoring energy and activity. This led to their prophesizing that at the end, everyone will recognize the source of all Gods which is poetic genius. He cites the example of King David of Israel who ruled over Judah from 1010-970 B.C.E. and depicted as an acclaimed courageous warrior, and a poet and musician, credited for composing much of the psalms contained in *Book of Psalms*. King David is widely viewed as righteous and effective king in battle and civil justice. He is described as a man after God’s own heart. Both in his prophetic and in his regal character, David was a type of messiah. The book of psalms commonly bears the title of the “Psalms of David”, from the circumstance that he was the largest contributor (about 80 psalms) to the collection. King David lived life to the fullest as he didn’t suppress his desires and on the realization of his scandal by a confrontation with Prophet Nathan, he accepts his sin and prayed fervently for God’s mercy.

Ezekiel explains that he and Isaiah preached against the priests and religions of other countries and asserted that they had rebelled just to make people understand the real source of creation, "Poetic Genius". But the common people could not understand their rebellion and without understanding their prophecies, they simply followed the established religion. He says that his and Isaiah's poetry did become mere religion. "Poetic Genius", the only real thing comes from "the human breast". But unfortunately, everyone simply followed the "the Jews code" and "the Jews God", falling into the pattern once again. The narrator heard all this with wonder and confessed his persuasion. After dinner, he asked Isaiah about his lost works and both the prophets responded that none of that value has lost. Then he asked Isaiah about his roaming naked and bare foot for three years and he responded by citing the example of his friend Diogenes, the cynic, as he walked around naked and lived a life of utter poverty just to bring out the hypocrisies of humans and human life in general. Then the narrator asked Ezekiel about his eating dung and laying so long on his right and left side. He responded that he underwent these conditions just to make other people realize of their finite approaches in their lives so that they can open up to the infinite. People often think about their immediate pleasure or gratifications, thus ignoring their conscience or inner voice and remain devoid of that immense knowledge and pleasure which comes with transgression, all their lives. He says that they did all this in order to make people realize of their infinite capabilities by identifying their latent energies. Since Blake is trying to walk on the path of these prophets, if people start worshipping his mythology and treat it as religion, the cycle would continue.

Plate 14

"The ancient tradition that the world ... he sees all things thro' narrow chinks of his cavern."

In plate 14, Blake makes a reference to the creation of universe which was created in six days and says that he agrees with the ancient

tradition of destruction of world at the end of six thousand years by its consumption in fire. He attributes the source of this information to hell. Here Blake is clearly predicting the liberation of world from the restrictive thoughts of the enlightenment (including Cartesian dualism of the separation of body and soul) which appear “finite and corrupt” to Blake. The world will be released from its restrictions and appear infinite and pure when the Cherub with the flaming sword who guards the Garden of Eden will have to leave and people will be able to have fun and happiness in their lives again Blake makes his contribution in this reformation through his own artwork by “printing in the infernal method, by corrosives.” He tries to improve the taste of people by pouring down the nectar of creative imagination so that they understand the infiniteness of the finite through an improvement in their sensual perception. The first thing he wants to achieve is to efface completely the notion of distinction of body and soul from the consciousness of man by making use of the infernal method for printing, that is, by making bitingly sarcastic remarks at the finite and parochial ideologies of pre-established institutions of religions and philosophies. This method has medicinal and curative benefits in hell as it dissolves the evident upper layer and reveals the holy infinite which was concealed by the superficial limitedness. It is important to cleanse senses through which we perceive this world in order to see it in its true capacity and true infiniteness. We need to shake the dust of finiteness and religiously preached good and morality off our senses and need to embrace the idea of bad and devil in us, to understand the real essence of this whole world. Man has become passive to explore the avenues out of his grotto as he remains closed up in it and only see the fragments of the things through the narrow slits of his cave. This passivity, this acceptance for readymade ideas, this viewing the world through the small slit is his weak spot which makes him vulnerable and he is able to see only one aspect of this world. If he wants to open himself up to the full view of life and experience all its energies and emotions, he needs to approach lives and

world from the perspectives of both, good and bad, the angel and the devil. This is another example of Blake being funny since he is being serious about the part he will play while also being slyly self-depreciative.

Plate 15-17

A Memorable Fancy

“I was in a printing house in hell, & saw ... who are our Energies.”

In plate 15, Blake gives the detailed description of a printing house in hell and relates the method of transferring knowledge from one generation to another. This is the poetic way of describing his own printing process by calling it “a printing house in hell.” Symbolically, Blake is suggesting that his work will have a lasting impact saying that his new printing methods will be transmitted from generation to generation and it will bring revolution. Blake’s vision of a printing house in hell is the type of dream an inspired printer is expected to have and in all his visions, he is more than a passive observer. Blake has the ability to live the visions on the level of abstraction and is able to objectify them. Arising from the collective unconscious, it appears to Blake in the form of an archetypal dream. He observes, converses and participates through the medium of his own personality in the action that takes place. He also involves the external world in the dream as he views the vision as having implications. Through the support of his visionary experience, he is able to comment on the world from a detached position. This leads Northrop Frye to declare that *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* belongs in the tradition of great satire. Satire has always been one of the most effective weapons of the poet and the prophet. It acts as an acid which corrodes everything that it touches. Blake saw the acid bath of his engravings as a symbol of this approach.

In order to understand Blake’s imagination completely, we must try to analyze the symbols he uses, that come into consciousness in the course of visionary experience. This connects us with another aspect of reality, i.e.,

with the non-rational side of reality. For, we must accept and believe that man is not just a rational being but is also under the effect of some non-rational factors as emotions and instinctual drives and we cannot ignore these in the full comprehension of man and reality. Thus it is important to consider the various elements that appear in Blake's visions and use the method of amplification for their analysis and to elaborate upon what Blake is "seeing" in order to discover that what reality these images impart.

Readers and critics of Blake have offered various differing interpretations of his symbols- as the symbol is a bridge between consciousness and something which is unknown. The essence of a symbol could be seen in its ambiguity and its attraction lies in its one part being visible and the other remaining obscure as the case with the printing house vision of the six caves-chambers and their occupants.

The number six has a striking affinity for the motif of his study. Jung states that according to old tradition six means creation and evolution, as it is the product of two and three (even and odd=female and male). He quotes Philo Judaeus, who calls the "senarius" (six) the "number most suited to generation."

The word "generation" here may convey more than one sense. Blake's intention of using the word "generation" may imply a period in the history of mankind but on another level, Blake may be hinting at the generation of an idea and how an idea bursts into form.

The six chambers, except for the last one, are really caves-dark womb-like openings in the earth and where the inhabitants live in isolation from the rest of the world. Blake can enter that area at will as he has cleansed his doors of perception with corrosives and he no longer requires to peer through the narrow chinks of his five senses.

In the first chamber, he sees a Dragon-man. This reference to Dragon-man shows evidences of Blake's being familiar with the mythological patterns of ancient Greece, where a parallel exists. The first king of Attica, as Ovid

recounts the tale, was called Cecrops. He had no human ancestor and was only half human, that half being the head, arms and the upper part of the torso and remaining part being the dragon. The vipers, and the others with him, are seen adorning the cave with gold and silver and precious stones. He spreads about all kinds of material treasure prized by man. Like the serpent in Eden, he holds before man's eyes that for which he yearns. It is the fruit of the tree of knowledge, and it tempts man to procure for himself all the advantages of power and wealth. This is what Blake believes makes the attainment of knowledge desirable to so many people, and this is what he fears and distrusts as he would the venom of the viper. This is why he detests the tools and machines of the Industrial Revolution; he sees them as becoming the masters of men as they grope blindly after the treasures of the earth. Blake regards them as the blandishments of the serpent, and he believes that rather than freeing mankind, the use of knowledge for material production enslaves him.

As the viper symbolizes all that is material and sensual in man, the eagle represents the polar opposite to Blake. The third chamber, then releases corporeal man from the coils of the serpent. No longer need he be bound to earth, for this eagle's feathers and wings are of air-the whole bird is mind or spirit. What under the viper's domination was a rocky cave now dissolves its walls and becomes infinity. This is Blake's feeling about the power of imagination as embodied in the great bird: it surpasses time and space and reveals that which is beyond the limit of man's experience.

We note that in the first chamber the activity of the dragons was the clearing away of rubbish, in the second chamber, the vipers are busily engaged in placing valuable baubles about; and it is only in the third chamber that something new actually comes into being. It is with the emergence of the eagle-men, Blake's conceptualization of the poetic genius- that creativity begins to take place.

Blake describes perception in the first case, acceptance of sensual desire in the second, development of the creative spirit in the third, and now his dream brings him into the fourth chamber: a fiery furnace in which

flaming lions are the agents of a process of transformation. Their rage as they talk about is the reaction to the ceaseless conflict between viper aspect and the eagle aspect in man, as Blake experiences it in his own being. In the interaction, which takes place in the fourth chamber, the metals, or elements continue and “living fluids” are the result. The fluid state is that condition which can take the form of any vessel into which it is poured—it might be said to resemble free energy which has the capacity of being directed into a limitless number of channels. Blake feels this energy burning within him, it is too intense for him to endure, and he must swiftly advance into the next chamber.

In the fifth chamber, Blake makes reference to some “Unnam’d forms”, which give shape and expression to energy, represented as flaming fire. Blake says that these forms “cast the metals into the expanse”, that is, from these inner constructive principles ensues the dynamic action which results in the transmission of knowledge from generation to generation. The sixth chapter is the end of the historical process, when a man is finally able to understand something of which he was not aware before. What he has done is to accept certain contents which come up from the unconscious and to make those contents conscious. Blake recognizes intuitively that this is the way man learns. And man as printer commits this learning to books which are placed in libraries.

The whole passage can be interpreted as Blake’s projection of the mystery of his personal creative activity, beginning with a vision and being brought into reality through a magical and devilish printing process. Or, the passage could be taken in a broader aspect, as the paradigm in one man, possessed of an unparalleled ability to express his experiences, or the manner in which unknown mysteries become psychological facts.

Blake used to do everything himself in printing; he did not have to go to traditional publisher and therefore follow their rules. It is another poetic way of delineating something that is fairly mundane; the printing of a book.

It also talks about the giants or the antediluvians that are briefly mentioned in the flood story of the book of Genesis. They were the sources of energy which is now suppressed by the religion. Blake says these giants are in reality the cause of life on this earth and the source of all energy and activity, they are the seed bed of the sensual existence of this world but now they themselves are living in chains in this world. He further adds that chains can only bind those who are not strong enough or lack the will to get immersed in their own selves, in their energies good or bad. Chains are the devices created by the weak and tame minds to resist the call of their inner voice and the will to act on it. The weakness in courage becomes the strength of the cunning as the mind who cannot herald into creativity through the reigns of his courage and inner energy will definitely find clever avenues to stay in its place intact and also to save its position.

Blake divides this world into two – the Prolific and the Devourer. The Prolific are the producers, the fecund energies who fulfill the world with the fruits of their creativity and production. The Devourers, the oppressors of the energies, prey upon and enjoy avidly the production of the prolific and fancies that the producer is in its fetters. The devourer is oblivious of the fact that, through the fruits of the creator, he is only consuming a part of it taking it as whole and he cannot bind the creative energy as it is infinite. But Blake also throws light on the importance of the devourer as without him, it is not possible for the creator to be prolific as the contention between the two is the source of creation. The devourer provides the direction of creation to the prolific as the devourer tries to engulf whatever excesses the prolific provide and thus the prolific has to become more and more creative every time. Then Blake also brings forth the doubt of some who consider only God to be prolific. He satisfies their query by suggesting what he suggested earlier also that nobody has seen God physically. God is present and act through the man or the existing beings. He manifests himself in human beings when they listen to the pure voice of their inner selves and when they realize the immense power and

conviction present inside. He is not present in the pre-established notions of religion. He is present in the ever flowing energy inside us. Then he says that these two types of man are present on this earth since creation and they are supposed to be enemies. The idea of their reconciliation will lead to the destruction of the existence as these contraries are important for the progression of the world. Religion tries to establish the friendship between the two but Jesus Christ wanted to separate them and make them enemies.

Plate 17-20

A Memorable Fancy

“An Angel came to me and said: ‘O pitiable foolish... Opposition in true friendship’”.

In this “Memorable Fancy”, Blake quotes an angel who came to him and sounded like a typical hell fire preacher and addresses him as a pitiable foolish young man, horrible and dreadful and asks him to reconsider the choice of his career as it will lead the narrator to hot burning dungeon till eternity. The narrator says that they should compare eternities and then see whose is better. The angel thus took him through a stable and through a church into a church vault and finally they reach a mill. The church here symbolizes the institutionalized religion, church vault suggests death or something locked away and the mill symbolizes the rational thought. After the mill, they arrived at a cave and through the cave they search their slow and boaring way into a boundless void which appeared as if there exists a sky below them and they held themselves at their places by sticking to the roots of trees and hung over this immensity. The narrator said to the angel that if the angel pleases, they could commit themselves to the void and wait for the divine guidance there and further adds that he will definitely wait there even if the angel refuses to do so. The angel asked him not to presume and he also agrees to stay till the darkness fades away and the destiny of the speaker is revealed. So they

both remained there, the speaker sitting in the twisted root of an oak and the angel suspended in the fungus. In front of them was an infinite abyss and it was fiery and smoky as if a city is on fire. Beneath them, at a long distance, there was the sun, black and shining along which on a fiery track were spiders who were revolving and moving towards their preys. Their preys were the offspring of corruption and were terrifically shaped animals and were flowing or swimming in the air in the infinite deep and these were the “Devils” and were called “Powers of the air”. The speaker then asked his companion which was his eternal lot and the angel replied that it was “between the black and white spiders” but from between them cloud and fire worst blackening all below and the bottom became black as a sea and below nothing was visible and appeared only a black tempest. Then eastwards, they saw a large waterfall of blood and fire between the clouds and the waves and then at a little distance, they saw a thing approaching. At first it rose and sunk like the scaly fold of a giant serpent, then appears as a fiery crest over the waves, and then it appeared as a ridge of golden rocks, then two globes of crimson fire and finally the identity of the thing became clear as it was Leviathan which was heading towards them with all the “fury of a spiritual existence.”

At seeing this, the angel climbed back into the mill and the speaker remained alone. Then the appearance also vanished and the speaker found himself on a pleasant bank of a river in moonlight and a harper was singing to his harp about the stagnation of the opinions of the mind and the harm caused by it. Then the speaker headed for the mill where he found the angel who was surprised to see him and enquired about his escape. The speaker answered that whatever they saw was because of the angel’s metaphysics and when he ran away, the speaker found himself at a very, pleasant bank of a sea. They have seen the speaker’s lot and now the speaker offers the angel to show him his lot. The angel laughs at it but the speaker forcibly carries him in his arms and flies towards west until they were elevated above the earth’s shadow and then they both

jump into the body of the sun. There the speaker clothes himself in white robe, taking Swedenborg's volumes and passing all the planets to reach Saturn and then after some rest leaped into the void between storm and stars. The speaker tells the angel that here in this space is his lot. Then they saw the stable and the church and he took him to the altar and opened the Bible and found a deep pit into which they both moved and saw seven houses of brick. Blake gives the description of only one house which they entered and it was full of chained monkeys, baboons and other animals of that species, they were grinning and snatching at each other but were controlled by their short chains. At sometimes, they grow multifold and then the hunting of the weak by the strong takes place. First they couple with each other grinningly and then the strong devoured the weak by first pulling its one limb, then another till the body becomes a helpless trunk and at last with apparent fondness, it is devoured too. One animal was plucking the flesh off his own tail and the atmosphere was filled with annoying stench. Then they enter the mill and the speaker comes out with the Skelton of Aristotle's *Analytics*. To all this, Angel responds by saying that the speaker should be ashamed as he has imposed his own phantasy or imagination on the angel. Angel retorts by saying that at times favourable, they both imposed their beliefs on each other and now they cannot converse with each other as the work of angle is only *Analytics*. Blake once again hints at the importance of contention or opposition as it is the source of progression and it is true friendship.

Through the eyes of the angel, the narrator's future looks like hell and the angel runs away with fear- which causes the place to look pleasant through the narrator's own vision. And through the speaker's eyes, the angel's future also looks bleak including chained monkeys who were killing each other and other bad visions. Blake also makes fun of Swedenborg and Aristotle's logic in the course of his fancy. This is another example of seeing yourself and the world through other people's eyes ignoring our own heart and energies and how the situation reverses when you follow your own heart.

Plate 21-22

“I have always found that Angels ... he only holds a candle in sunshine.”

In this plate, Blake exposes the vanity of angels as they consider themselves to be the only wise and the foundation of this vanity is systematic reasoning which is the principle of enlightenment and they preach it with confident impudence. This plate is a specific jab at Swedenborg. Blake sarcastically attacks Swedenborg's claims that whatever he writes are fresh whereas they are the contents or index of the already published books. He compares Swedenborg to a man who carries a monkey along with him to show his superiority in intelligence to monkey and his vanity increased and considered himself to be wiser than others. Swedenborg considered himself to be the first one who exposed the church and its hypocrisies and he considered all others as religious and saw himself as a transgressor. Blake cites two facts about Swedenborg. Firstly he says that Swedenborg did not write anything fresh or any new truth as what he wrote, it has already been written or hinted at by other writers also in the past. The other fact is he has repeated all the old falsehoods. He has not created anything new and just copied the old knowledge and the reason behind this is his finiteness in his conversation which is limited only to the angels who are all religious and never conversed with the devils who hate religion. He never tried to see another face of coin as he was not capable of shedding off his envisaged beliefs. His writings are mere encapsulations of all the previous superficial knowledge and opinions and dissection of some eye opening knowledge but nothing more. He also states another fact that any person with some mechanical skills has the capability of producing the huge works of equal weight age as that of Swedenborg's work from the writings of Paracelsus or Jacob Behmen and the work will be infinite in number if the reference taken is works of Dante or Shakespeare and be better than Swedenborg. He again remarks that whoever copies from the earlier works does not become superior or wiser than the master but only knows a part of his knowledge. They could

never be better than their masters as their works will be the candle whereas their master's work is sunshine.

Plate 22-24

A Memorable Fancy

“Once I saw a devil in flame of fire ... Ox is oppression.”

In the last ‘Memorable Fancy’, Blake reveals his notion of worshipping God. Persuasive, rebellious and centuries ahead of his time, defiant Blake honors the name of God by challenging our beliefs and exposing us to opposition. The speaker narrates an incidence of conversation that took place between devil in a flame of fire and Angel who sat on a cloud. Devil voiced the emotions of Blake regarding worship of God. The best way to worship God is to appreciate and esteem his valuable gifts in other fellow men according to their creativity, for God manifests himself through his gifts he bestowed upon human beings. The greatest man should be loved and revered best and those who asperse the personality and deeds of great men in reality hate God as God resides in all humankind. On hearing this, the angel first becomes blue, then grew yellow and at last became white, then pink and smilingly addressed the devil as Idolater and asked if God is not one and if he is not visible in Jesus Christ. Also he asserts that Jesus Christ has given his approval to the law of Ten Commandments and considered all other men as “fools, sinners and nothings”. The devil replied that if you crush a fool along with wheat in a mortar, his folly will also be beaten out of him. Taking the example of Jesus Christ he says that if he is the greatest man, then he should be loved to the greatest degree but he also broke the Ten Commandments to which he has given his sanction. He cites certain examples of Christ when he broke the laws of Ten Commandments viz. when he mocked at the Sabbath, and thus mocked at the Sabbaths God, he is guilty of murdering those who were murdered because of him, not providing the support of law to the woman

taken in adultery and other such examples. The devil then says that without breaking these Ten Commandments, no virtue can exist. As Jesus acted by his own impulses rather than following the rules of others, or the religious rules which is the reason of greatness of Jesus. At this point, Angel stretched out his arms to embrace the flame of fire and emerged as Elijah. He became a convert and is now a devil.

Blake ends the “Memorable fancy” by promising the “Bible of Hell”, which allude to his future works he will write and illustrate.

7.4 A SONG OF LIBERTY

“1. The Eternal Female groaned! It was heard over all the Earth:...
For every thing that lives is Holy.”

Reflecting the outbreak of American Revolution and the uprising against the tyranny of Church and state, Blake’s ‘Songs of Liberty’ is entirely symbolic. It opens with a fallen experiential world of oppression, with Albion, Blake’s representation of England, sick. The American Revolution and the France being commanded to ‘rend down thy dungeon’, clearly projects the fall of the Bastille. The French revolution here is seen as the birth of the spirit of liberty. With this, the fiery spirit of revolution is reborn, which Blake calls Orc, encompassing all forms of liberation. Its main figure, a redeemer son is described as a ‘terror’ born on the ‘infinite mountains’ across the ‘Atlantic sea’. This son is basically a thinly rewriting of Christ at the Second Coming.

Confronting Urizen on the Atlantean mountains and the ‘starry king’ of England, George III, who repress liberation, Orc succeeds in stamping the ‘stony law’ to dust. Urizen hurls him into the western sea, only to suffer a Satanic fall himself. He promulgates the Ten Commandments, eyeing in dismay Orc, who is destroying curses, law, empire and sexual repression. The event is accompanied by a chorus at the backdrop that rings the proclamation against imperial savagery as it sings, “Empire is no more! And now the lion and the wolf shall cease... For everything that lives holy” (226).

The poem can be identified with the Bible, particularly the book of Revelation in terms of its structure and language. Beginning with 'eternal female' which is with reference to Mary, Blake's implication is to create the mental picture of conception and the birth of Jesus. But here, he reverses the context by posing the birth of the antichrist, the opposite of Jesus. Nevertheless, this alternate identity is not an evil creature, but an agent of freedom and liberation. The fire imagery represents how the marriage of heaven and hell will liberate the world from autocracy. It should be noted that fire which is usually associated with hell is here used in heaven.

7.5 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

1. William Blake dined in the hell. Name the persons with whom he dined.
2. Discuss Blake's idea of heaven.
3. Blake was in the favor of Angels or Demons.
4. Does Blake refer to the biblical concept of creation in his poem or not.
5. Discuss Blake's idea of God.

7.6 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

1. What does the narrator learn from the Prophets Isaiah and Ezekiel?
2. What constitutes the Apocalypse alluded to in the line "the world will be consumed in fire at the end of six thousand years"?
3. What, if anything, does Blake's own writing or engraving have to do with the Apocalypse? (The *Norton* editors write that the Fancy is an allegory about Blake's methods as an engraver. Is it more than that?)
4. What are the "Prolific" and the "Devouring," respectively? What is the relationship between them?
5. From what perspective does the Angel admonish the narrator?
6. By what means do the Angel and the narrator descend into the abyss or "void boundless"? Can you provide some explication of the various "places" along the way?

7. Why should it matter that the Angel is upside down, I.e. that “he was suspended in a fungus which hung with the head downward into the deep”?
8. Why does the narrator’s comic vision of the Angel’s eternal lot take the particular form it does?
9. What is the narrator’s basic criticism of the Angel’s view and of those who ground their opinions in sacred codes, or institutional religion? What, then, is the way to true knowledge?
10. Why is it significant for *MHH* as a whole that the Angel is converted to the narrator’s and the Devil’s perspective?

7.7 SUGGESTED READING

1. *The Book of Thel, and The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* by William Blake. Dodo Press.
2. *Art and alienation in Blake’s The marriage of Heaven and Hell* by Timothy Wallace Drescher. University of Wisconsin Press.

M.A. ENGLISH : SEMESTER II

COURSE CODE : ENG 212

LESSON No. 8

POETRY-II

WILLIAM BLAKE

UNIT-II

Selection from *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*

STRUCTURE

- 8.1 Introduction
- 8.2 Objectives
- 8.3 Blake's symbolism
- 8.4 Swedenborgianism
- 8.5 Marriage of Heaven and Hell as a satire
- 8.6 Blake's Satan
- 8.7 Self-Assessment Questions
- 8.8 Examination Oriented Questions
- 8.9 Suggested Reading

8.1 INTRODUCTION

The Marriage of Heaven and Hell not only broke with the past on many levels but was also an important first step in the articulation of Blake's philosophy and the creation of his new university.

8.2 OBJECTIVES

In this lesson we shall discuss William Blake's *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, from various perspectives which will help the learners in complete explanation of the poem.

8.3 BLAKE'S SYMBOLISM

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

An explanation of *The Marriage* requires first a brief discussion of the symbols involved in that work. The first of the symbols which confronts us is that of Rintrah, the mythological being who "rear and shakes his fire". Northrop Frye in his study *Fearful Symmetry* equates Rintrah with the Biblical Elijah who is the ascetic prophet in angry revolt against injustice and the deformity of moral virtue in society. In *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* Rintrah is mentioned only twice - once at both the beginning and end of "The Argument". In those two instances he seems to be expressing merely the cyclic spirit of revolt, and hardly more than this can be deduced at this point concerning his character. A more significant symbol in *The Marriage* is Blake's picturesque representation of himself as the Devil, who also represents the spirit of protest. But while Rintrah is the ascetic statement of revolt, the Devil is the positive movement of revolutionary energy within a society. Since *The Marriage* is a biting satire on the evils of passive and conventional society, the Devil symbolizes, on one level that influence which seeks to disrupt the status quo in a drive for positive reform.

The Devil and Rintrah are in strong opposition to a third symbol — that of the Angel — who represents the society of convention and law, of

moral virtue for its own selfish ends. As the personification of tradition and restraint, this symbol is the spirit of complacency which rules all worldly societies. The Angel is the status quo that the Devil seeks to upset and he is the complete antithesis of the ascetic Rintrah.

In the reading and analysis of *The Marriage* one must remember that Blake for the most part ascribes to the Satanic characters the admirable qualities of energy and open-mindedness, while he clothes the - “heavenly” element of humanity with the contemptible attributes of narrow-mindedness and passivity”. This method of satire offers a perfect set-up for criticism of the social order,

“Without contraries is no progression. Attraction and Repulsion, Reason and Energy, Love and Hate, are necessary to Human existence.”

“From these contraries spring what the religious call Good and Evil. Good is the passive that obeys Reason. Evil is the active springing from Energy.”

“Good is Heaven. Evil is Hell.”

Blake, like Heraclitus, believes “opposition brings men together, and out of discord comes the fairest harmony”.

This interaction of the two contraries in man’s life brings the reader to the fourth symbol of *The Marriage* — that of the Angel embracing the Devil who, being consumed in flames, rises as Elijah-. This synthesis of Angel and Devil represents the artist whose Imagination must create within a society which continually attempts to restrain it. Like the artist, all must live in this world. The most sublime of our creations — no matter how universal their implications — are necessarily in its terms. One cannot constantly reject the imperfect society, as Rintrah does, without offering some substitution, for all are bound by the very nature to require expression through such mediums. These societies, of which the artist is irrevocably a part, constantly attempt to restrict and suppress his imagination, requiring a conformity which is death

to the creative impulse. In the same way all are caught to a greater or lesser degree in the conflict which exists between the individual imagination and the conformity required by the environment. It is for this reason that the artist and the individual ever lie between the two temptations- one, to forsake society for the life of the imagination and in so doing, surrender that environment which gives scope and meaning to creativity, the other, to forsake imagination and live by the mediocre standards of society, thus sacrificing the essence of the artistic soul. Blake considered those who have made a successful adjustment to society and yet have not compromised their imaginations, to be among “the Redeemed”.

The Argument opens, with a picture of Rintrah, the hermit protester and social outcast. Blake establishes the ascetic character of this symbol by setting his description in a two-line stanza away from the rest of the poem. In the second stanza Blake goes on to speak of the distant past when just men walked in the paths of holiness through the mortal world. These were the men who loved the spirit of goodness and virtue, of creative imagination, and though the way of virtue was rough at first, they, by their diligence, found that this way of life could flourish. The third stanza shows how virtue and imagination smoothed the paths of holiness and made from its barrenness a rich soil on which goodness could thrive more easily.

It was then that the wicked, like parasites, seeing the richness of this way, desired it for themselves. They moved in upon the just men and drove them out of the society they had made; then the wicked put on the semblance of virtue and began to cultivate the paths of holiness for their own ends. Finally, in stanza five is the situation as it exists today. “The sneaking serpent walks in mild humility, and the just man rages in the wilds where lions roam”. The hypocrites, the Angels, as they would think of themselves, control society according to their own selfish standards under the guise of pious religion, while the honest men of imaginative impulse must become the outcasts, protesting alone against an error which has become the norm. They are left with Rintrah who -

... roars and shakes his fires in the
Burden'd air;"

while -

“Hungry clouds swag on the deep”.

Here, in little more than four stanzas one can see the course of society from revolution to revolution. Blake sees the whole of human history since the fall as bound in these cycles of social upheaval. The revolutions recur because man's imagination, the one part of his nature which is free and unfallen, revolts against the restraints placed upon it by the society of a fallen world. After revolutions men have temporarily gained some little added dignity and freedom which will serve to nourish the imagination. However, selfishness, jealousy, tyranny creep back inevitably through fallen man's very nature; imagination is again the outcast building up the power for a revolution.

8.4 SWEDENBORGIANISM

Although little known today, Swedenborg was at the centre of an occult revival in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Son of an eminent Lutheran minister in the city of Stockholm, Swedenborg had a long career as a scientist. He published widely in a number of fields, including anatomy, geology and chemistry. However, during 1743–45 he had a series of visionary experiences and subsequently devoted himself to spiritual investigations. Swedenborg claimed that he, through revelations, had come to understand the hidden meaning of Scripture, which had hitherto been obscured or merely understood superficially in the old churches.

Swedenborg held that there was a fundamental interconnection between the material and the spiritual world, which could be perceived through 'correspondences'. This did not give way to any monism; the material and the spiritual were firmly discriminated. But Swedenborg emphasized the connection between them. In the Bible, the 'correspondences' appear as a coded language, so that natural objects, animals, or names had an 'inner sense' relating to one's spiritual salvation. Thereby, Swedenborg provided a semiotics of divine significances, which Blake would refer to—and satirize.

Swedenborg described a number of visionary journeys to Heaven and Hell, on which he conversed with angels and devils. What Swedenborg became witness to in the spiritual world he entitled 'Memorable Relations' and placed at the end of the chapters of his theological books. Their primary function was to confirm the doctrines he had just proposed in the preceding pages. It was in the spiritual world he learned how the images of the Bible were to be interpreted, since their significances were made explicit as visionary projections.

Blake owned Swedenborg's books, of which, three annotated copies are extant. At the time his works were translated from Latin into English in the mid-1770s, Swedenborgian groups and societies were emerging all over England. Especially, Manchester and London proved to be a fertile ground for Swedenborgianism. The Swedish prophet also had a large audience who did not convert, but read the teachings to learn more about the man who had 'made a lot of noise in the speculative world'. Blake's attack on Swedenborg in *The Marriage* may have been compelled by private grievances, but, as a satire, it had public potential.

The Marriage was not Blake's final word on Swedenborg. Morton Paley has shown Blake's interest in the mystic philosopher extends to a long list of borrowings and adaptations in poems etched long after *The Marriage* was completed. In a trilogy of essays, Joseph Viscomi greatly explored the critical understanding of the chronology of composition and the sub-cultural context of *The Marriage*. Viscomi's meticulous research has evidenced that the first segment of the work to be completed was the four consecutive plates, which (in the final organization of the work) became Plates 21–24. This is where we find the most direct criticism of Swedenborg. The work was subsequently expanded piecemeal, through several print sessions. Although many of the later plates are not directly linked to Swedenborg, Blake's other writings at the time show that they reflect ideas that went counter to the increasingly conservative New Jerusalem Church.

The central area of disagreement is raised on Plate 3, which Blake would place at the beginning of the finished *Marriage*. Swedenborg is here mentioned by name, immediately followed by a renunciation of ‘what the religious call Good and Evil’.

8.5 MARRIAGE OF HEAVEN AND HELL AS A SATIRE

The Marriage of Heaven and Hell is an attack on conventional 18th century society, its philosophy and politics. It satirizes everything within that society from its economics to its theology, and yet there is something more here than mere general attack on the world in which Blake lived. David Erdman in his recent book *Prophet Against Empire* studies Blake primarily as a “poet of social Vision” whose works were an “interpretation of the history of his own times.” He feels that Blake, like many prophets, believed that he would live to see the enactment of his apocalyptic vision in a time when “Empire is no more” :

“...despite the occasional shrinkings of Blake au citizen, Blake as prophet, from the *French Revolution* to *The Song of Los*, from 1791 to 1795, cleaved to the vision of an imminent spring thaw when the happy earth would ‘sing in its core’ as the fire of Voltaire and Rousseau melted the Alpine or Atlantic snows”.

The composition of *The Marriage of the Heaven and Hell*, etched about 1793, is situated in the midst of these most optimistic works. The final prophetic vision in “A Song of Liberty” is certainly an expression of the poet’s faith in the power of the revolutionary times in which he lived. No one reading its powerful poetry can help apprehending his deep conviction that the day of social judgment is at hand. Blake, however, lived to see the rise of Napoleon from the devastation of the French Revolution, and with this came the consequent dashing of his hope that such a day of judgment would arrive while he was living. Never did he lose, however, his fundamental belief in the salutary effects of revolutionary energy. Blake saw in the 18th century a microcosm of a universal pattern of fallen society. While *The Marriage of*

the Heaven and Hell is a satirical study of a narrow minded reactionary society whose religious, moral and political oppressions produced both the French and American Revolutions, it is also by implication a picture of fallen society since the time of the first humans to the Day of Judgment. In "The Argument" Blake has portrayed the cycle of revolution which will repeat itself endlessly until all men reach that final vision of "A Song of Liberty" in which "everything that lives is Holy".

To what degree then, is *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* a social satire of the 18th century and to what degree is it an expose of the nature of fallen Man? Since Blake holds the imagination - that faculty of vision which induces an apprehension of Truth beyond ordinary sense perception - to be of prime importance in Men's life, it is apparent that his poetic works, though easily interpreted in terms of his contemporary social problems, should be concerned with the universal meaning of life. Because of this, *The Marriage of the Heaven and Hell* may be read on two levels. Surely, one can see the contemporary social satire in *The Marriage*.

The Angel certainly represents the repressive 18th century society which is bound by its lack of imagination to stiff moral codes of right and wrong. Through Blake's eyes it is seen as a society frightened by the consequences of the very conditions it has imposed upon itself- a society fatalistically submitting to those conditions, because: it fears even more the activity which will change the status quo and reveal the precarious foundations on which its rationalist philosophy rests. In the Devil, on the other hand, one can clearly see the spirit of revolt stirred by man's struggling imagination which realizes that this society is false to its very presuppositions. It resents the rational restriction which arbitrarily imposes moral codes, foster a Deistic philosophy and thwart what is the essential divinity in man -his imagination. Between the Angel and the Devil, and paradoxically expressing both their natures, is the individual in society. He has the alternative to submit to the Angel or ally with the Devil, for in the philosophical situation of 18th century society Blake feels it is impossible to sit on the

fence. One either accepts the rational world and all it represents or he is ruled by his imagination and is considered a heretic.

Blake attacks the ethical foundations of the rationalist philosophy of his time. The false ideas of good and evil are those promoted by unimaginative tyrannical minds, Where is the difference between the murderer and the society which arbitrarily imposes execution on the murderer? For Blake the motivation of revenge was no nobler than that of murderous hate. He saw instead that revelation of God was realized through an interaction of contrary states of passivity and activity.

He points out the evils of orthodox religion in his day, a theology which aspirated the soul from the body and subjected itself to a passive moral code by promising a lazy, blissful heaven to those who obeyed, and a torment in hell fires to those who did not. Blake penetrates the ritualistic dogmatic religion to show that it is only in activity that we realize the true nature of the God within us.

The poet attacks the 18th Century ideas of art which originate from the clouded minds of those who work to justify the rationalist philosophy. He, himself, seeks to clear men's minds of their passivity and "display the infinite which is hid" from mere reasoning.

During the startling "Memorable Fancy" in which the Angel shows Blake his lot in eternity, the poet gives us a clear picture of the narrow-mindedness of 18th century politics. The Conservative refuses to see the inevitable revolution he is bringing on by reactionary measures and inability to understand social conditions. He cannot see beyond the end of this narrow Legislative nose, for that, too, is based on the rationalist philosophy which exalts passivity and refuses to acknowledge vital and active imagination of Man. Finally, in "A Song of Liberty" Blake portrays that revolution as it was happening in America and France.

The satire he has written of his contemporary world penetrates through every word of "the Marriage". But, while it bitterly attacks that society and

leaves the object of its criticism Completely devastated, *The marriage* has a more far-reaching Intention than mere destructive attack. What makes the attack so vivid and meaningful is Blake's desire to create a true sense of insight in his reader concerning the life of humanity and its search for Truth-an insight which is social vision in its greatest sense.

Blake not only wanted society to gain this insight thus to **see** the absurdities on which it was founded, but moreover, he wished to reveal the way of salvation to the individual man. Essentially this was not heretical to true Christianity, although Blake would have nothing to do with the established religion of his time, which he viewed as having lost the necessary imaginative spirit. Instead he points out the imaginative and energetic life of Christ as the pattern for men to live by.

That *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* is vitally concerned with fallen Man is shown by Blake's use of the Angel and the Devil who in themselves represent a concept in conventional theology which he is satirizing. Blake does not believe in a marriage of heaven and hell in one sense, for if the two states are taken to mean the greater concepts of Reason and Energy, they are contraries never to be united. Yet in another sense he does believe in a "marriage" insofar as the interaction of these contraries will produce a true insight into the divine nature of our minds.

When man once truly realizes that he is a fallen creature whose senses are imperfect and whose imagination is the single link with his previous state of oneness with the infinite, he will then have the insight which will make it possible for him to rise from the fallen state into the eternal.

The Marriage satirizes man's blindness by calling the faculty of his salvation the Devil and the hindering faculties the Angel. Somehow in his fallen ignorance Man has turned proper things upside down. He is blessing and exalting that very spirit which still prevent his salvation prevent and he is fearing and condemning that which will give him necessary insight. Blake makes it his easy task to tear away the veils of blindness and expose the Angel and the Devil in their true relations.

In concluding this study of *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, we may then answer our previous question: to what degree is this work a social satire of the 18th century and to what degree is it an expose of the nature of fallen Man? It is obviously to all degrees both. For a while his emphasis is in terms of the restrictive conventionality of the 18th century, Blake has underlined his satire with the basic ideas of his visionary philosophy. Before he died, Blake's concern for the apocalyptic social revolution had its roots in a far more profound concern for humanity's revelation of Jesus Christ. Both concerns are to be found in each of the two works, but the visible change in emphasis shows a great maturation in Blake's thought. Before him always was the ideal of the individual and his imagination. Lavatar describes this individual in one of his

“Aphorisms”:

“The greatest of characters, no doubt,
was he, who, free of all trifling accidental
helps, could see objects through
one grand immutable medium, always at
hand, and proof against illusion and
time, reflected by every object, and
invariably traced through all the fluctuations
of things”.

In his copy of the “Aphorism”, just below this quotation, Blake has written, “This was Christ”

8.6 BLAKE'S SATAN

Blake defies the classification of Body and Soul, Good and evil by those would-be interpreters of Christian ethics who, setting up awful alternatives, enslave the praise of the Lord in fetters of doctrine and call it Religion.

Blake points to the Messiah of Milton's *Paradise Lost* as an example of the restrainer of the imaginative impulse. In Book V of that work God

declares his Son, the Messiah, to be Vic.-regent before whom all the hosts of hell shall kneel.

United as one individual Soule
For ever harple: him who disobeys
Mee disobeys; break union, and that day
Cas tout from God and blessed vision falls
Into utter darkness...

What Blake and Satan object to here is the insistence on conformity, the bowing before authority which destroys all individuality. The man of this society who refuses to obey the Laws of the society, who will not, conforms to its codes and standards will also be cast out, if not from God at least by those who propose that their authority represents to God. The revolutionary, too shall falls into utter darkness as he is ostracized from rest of the social world.

Satan complains of the new restrictions and calls together his angelic colleagues asking

Will you submit your necks and chuse to
Bend the supple knee? He will not if
I truest to know ye right, or if ye know
Yourselves natives and sons of heaven
Possess before none and if not equal

Satan is the democrat of heaven and it is with him that Blake sympathizes, not with the tyrannical Messiah. Blake associates this same tyrannical character with the Satan of the *Book of Job* to deny his faith on God by blighting his lands and putting plague upon his body. Satan in *Job* is the worldly figure who cannot conceive of the individual integrity and who can understand even less the man who puts his personal faith above his material fortunes. This Satan, like the Roman Emperor, would give the mobs their bread and games to satisfy their physical and recreational desires, assured

that this is all that is necessary to keep them under his thumb and living by his dictates. He does not believe in, or account for, the desire in man to assert himself and his beliefs as an individual.

Although *Paradise Lost* claims the Devil and Desire to have fallen, Blake asserts that it is really the Messiah, called by the Deville name, who has fallen, for the true Messiah was impelled by his energies and desires. It is merely another case of the Imaginative individual exiled from society of tyrannous hypocrites. In the Gospel there is a passage in which Jesus Christ promises he will send to his disciples a Comforter:

“And I will pray the Father, and he shall
give you another Comforter that he may
abide with you !forever.” (John XIV:17)

Blake would translate the Holy Ghost or “Comforter” as Man’s desire that within which impels him ever to manifest his imagination in the search for truth. Without Desire this world of truth would have nothing upon which “to build Ideas”. Thus we return to Blake’s earlier proverb:

“Without Contraries there is no progression.”

This Desire comes from the *Old Testament* Jehovah who “dwells in flaming fire”. The thunderous energy of the God of Judgment has a close similarity to the character of Milton’s Satan as Blake admires. When Christ died he took on the likeness of Jehovah, the spirit of energy, desire, and imagination characteristically Satanic.

Milton’s Trinity has not the power which Blake demands of the divine. “The Father is Destiny”, authoritative purpose which discounts human energy in the shaping of men’s lives; “the Son a ratio of the five senses” which restricts the sense, denying the energy that Will allow them to soar to the outer circumference of their imaginations and the “Holy Ghost Vacuum” appearing not at all, much less as the dynamic force of Desire which for Blake characterizes the Holy Ghost.

Blake concludes with an amusingly original criticism of *Paradise Lost*.

“The reason Milton wrote in fetters when he wrote of Angels and God, and at liberty when of Devils and Hell, is because he was a true Poet and of the Devil’s party without knowing it”.

This is a typically Blakean compliment that not everyone is likely to appreciate.

8.7 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

True or false

1. In *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* Rintrah is mentioned only twice
2. A more significant symbol in *The Marriage* is Blake’s picturesque representation of himself as the Devil, who also represents the spirit of protest.
3. Swedenborg was at the centre of an occult revival in the late 17th and early 18th century.
5. Swedenborg had a long career as a politician.
6. The central area of disagreement is raised on Plate 3, which Blake would place at the beginning of the finished *Marriage*.
7. *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* is an attack on conventional 19th century society, its philosophy and politics.

8.8 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

1. How does the poet attack the 18th Century ideas of art which originate from the clouded minds of those who work to justify the rationalist philosophy?
2. Why Blake defies the classification of Body and Soul?
3. What is Swedenborgism and how it influence Blake?
4. What Rintrah symbolizes?
5. What Angel had shown Blake in ‘Memorable Fancy’

8.9 SUGGESTED READING

1. *A Blake Dictionary: The Ideas and Symbols of William Blake* by S. Foster Damon. Dartmouth College Press.
2. *Blake's Vision of Satan and Hell* by Tommy Doerle.
3. *Blake and Swedenborg, Opposition is True Friendship: The Source of William Blake's Arts in writings of Emanuel Swedenborg: an Anthology* by Harvey F. Bellin. Swedenborg Foundation.
4. *William Blake and Religion: A New Critical View* by Magnus Ankarsjo. Macfarland and Coampany, inc., publisher.

M.A. ENGLISH : SEMESTER II

COURSE CODE : ENG 212

LESSON No. 9

POETRY-II

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

UNIT-III

STRUCTURE

- 9.1 Introduction
- 9.2 Objectives
- 9.3 William Wordsworth
- 9.4 Literary Career
- 9.5 Association with S.T. Coleridge
 - 9.5.1 Answer Key
- 9.6 Self-Assessment Questions
- 9.7 Examination Oriented Questions
- 9.8 Suggested Reading

9.1 INTRODUCTION

William Wordsworth worked with ST. Coleridge on *Lyrical Ballads*. The Collection, which contained Wordsworth's *Tinter Abbey* introduced romanticism to English Poetry. Wordsworth became England's Poet laureated in 1843, a role he held until his death in 1850.

9.2 OBJECTIVES

The objective of this lesson is to familiarize the distance learner with the life and works of William Wordworth. At the end of the lesson the distance learner will be able to understand how Wordsworth started his literary career to become one of the most successful poet in English literature.

9.3 WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

Born in 1770, William Wordsworth was deeply attached to the natural way of life. He grew up in the Lake country. For education, he studied at the Cambridge University. On leaving Cambridge in 1791, just after his undergraduate education was completed, he passed four months in London and then went for second time to France. Earlier, in 1790, he had made a summer walking-tour of the Continent, where he had come into contact with the revolutionary events in France. The French Revolution, we know, had begun in 1789. On his second visit to France in 1791, Wordsworth lived there till the autumn of 1792. In this neighbouring country in turmoil, he lived for long periods at Orleans and Blois, with only a brief pause in Paris. The attractive chateaux (French castle or large country house) of the region stirred Wordsworth to imaginative sympathy with the aristocratic life of the past. But his friendship with one Michel Beaupuy, an officer in the revolutionary army, brought him to the popular side.

It was during this second visit to France in 1791 that Wordsworth met a French girl named Annette Vallon, with whom he quickly fell in love. To the lovers a daughter named Caroline was born in December, 1792. Though much against his wishes, Wordsworth had to return to his native country (England) for want of funds soon after. His uncles, who had supported him, refused to do so any further. They also refused to help him in any way to facilitate his marriage with Annette Vallon. War, too, was a factor that separated him from Annette. Evidence suggests that Wordsworth did come to France again in the autumn of 1793, running a great risk. But there is no evidence that he met Annette. There is a critical view that in later years Wordsworth was plagued with remorse, which he sublimated by writing poems about forsaken women and unmarried mothers. These poems include 'The Ruined Cottage,' 'The Thorn,' and 'Ruth'. The critical opinion also attributes Wordsworth's Lucy poems to the memory of the poet's illegitimate daughter, Caroline.

Wordsworth's anxiety for Annette and Caroline did, of course, deepen his dependency when, once more in London, he watched the French Revolution

degenerate into the Reign of Terror. He received a much greater shock when England entered into the war against France. He took it as a betrayal of the cause of liberty. In fact, he ascribed to England's entry the opportunity given to the extremists in Paris to seize the reigns of power.

9.4 LITERARY CAREER

One of the earliest poems of significance that Wordsworth wrote relates to the subject of the Revolution. The poem in question is 'Guilt and Sorrow,' which was begun in 1791, and was much revised. It is written in Spenserian stanza (of nine lines), instead of the couplet, and shows preference for simplicity of language and syntax. By implication, the poem evinces Wordsworth's dissatisfaction with the neoclassical tradition, which preferred the couplet and complex syntax along with sophisticated poetic diction. The poem intertwines stories of a soldier's destitute widow and of a discharged soldier who is driven to crime by penury. The poem is obviously meant to expose the miseries of war, the injustices of the penal code, and the wrongs inflicted by the privileged upon the defenceless poor. This indictment of society is decidedly Godwinian in spirit.

Forced by his radical view to suppress his patriotic instincts and to condone the Terror, Wordsworth remained for some time in an unhappy state of mind. The mood drove him even to write a satire on Pitt (the then Prime Minister of England) and English society, but he soon abandoned his attempt. Gradually, he was attracted to the region of abstract Godwinian speculation. But his reliance upon syllogistic reasoning drove him to the point where he "yielded up moral questions in despair" (*The Prelude*). However, the distrust of logic is not to be understood here as a repudiation of "Reason in her higher mood." We can find the same distinction drawn by Kant and Coleridge between the "higher" reason and the understanding. From the slough of despondence into which he had fallen in 1793 Wordsworth extricated himself with painful slowness. We need to go into the act of tracing here the course of his spiritual convalescence. It is enough to say that the transition came in the autumn of 1795 when, having settled in Racedown with his sister Dorothy, he turned

from France and Godwin to a political philosophy more in harmony with Burke, and to the loveliness of the natural world.

Dorothy's companionship and a legacy, which relieved Wordsworth of monetary anxiety, both played their parts in the poet's recovery from the shock of separation and regression of Revolution. His thwarted political ambition (or enthusiasm) was diverted into imaginative channels of poetry. He wrote at this time (in 1796-97) the tragedy named *The Borders*, a laborious effort in the "German" fashion. Like all other Romantic plays, it is not of much significance as drama, but it does have a significance as a milestone in Wordsworth's development as artist. As a typical villain hero, Oswald, the play's protagonist, commits a crime, banishes remorse by condemning all human feeling as weakness, and becomes a malignant moral sceptic. The play's story demonstrates that though the attempt to live by the light of reason may be a noble aspiration, yet to discard affections and "prejudices" leaves not reason but passions supreme. Thus, the play is not merely a negation of Godwinism but an affirmation of the reconciliation of man and nature.

9.5 ASSOCIATION WITH S.T. COLERIDGE

A significant event of Wordsworth's life, having equally significant bearing on his growth as poet, was his association with Coleridge. He had met the fellow poet first time in 1795. In the next two years, the friendship between them ripened into maturity. In the summer of 1797, Wordsworth moved to Alfoxden, near Nether Stowey, where Coleridge lived. Under the strong influence of Coleridge, Wordsworth's poetry turned "from fragmentary descriptions of impressions and emotions into the expression of a comprehensive philosophy" (Lawrence Hanson, *The Life of Coleridge: The Early Years*, 1939). Whether through Coleridge's guidance or from independent reading, Wordsworth did absorb during this period the associationist philosophy of David Hartley's *Observations on Man* (1794). This form of empiricism, which denies the existence of innate ideas, advocates that all sense impressions originate in external things. Through the power of association the simple ideas emanating from sensation combine into larger and more efficiently organized

units. Hence the character of a man's higher ideas is determined by the character of his sensations. In other words, the 'sense' is the guardian of the heart and soul of the moral being. According to Hartley, each faculty of the mind is produced by a transformation of the faculty next below it in rank; and at the summit is the moral sense. In his view, there is three-fold hierarchy of sensation, simple ideas, and complex ideas. Wordsworth felt that this hierarchy corresponded to the three stages of mental development. Thus, when Wordsworth wrote, in *The Prelude* and shorter poems such as "Immortality Ode" or "The Tintern Abbey," about the passing of sensations from the "blood" into the "heart" (or feelings) and thence into the mind, he was very much expounding Hartley's psychology.

Wordsworth does not, however, fully agree with Hartley. For example, according to Hartley, the mind has no control over the physical or mechanical necessity by which it acts. In his view, the mind has the power of classifying ideas into categories of pleasure and pain, but nothing else. On the other hand, in Wordsworth's view, though experience may be merely passive and in that case the theory is necessitarian, this is not always the case. In his view, the influence of natural objects may depend in part on us. In that case, we are not merely passive recipients but "half create" that which we perceive. We can recall here Coleridge's "We receive but what we give" (from "Dejection: an Ode"). This belief becomes for the Romantics a claim for the superior validity of imaginative experience over the data communicated by sense. In other words, Wordsworth imposed upon Hartley's associationism a Platonic principle of mystical insight, which he calls "another gift of aspect more sublime" ("Tintern Abbey").

During the year at Alfoxden (1797) Wordsworth and Coleridge decided to raise the banner of revolt against the contorted and artificial phrasing of contemporary verse. They evolved their own theory that poetry should be written in a "selection from the real language of men in a state of vivid sensation." Coleridge had long been moving towards this theory, which had some significant connections with associationism.

In accordance with this new theory of the language of poetry and with Hartley's psychology they composed many of the poems on rustic and humble life, which they collected under the heading *Lyrical Ballads* published in 1798. It was during this very period that the yet unnamed *Prelude* was conceived to remove the misgivings that Wordsworth felt as to his strength for a yet greater task, *The Recluse, or Views on Man, Nature, and Society*. *The Prelude*, which was to be autobiographical, was at first planned as a part of the great epic poem. However, since the autobiographical part itself grew to epic dimensions, the "greater task" could never be accomplished in full. Wordsworth completed *The Prelude* in 1805. In broad outline, the poem's pattern is suggested in the "Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey" (in short called "Tintern Abbey"). This shorter poem was the result of a walking-tour in June, 1798. The poem, though not a ballad, was inserted at the very end of *Lyrical Ballads with a few other Poems*, which Joseph Cottle of Bristol published in September, 1798.

After the publication of the *Lyrical Ballads* the Wordsworth and Coleridge set sail for Germany. Having separated from their companion (Coleridge), Wordsworth and Dorothy passed a somewhat dull and lonely winter at Goslar. It was here at Goslar (in Germany) that Wordsworth wrote various narrative pieces later incorporated in *The Prelude*. He also wrote at the same time the cycle of five poems commemorative of "Lucy". There has been a lot of critical speculation about the identity of the girl named "Lucy". The controversy about the identity of "Lucy" apart, the little cycle is poetically exquisite. It can be regarded as the poet's evocation in an uncongenial foreign city of an ideal that is simple, humble, rustic, and English.

Returning to England in the Spring of 1799, the Wordsworth wandered for a while and then settled at Dove Cottage on the outskirts of Grasmere. In the summer of that year, Wordsworth and Coleridge prepared the enlarged second edition of *Lyrical Ballads* (1800) which also included, "Michael," the finest of the pastorals. Wordsworth alone also prepared the "Preface" to *Lyrical Ballads*. The critical piece grew out of the poet's realization that

it was necessary to educate his readers by explanation as well as examples of his work. A representative statement of this piece appears in a central paragraph, which can be considered as a concentrated presentation of his convictions and intentions: to draw material for poetry from humble and rustic life because on that social level the “essential passions” are “less under restraint”; to set forth the chosen incidents in a selection from the language really used by men; to throw over them “a certain colouring of the imagination”; and to trace in them “the primary laws of our nature.”

Except for work on *The Prelude* and on the fragment of *The Recluse*, which was not published until 1888, the year of 1801 was comparatively less productive. On the one hand, Coleridge’s health was causing anxiety, on the other Wordsworth was engaged in his courtship of Mary Hutchinson, whom he married on October 4, 1802. The year of 1802 was quite productive and eventful. A poem called “the Leech-Gatherer,” later renamed “Resolution and Independence,” of which the germ can be found in Dorothy’s Journal in September, 1800, was composed and the “Ode on Intimations of Immortality” was begun. About the same time took place the Peace of Amiens, which provided Wordsworth the opportunity for a final settlement with Annette Vallon. In July that year, Wordsworth along with his sister met the French woman at Calais. His impassioned protests against Napoleon’s suppression of liberty in nations and individuals mixed with exhortations of England to be worthy of her past find a spontaneous expression in his *Sonnets Dedicated to National Independence and Liberty*, considered the best patriotic poems written in the English language since Milton.

In the year 1803, Wordsworth met Sir Walter Scott, while on a tour of Scotland, whose influence can be seen in some of the poems he wrote around that time. More worthy of mention among them are “Highland Reaper” and “Song at the Feast of Brougham Castle.” In 1805, died his beloved brother, John, whose death coloured the mood in poems like “Elegiac Stanzas on a Picture of Peele Castle” and “the Character of the Happy Warrior.” The most notable poem of the period is, however, “Ode to Duty,” in which

the romantic conviction of the inherent goodness of man has declined into a belief that though there are some *schone seelen* whom Nature “saves from wrong”, most men must depend for guidance upon the sense of Duty, “stern daughter of the voice of God.” The “Happy Warrior” presents a specific illustration of this doctrine.

The course of Napoleon’s tyrannical progress through Europe forced upon Wordsworth a re-orientation of his political and social ideas. This change is quite apparent in his prose tract on *The Convention of Cintra* (1809). Like Milton, Wordsworth uses eloquence to indicate England’s place and duty in the country of nations. He enunciates in this document an anti-democratic doctrine of leadership which foreshadows the “hero-worship” of Carlyle. A reverence for tradition, echoing Burke, a growing affection for the past as enshrined in English institutions, awakened his sense of the political value of the Ecclesiastical Establishment and a reverence for the means whereby Christianity has given formal expression to religious concepts. Thus, Wordsworth’s earlier trust in inner “gleam” yielded to the acceptance of divine grace through the mediation of the Church. These changes brought to a close the poet’s early turbulent spiritual life. One could see that his “anti-climax” was at hand.

Although the fact of Wordsworth’s decline remains undisputed, there has been an unending debate about the cause or causes of this decline. Different critics have attributed the decline to different causes, including the poet’s psychological disturbances resulting from the French love affair and its long aftermath; the alienation from Coleridge; the acceptance of conservatism; an awareness that the themes for poetry to which he had committed himself were exhausted; a weakening in inspiration not without precedents in the case of other poets approaching middle life; all these causes combined.

Wordsworth’s great task in his later life was *The Excursion* (1814), which was originally planned as the central portion of the never finished *The Recluse*. The two distinct phases of Wordsworth as man and artist can be clearly seen in *The Excursion*, whose two books (written in 1797) reflect the

earlier revolutionary poet, and the rest of the books (written after the decline) the later conservative poet. There is not only a shift in topography but a change in mood. The earlier spirit of social protest and of oneness with the causes of the poor and outcast disappear in the later books. In his later life, Wordsworth seems to look with complacency upon their sufferings, content with the promise of a heavenly recompense for earthly trials. Thus, both in narrative as well as style there is a jarring contrast between the homeliness of the stories and the Miltonic sublimity of the speculative passages.

Wordsworth's fame expanded after 1814-1815, which is shown by Leigh Hunt's estimate of him not only as the greatest of living poets but as the founder and leader of a school of naturalistic poetry which succeeded the artificial poetry of the preceding era. Listing the followers of this new style Hunt included himself and Keats. No doubt, the influence of Wordsworth's poetry, especially *The Excursion*, was great on Keats. Even Byron and Shelley followed his style in certain of its aspects. In the wider world his fame was growing as teacher and moralist; the "healing power" of his poetry was exerting a benignant influence. Wordsworth's didactic and austere sonnets, *The River Duddon* (1820), owe little to regional legend, and owe instead to Coleridge's projected but never written poem, *The Brook*, the idea of tracing a stream from the mountain source to the sea. The metaphor of the stream was employed to unify the *Ecclesiastical Sonnets* (1822). Only the gleams of the old splendour constitute the silver lining in the two series.

Large part of Wordsworth's time in his later years was spent on the revision of *The Prelude*, which, though completed in 1805, was published soon after his death in 1850. It only shows that even after the long span of forty five years spent on the poem's revision, the poet was not satisfied with the work for reasons best known to him. During the last two decades of his life, Wordsworth's continued interest in public affairs generally assumed the form of a dread of change. He professed an interest in Chartism, but he opposed Parliamentary reform, contending that extension of the suffrage would put power into the hands of men who would proceed quickly to violence. He

also opposed the emancipation of the Catholics, the secret ballot, and even the abolition of death sentence for various minor offences. No wonder that the grand old man, fully turned conservative, accepted, on the death of Southey in 1843, the post of poet laureate. Of course, he put a rider to the acceptance, of not producing any “official” poems. His acceptance of the official position provoked the young poets like Browning to write satirical poems such as “The Lost Leader.” In this poem, Browning describes him as a deserter of a cause :

For a handful of silver he left us,
For a riband to stick on his coat,

As the graph of Wordsworth’s development shows, his decline from a revolutionary to a rabid conservative was complete.

Wordsworth’s last decade was rather sad. His sister’s tragic lapse into premature senility and a daughter’s death were devastating blows which broke his fortitude. Always austere and repressed, he now drooped sadly. There are many extant records available of the gloom of Rydal Mount in these last years. He died on April 23, 1850, and was buried in Grasmere Churchyard. The best tribute to Wordsworth is paid by Matthew Arnold in his poem “Memorial Verses,” where mourning the poet’s death, he says :

He laid us as we lay at birth
On the cool flowery lap of earth.

Wordsworth’s creative originality among English poets of all times remains closely linked to his close contact with the revolutionary faith. A spiritual bond was thus formed never to be broken. Enthusiasm for the brotherhood of mankind played the part in his life. From this glow was kindled the flame of an idealism which varied much in its expression. It even seemed to belie itself in belying its first forms, before it declined with age. But it was never completely extinguished. In fact, it preserved until the end a radiating power that remained effective until the end. No doubt, he became the apostle of what Revolution had made him. It is, in fact, of little consequence that his poetic vocation and

art should have developed after the disappointment of his social and political hopes, and as a reaction against them. The essential initiative which he then took in the order of art showed an inner certitude, a clarity of vision. In order to make a through revision of the subject and style of poetry, to modify completely an imperious tradition and to break a spell required moral courage of the highest order. Blake, too, had displayed such a courage, which he owed to his mysticism. But Blake was not fully aware of what he had done. Wordsworth, on the other hand, had the knowledge of what he was doing. His corresponding courage in coming out in support of the French Revolution showed the same courage in equal measure. It is therefore almost impossible to ignore that the doctrine of the *Lyrical Ballads* was an aesthetic application of a political belief.

Whatever might have been the measure of decline of Wordsworth's later life and art, it is his revolutionary role in the Romantic movement, which he led, for which he will always be remembered. As a poet, he is always mentioned next only to Shakespeare and Milton. This shows the greatness he achieved in the history of English poetry, which has remained unchallenged, despite the occasional attacks from launchers of new events.

9.6 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

1. When did the French Revolution began
 - a) 1760
 - b) 1786
 - c) 1789
 - d) 1798
2. The 'Lyrical Ballads' was first published in
 - a) 1798
 - b) 1797
 - c) 1799
 - d) None of these
3. Wordsworth completed 'The Prelude' in
 - a) 1800
 - b) 1801
 - c) 1802
 - d) 1805

4. The first "Preface" to the 'Lyrical Ballad' was attached in
a) 1802 b) 1801
c) 1800 d) 1799
5. The two distinct phases of Wordsworth as a man and artist can be clearly seen in _____
a) The Excursion b) The Recluse
c) The Prelude d) The Lyrical Ballad.

9.6.1 Answer Key

- 1) 1789 3) 1805
2) 1798 4) 1800 5) The Excursion

9.7 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

- Q.1 French Revolution had deeply influenced Wordsworth, Discuss.
Q.2 'Lyrical Ballad' was an important personal and literary product. Discuss.
Q.3 Write an essay on the literary output of William Wordsworth.

9.8 SUGGESTED READING

1. Hunter Davies, 'William Wordsworth : A Biography, Francis Lincoln, London, 2009
2. M.R. Tewari, 'One Interior Life– A Study of the Nature of Wordworth's Poetic Experience, New Delhi 1983

M.A. ENGLISH : SEMESTER II

COURSE CODE : ENG 212

LESSON No. 10

POETRY-II

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

UNIT-III

STRUCTURE

10.1 Introduction

10.2 Objectives

10.3 *Resolution and Independence* : Critical Analysis of the Poem

10.4 *French Revolution* : A Critical Analysis of the Poem

10.4.1 Answer Key

10.5 Objective type Questions

10.6 Examination Oriented Questions

10.7 Suggested Readings

10.1 INTRODUCTION

The French Revolution played a huge role in influencing Wordsworth. Literature began to take a new turn when this period of the revolution caught the entire nation and turned things in a whole new direction.

10.2 OBJECTIVES

The objective of this lesson is to familiarize the distance learners critically with the central idea of the poem 'Resolution and Independence' and 'French Revolution' prescribed in the syllabus.

We can see how the entire stanza (rime royal) is devoted to describing the natural setting, focusing on the wind, the rain, the sun, the birds, the stock-dove, the Jay, the Magpie, and the air. All the sentences in all the seven lines are simple and straight with the language equally simple. Item after item accumulate to create a picture of the place with all the atmospheric elements listed. The cumulative effect is an evocation of a concrete scene which only a poet like Wordsworth who has personally lived there can create. The concreteness and specificity of his poem, as we have seen in the stanza, just cited, the virtues of its verse.

Wordsworth, as he asserts in the introductory prose lines, created “Resolution and Independence” out of his own experience, his reflection and the power of his character. He finds for his poem a stanza that can contain both exultation and depression, both beginning and end of life, both lightness and sobriety. The stanza shows the capacity to contain both the hare of the opening exultation, which runs in her luminous mist, as well as the old man, bent double, with head and feet coming together towards the end of his travel, both unself-awareness and the later consolation of knowledge. As we have seen, the lines move with quick variation, quickly pivoted on rhymes. Then at the end of lines 4 and 5 in each stanza, the rhyme is repeated. This doubling of rhyme makes the stanza pause, gather and emphasize the meaning. A deeper pause takes place when the kernel of sound is doubled at the end of the sixth line and the seventh – that closing line, which lengthens always and is enabled to carry, when required, the most expressive gravity. Note, for example, the following:

Solitude, pain of heart, distress, and poverty.

Or

The oldest man he seemed that ever wore grey hairs.

Or

but there of come in the end despondency and madness.

As we read through the poem, we don't feel it necessary to know about Wordsworth's thought or the circumstances of the poem. The need is not felt because the poem is self-subsistent and the thought is complete. The poem explains itself.

Critics like Herbert Read have argued that Wordsworth is to be deduced from his own poetry. But, as this poem bears it out, knowledge of the poet does not hinder our enjoyment of the poem. At the same time, we can see that the poem is grounded in the poet's own experience. It is the poet as man who is first introduced in the poem with his mood of despondence, reminding him of the general fate of poets like him. There is a special mention of a young poet who experienced singular misfortunes that led him to court death:

*I thought of Chatterton, the marvelous Boy,
The sleepless Soul that perished in his pride;
Of him who walked in glory and in joy
Following his plough, along the mountain-side:
By our own spirits are we deified:
We Poets in our youth begin in gladness;
But thereof come in the end despondency and madness.*

Coleridge, an intimate friend of the poet, has confirmed how Wordsworth suffered "occasional fits of hypochondriacal uncomfortableness – from which, more or less, and at longer or shorter intervals, he has never been wholly free from his very childhood." Yet "he both deserves to be and is a happy man; and a happy man not from natural temperament, for there lies his main obstacle...but...because he is a Philosopher, because he knows the intrinsic value of the different objects of human pursuit, and regulates his wishes in strict subordination of that knowledge."

Making himself happy, Wordsworth was independently William; and then resolute, against the difficulties and dangers inherent in his being:

*As high as we have mounted in delight
In our dejection do we sink as low*

The dangers, we know, were exceedingly real. These dangers did recur in his life. The most famous couple of lines in the present poem, too often true, is the rhymed couplet which completes a pause of extra solemnity at the end of the seventh stanza :

*We Poets in our youth begin in gladness;
But thereof come in the end despondency and madness.*

In his end Wordsworth, too, became melancholic, if not mad, his poet-laureateship notwithstanding. The correct set of words also deserted him. Even the fineness of his response coarsened. His thought turned dogmatic. The poems too, hardened like calcium carbonate around a stick into official verse. His sister, who has been his twin in gladness, became altogether mad. But in May 1802, realizing what may befall him in future, Wordsworth took comfort from the grave independence and resolution of the old man by the moorland pool. Poor and decrepit, on the bare up-land of existence with stately speech the leech-gatherer became for the poet a symbol of resolution and independence :

*As a huge stone is sometimes seen to lie
Couched on the bald top of an eminence;
Wonder to all who do the same espy,
By what means it could thither come, and whence;
So that it seems a thing endued with sense:
Like a sea-beast crawled forth, that on a shelf
Of rock or sand reposes, there to sun itself;
Such seemed this man, not all alive nor dead,
Nor all asleep – in his extreme old age:
His body was bent double, feet and head
Coming together in life's pilgrimage;*

*As if some dire constraint of pain, or rage
Of sickness felt by him in times long past,
A more than human weight upon his frame had cast.*

Wordsworth copies here Miltonic style, using epic similes for describing the larger-than-life portrait of the leech-gatherer. The very style conveys the sense. The decrepit old man is obviously meant to act as a symbol of fortitude, of resolution and independence. The poet finds in him a source of strength. He derives inspiration from him and comes out of vale of despondence. Wordsworth's Michael is another character of the same type. The strength of such characters comes from their resolution to face the odds of life with determination. They emerge stronger after every such ordeal. That they are meant to be role-models is quite evident from the way the poet looks up to the leech gatherer and Michael. Note, for instance, the following :

*While he was talking thus, the lonely place,
The old Man's shape and speech – all troubled me:
In my mind's eye I seemed to see him pace
About the weary moors continually,
Wandering about alone and silently.
While I these thoughts within myself pursued,
He, having made a pause, the same discourse renewed.
And soon with this he other matters blended,
Cheerfully uttered, with demeanour kind,
But stately in the main; and when he ended,
I could have laughed myself to scorn to find
In that decrepit Man so firm a mind.
“God,” said I, “be my help and stay secure;
I'll think of the Leech-gatherer on the lonely moor!”*

In this poem Wordsworth is clearly asserting the point that “By our own spirits are we deified.” He was always firm on the creative role of joy.

For example, in this poem, the hare raced with joy, which succeeded the roaring night of floods, and might be succeeded by them again. Then, the poet thought of Burns

*..who walked in glory and in joy
following his plough, along the mountain-side*

In Wordsworth's view, joy and our own spirits desert us : they let us down, they leave us unable to create. In that situation, we need the firmness of the old man, catching leeches, which he sold, as Dorothy recorded, at thirty shillings a hundred. The old man, we are told, lost his joy long ago, yet lived, alone, by a hard, humble avocation that gave health to others, without despair. Then whatever we have at our own command, we need stimulation by such exterior firmness, not being superhuman. Obviously, in such a poem as this, which is self-instructive, and not a release of self-deifying spirit, straight discourse is needed and very simple language. As Coleridge remarked after reading Wordsworth's "Resolution and Independence," "And in this way he gained an honest maintenance." According to Coleridge, we find "here and there a daring humbleness of language and versification, and a strict adherence to matter of fact, even to prolixity, that startled me." Yet the straight discourse of the poem is interspersed with its rhymes; with its variations of rhythm against measure. It is also interspersed with the action of the encounter on the moor; with contrasts, the quick hare that raises her self-enveloping mist, the slow old man staring fixedly at muddy water. The poem narrates direct matter-of-fact speech from the poet, and from the old man nothing directly recorded, but the reported *oratio oblique* received into the narrator, whose poem it is. The poet tells us about the feebleness, and the life in the very old man's pale face, from "the sable orbs of his yet vivid eyes." Also, from straight discourse or daring humbleness of language, the poem lifts or descends without discord into its extra-memorably effective line: up unto "All things that love the sun are out of doors," down into "the sleepless soul that perished in his pride" (the promising poet Chatterton

who was driven to suicide by want at the tender age of eighteen), or deeper down into that line, more inclusive, yet more naked: “And mighty poets in their misery dead.”

It is important to note about “Resolution and Independence” that on a midsummer occasion in 1868, “in all likelihood” – in his own words – “after a time of mental depression over his work and prospects,” Thomas Hardy at the age of twenty eight wrote down three cures for despair. The first of these three, interestingly, was “To read Wordsworth’s ‘Resolution and Independence.’” Written when he was thirty-two years of age, in the vegetative time of the year, this poem was also Wordsworth’s cure in a similar condition. However, the poem is not to be considered as no more than a Purple Heart. It is one of his great achievements in terms of its articulation of an intense moment of life captured in all its complexity. Thus, Wordsworth looked for the heroic virtues in humble life. No other poet before him had ever written about these lowly characters, much less as models of heroic virtues. Like Milton, Wordsworth considers heroic, not wrath or anger, physical prowess or courage to kill, but fortitude and forbearance, resolution and determination. Further, as we have seen in the present case, these heroic qualities in humble life are fostered by the mother-like Nature in whose lap the simple characters have grown and continue to line in an integrated condition.

Such a revolutionary change in the subject of poetry had never been sought earlier than Wordsworth. If the eighteenth century poets ever attempted a description of rural life, it clearly reflected a distant look at something far removed from the poet’s own urban situation. Consequently, the picture presented of simple rural life always tended to be sentimental, lacking authenticity and austerity. Even after Wordsworth is paid to have ceased to be revolutionary, his love and reference of rural life remained. And that aspect of his poetry would always remain valuable. Life may have become less simple and more sophisticated thereafter, but its value as a way of life, as a philosophy to live by remains, and will always remain. The permanent value of character like the leech-gatherer lies, not in their outward or external style of living, but

in their inward or internal qualities of character. While the external conditions of life would keep changing, the internal qualities of character required to face life-situation would always remain, even though they become rarer and rarer as time passes. The reason for their becoming rarer with time is that life keeps becoming less and less simple, more and more removed from the natural surroundings, rendering man unnourished by the foster-mother. The soft conditions of life man keeps creating, making them softer by the day, soften the moral fibre of man as well, leaving him incapable of facing the odds of life. It is for this reason that Wordsworth looks for these brave qualities in those poor and homeless people who are used to taking hardships of life as a matter of routine. Cultivation of heroic qualities in such a life and in such characters is only natural.

10.4 FRENCH REVOLUTION : A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE POEM

As already stated in the previous lesson, Wordsworth's involvement in the French Revolution was both emotional as well as intellectual; of course, more emotional than intellectual. His enthusiasm at its beginning was a passionate as his later disillusionment was deep. A detailed account of Wordsworth's enthusiasm, his involvement, and the subsequent disillusionment, etc., is elaborately depicted in Books IX, X, and XI of *The Prelude*. The present poem is only an excerpt from that account. What is separately made a poem is actually a verse paragraph of *The Prelude* from Book XI, which runs from line 105 to line 144. It runs as under:

FRENCH REVOLUTION

AS IT APPEARED TO ENTHUSIASTS AT ITS

COMMENCEMENT

REPRINTED FROM THE FRIEND

OH! pleasant exercise of hope and joy!

For mighty were the auxiliars which then stood

Upon our side, we who were strong in love!

*Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,
But to be young was very heaven! – Oh! Times,
In which the meager, stale, forbidding ways
Of custom, law, and stature, took at once
The attraction of a country in romance!
When Reason seemed the most to assert her rights,
When most intent of making of herself
A prime Enchantress – to assist the work,
Which then was going forward in her name!
Not favoured spots alone, but the whole earth,
The beauty wore of promise, that which sets
(As at some moment might not be unfelt
among the bowers of paradise itself)
the budding rose above the rose full blown.
What temper at the prospect did not wake
To happiness unthought of? The inert
Were roused, and lively natures rapt away!
They who had fed their childhood upon dreams,
The play fellows of fancy, who had made
All powers of swiftness, subtlety, and strength
Their ministers, – who in lordly wise had stirred
Among the grandest objects of the sense,
And dealt with whatsoever they found there
As if they within some lurking right
To wield it; – they, too, who, of gentle mood,
Had watched all gentle motions, and to these
Had fitted their own thoughts, schemes more mild,*

*And in the region of their peaceful selves; –
Now was it that both found, the meek and lofty
Did both find, helpers to their heart's desire,
And stuff at hand, plastic as they could wish;
Were called upon to exercise their skill,
Not in Utopia, subterranean fields,
Or some secreted island, Heaven knows where!
But in the very world, which is the world
Of all of us, – the place where in the end
We find out happiness, or not at all!*

As is amply clear from these lines, Wordsworth as a young man, like most other leading minds of his generation, was highly inspired by the promise the Revolution in France offered to ordinary individual, the promise of liberty, equality, and solidarity. The poet's ecstatic mood is obvious from the lines often quoted :

*Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,
But to be young was very heaven!...*

He felt that Utopian dream was soon going to be realized, the world of this heart's desire will be created

*Not in Utopia, subterranean fields,
Or some selected island, Heaven knows where!
But in the very world, which is the world
Of all of us – the place where in the end
We find our happiness, or not at all!*

The heaven will descend on the very earth on which the mortal humans live. The excitement of youth, the Godwinian idealism of individual liberty, the Rouseauistic dream of equality, all combined to create an extraordinary

expectation from the event which was essentially political. The poet's colouring of the imagination converted the event into a Romantic dream.

Not all the lines are excellent in this verse paragraph drawn from *The Prelude*. There are some pedestrian patches as well, such as the following :

*...who in lordly wise had stirred
Among the grandest objects of the sense,
And dealt with whatsoever they found there
As if they within some lurking right
To wield it; – ...*

However, on the whole Wordsworth is more successful than he might have been expected in using blank verse here in order to give a sustained sense of emotional or moral excitement about the French Revolution. The poem *moves* on. It is Wordsworth's keen interest in the meaning and the moral implications of his own experience and reactions that keeps the poem moving. His sustained fascination with the growth of his own mind and the general moral meaning of it all gives the poem its life, its movement, and its continuity.

It is one of those poems in which Wordsworth tries to embody his philosophy concerning nature, man, and society. The question of Wordsworth's doctrine or philosophy as an obtrusive element in his poetry has been a matter of debate among his critics. Even his greatest admirer Matthew Arnold said as way of defence, that Wordsworth's philosophy is bad, his poetry is good, admitting that the two do not blend together in a happy measure. It was again his philosophy which irritated the younger generation of poets. We know how Keats condemned this aspect of his poetry, saying, "we hate poetry that has palpable design upon us." However, for many critics, the best of Wordsworth's poetry, the greater part of *The Prelude* and the finest passages of *The Excursion*, and "Tintern Abbey" and "Immortality Ode" as complete

poems, succeed in realising a remarkable harmony through a perfect blending of doctrine and poetry. In certain passages Wordsworth writes in a language compact and often technical. For instance, where Hartley's influence is perceptible, just as that of Milton reveals itself in blank verse arranged in long paragraphs, we find the propounding of a whole philosophy, which tends to be dryly argumentative, without actually becoming so. Through these pages wafts an invigorating freshness, coming for the most part from free nature. And it is the presence of this free nature that imparts, invigorating freshness which bathes the very inspiration of Wordsworth. This free nature is reflected in the gentle, calm, austere, or grand, yet ever wholesome character of Wordsworth's verse.

Even in the later phase of his career, when his inspiration is said to be waning, when a didactic purpose grows too prominent, there still remain moments of beautiful, grand utterance, as in his *Sonnets*, which rank among the most robust in the English language. It can be said without exaggeration that Wordsworth retained to the end his nobility of thought as well as of form. However, all that is exceptionally original in him belongs to the period of his first maturity. Wordsworth, in fact, should be called a psychological, rather than a philosophical, poet. His contribution to this effect is that by consciously shifting the domain of art into the realm of the implicit, he prepared the way for the supreme enrichment of modern literature.

10.5 OBJECTIVE TYPE QUESTIONS

1. The poem 'Resolution and Independence' was titled as _____
 - (a) The Leech-Gatherer
 - (b) Old man
 - (c) Independence and Resolution
 - (d) None of these
2. The Line :
"We poets in our youth begin in gladness :
but thereof come in the end despondency and madness".

- (a) The Prelude (b) The Recluse
 (c) Resolution and Independence (d) French Revolution
3. Thomas Hardy at the age of twenty eight wrote three curves for despair and the first of these three was
- (a) To write a novel (b) To read French Revolution
 (c) To write a poem (d) To read Wordsworth 'Resolution and Independence.'
4. The detailed account of Wordsworth's enthusiasm and the subsequent disillusionment is expressed in his work _____
- (a) The Recluse (b) The Prelude
 (c) Lyrical Ballad (d) The Excursion
5. The lines in the poem French Revolution :
 "Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,
 But to be young was very heaven!',
 'dawn' refers to _____
- (a) The English's Independence (b) French Revolution
 (c) English Revolution (d) the birth of Napoleon-I

10.5.1 Answer Key

1. The Leech-Gatherer
2. Resolution and Independence
3. To read Wordsworth Resolution and Independence
4. The Prelude & French Revolution

10.6 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

- Q.1 Discuss Wordsworth as a poet of Nature.
- Q.2. Critically comment on the development of thoughts in 'Resolution and Independence.'

Q.3 Wordsworth was disillusioned by the French Revolution and its result. Discuss in the light of the poem prescribed.

10.7 SUGGESTED READING

1. William Wordsworth, "The Prelude or, Growth of a Poet's Mind; An Autobiographical Poem".
2. The Norton Anthology of English Literature.

M.A. ENGLISH : SEMESTER II

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LESSON No. 11

POETRY-II

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

UNIT-III

STRUCTURE

11.1 Introduction

11.2 Objectives

11.3 Wordsworth as Poet of Man and Nature

11.4 Wordsworth on Poetic Diction

11.4.1 Answer Key

11.5 Multiple Choice Questions

11.6 Examination Oriented Questions

11.7 Suggested Reading

11.1 INTRODUCTION

Wordsworth believed that the company of nature gives joy to the human heart and he looked upon nature as exercising a healing influence on sorrow stricken hearts.

11.2 OBJECTIVES

The objective of this lesson is to discuss William Wordsworth as a poet of Nature and Man. It also includes his theory and views on the language on 'Poetic Diction' in poetry. After reading this lesson the distance learners will be able to answer the multiple choice questions.

11.3 WORDSWORTH AS POET OF MAN AND NATURE

Wordsworth's view of poetry was nothing short of a revolution in English poetry. He was the first to formally raise objection to an over-stylized poetic diction, and pleaded for a simple and plain language really spoken by people. No less revolutionary was his choice of simple incidents and humble people as subjects for his poetry. Equally revolutionary was his concept of Nature, which was radically different from the one held by the neo-classical poets. These well-known characteristics of Wordsworth as poet are only a few aspects of his revolutionary achievement. Poetry for him was primarily the record of a certain kind of mind. For him the value of poetry lay in the value of the state of mind which the poem recorded. A poet for Wordsworth was a man of uncommon emotional vitality whose perceptions of his fellowmen and of the external natural world yielded intuitions of the relation of one to the other. His perception also yielded intuitions of the psychological and moral truths underlying all existence. Although Wordsworth defined poetry as "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings," the process was not all that instantaneous. The high moments of perception yielded an emotion which on later recollection produced an awareness of its human and universal significance. It was to highlight this process that Wordsworth also defined poetry as "an emotion recollected in tranquility." The starting point, as we have seen, was the poet's special kind of perception, which differed in degree rather than in kind from that of ordinary men. This difference of degree was, however, of great importance. The end product was a record of the implications of the perception.

Wading through various philosophic and political influences, experiencing the emotions of ecstasy and despair, Wordsworth finally found solace in the companionship of his sister Dorothy and friendship of Coleridge. It took all this to force him to take stock of his basic ideas, and in doing so he worked out a view of poetry which enabled him to develop fully his poetic genius. It was a view which depended on the relation of the poet to the external world of man and nature. We might say that it depended on perception. If

for some reason, the poet's perception failed, if the intermittent moments of awareness, the "spots of time" as he called them, failed to recur with a certain regularity, then poetry, which was based on the recollection of such moments, would also not come, whatever the poet's technical virtuosity. No doubt, Wordsworth developed, in his later career, a kind of poetry which was less dependent on the original moment, or intense personal experience; he developed instead a poetry of moral rhetoric which is often impressive, but not typical of the great revolutionary poet. An example of this later poetry (perhaps at its best) is the *Ecclesiastical Sonnets*.

The poet's record of his moments of perception and emotion necessarily gives pleasure, a point on which Wordsworth insists. Joy for Wordsworth was a central principle of the universe. The poet's recognition of the correspondences between the mind of man and external nature was bound to be a joyful experience both for the reader as well as the poet. The poet "considers man as naturally the mirror of the fairest and most interesting properties of nature." In Wordsworth's view, the poet is "the rock of defence for human nature; an upholder and preserver, carrying everywhere with him relationship and love." He always believed that nature, man, and human life in general are related. To become aware of that relationship, he thought, was to love one's fellows and to participate in the "joy in widest commonality spread." As Wordsworth wrote the same year as the *Preface to the Lyrical Ballads* (1800), in lines which he later prefaced to *The Excursion* :

*On Man, on Nature, and on Human Life,
Musing in solitude, I oft perceive
Fair trains of imagery before me rise,
Accompanied by feelings of delight
Pure, or with no unpleasing sadness mixed;
And I am conscious of affecting thoughts
And dear remembrances, whose presence soothes
Or elevates the Mind, intent to weigh*

*The good and evil of our mortal state.
—To these emotions whencesoe'er
Whether from breath or outward circumstance,
Or from the Soul – an impulse to herself –
I would give utterance in numerous verse.*

This was Wordsworth's programme as a poet. And he carried it out in the subsequent, enlarged editions of *Lyrical Ballads* and in the poems of the 1807 volumes. His great creative period when he successfully carried out this programme was rather short. After 1805; he turned more and more from a poetry based on moments of inspired perception to a rhetorical, moral poetry, often very effective in its way but lacking the characteristic Wordsworthian touch.

In the best poetry of his prime, such as "Michael," "Resolution and Independence," "Lucy poems," "The Old Cumberland Beggar," etc., Wordsworth succeeds in giving moving cogency to the record of his experiences in an idiom of extraordinary freshness that combines quiet precision with poetic suggestiveness. Also, all these poems combine the poet's twin interest in man and nature. In fact, in the case of Wordsworth, the two were never conceived separately. If he thought of one, the other automatically became inevitable. Purity and power are the qualities of Wordsworth's most individual poems. This power can be of the massive, elemental kind that we find in "Michael". A little less obvious and made up of many cumulative touches of uncannily precise recording can also be seen in the same poem. The clarity of perception or imagination gives "Michael" an atmosphere of almost a trance like lucidity. This latter quality can also be seen, in different ways, in the Lucy poems as well as in poems like "The Idiot Boy" and "Peter Bell." Wordsworth shows to perfection his gift for giving poetic effect to the emotionally charged recall of luminous perception in such poems as "Daffodils," "The Solitary Reaper," and in several sonnets such as the one on Westminster Bridge.

The best example, in most precipitated form, of Wordsworth's treatment of the twin subjects of man and nature, is the famous "Immortality Ode," in which he has given his most complete account of the balance sheet of maturity as he saw it. In a poem whose very fabric is remembered perception giving way to reflection. Wordsworth charts the course of the developing sensibility. He did very much the same thing in his earlier great poem, "Tintern Abbey," and in much greater detail. The naive freshness of the child's awareness gives way to the more sober vision of the man. Medicated by love, the child's perceptions in an alien world take on a meaning which, as he grows up, finally emerges as the recognition of profound human significance in nature. As the poem clearly makes out, the poet is born only when the child's bliss gives way to the man's more sober and more profound sensibility. This sensibility (call it poetic) works through "relationship and love" rather than through mere animal sensation (of the child). The poem is thought, so far as the twin theme of man and nature is concerned, one of Wordsworth's most central and illuminating works.

The most elaborate mapping out of the dynamic relationship between man and nature, however, is made in Wordsworth's longest poem, *The Prelude*. Here, Wordsworth could most fully and adequately exploit his gift for what Keats called the "egotistical sublime." It is a long autobiographical account of his own development as man and poet—the two being inseparable in the case of Wordsworth. The poem was originally planned as an introductory part of or a preliminary poem to *The Recluse*, which was to be "a philosophical poem containing views of Man, Nature, and Society... having for its principal subject the sensations and opinions of a poet living in retirement." However, since the philosophical work did not materialize as intended, *The Prelude* grew into an epic size, a complete work in its own right, a remarkable and unique autobiographical poem, showing how man's (especially if he is a poet) growth of the poet's mind are marked by the change in the character of nature's role in that growth. The change in question does not, of course, emanate from nature's side, it

emanates from man's side. As he grows from childhood, to youth, to age, his response to nature changes. Man may slowly and steadily grow less and less dependent on nature, he can never remain a sensitive and perceptive human (a poet) without there being an active response to the surrounding nature. Thus, Wordsworth remains to date the most unique and authentic poet of man and nature, of the vital relationship between the two.

11.4 WORDSWORTH ON POETIC DICTION

The question of Wordsworth's view of poetic diction has been a red herring, which has misled many since Wordsworth's day. The real point to note is that Wordsworth wanted a minimum of stylization because he was (consciously and deliberately) not working in any tradition. Rather, he was kindling poetry from the bare experience, as it were. His task was not simply to describe the object seen or the incident encountered or heard of. His task was still less to render an experience or incident in a conventional poetic medium. Instead, he had to put it across with such naked force that the poet's feeling about it, his sense of its importance, when he later revoke the original perception, became immediately clear to the reader. If the poet became simply didactic, if he simply pointed out in separate stanzas the meaning of what he had described, or if he simply acted as a guide explaining the importance of what the reader was seeing, he ran the risk of separating the poet's mind from the external world of nature. For Wordsworth, the whole point of poetry was that the poet's mind and the external nature should come together in a special way. His poetry was intended to show that. He was liable, therefore, to fall into one or other of two opposite faults. He failed, for example, when he told a story with a complete matter-of-fact bareness. He would fail in such a case because the poet's sense of his relation to the events described would not come across. He also failed when he talked about his sense of the significance of it all without embodying it in the narrative or the account of the situation. He always, however, succeeded in walking the narrow path between didactic discursiveness

and complete objectivity. It is well-known that Wordsworth was not a dramatic poet. His vein was what Keats called the ‘egotistical sublime.’” In other words, he himself had to be implicated in whatever he wrote, however apparently objective the narrative might be. His greatest poems, therefore, are those where autobiography, perception, and narrative are woven seamlessly into one texture.

The best example on a smaller scale of Wordsworth’s autobiographical poem is “Tintern Abbey,” which was the star poem of the *Lyrical Ballads*, published in 1798. It shows how Wordsworth developed out of eighteenth-century meditative verse a richer and more personal idiom appropriate to a poetry which related reflection to sensation in a new, organic way. The poem has its importance for presenting one of the most succinct account of Wordsworth’s attitude to nature in all its changing hues. We see how this attitude to nature moves from the animal pleasure of childhood through adolescent passion for the wild and gloomy to adult awareness of the relation of our perception of the natural world to our sense of the human and moral world. Both “Tintern Abbey” and *The Prelude* tell us how Wordsworth learned to connect his feeling with humanity. Once it had been an animal thing, exultant and private; but then it deepened into a vision of man, a still, sad vision, accompanied by music and melancholy. In Wordsworth’s view, man’s fate is both complex and tragic. It is not the fate of birds or animals. Wordsworth had a keen sense of this. It was this very sense that had been wetted by his thoughts about the Revolution. It was the Revolution and his need to conquer it in his mind, that moved him at the climax of his career to take mankind for his subject.

Of course, Wordsworth did not do so the way Shakespeare did, or Homer did, or Dante did. These poets demonstrated in act the complexity and tragedy of men - not Man, as Wordsworth put it. Unlike them, Wordsworth did not know men, and so he could not tell great stories. He could only state his reverence and affection for the species. His canvas, so far as society was concerned, was very narrow. In some instances, limited

to the rural individual (not folk) he knew, such as his pastoral tales of "Michael" and "The Brothers," he could movingly relate the pathetic ends of simple lives. Wordsworth was restricted by his very nature to the contemplation of undeveloped persons, or at any rate of persons so simple that he must treat them in lyric, not drama. Mankind looked most real to Wordsworth in the child, and in the man who has never ceased to be one. Even idiots, and persons crazed by griefs until they were all one image of sorrow or pain, interested him as Hamlet, Oedipus, Macbeth, or Achilles never could have done.

No doubt, Wordsworth is limited in scope. Yet within his limits he is accurate and grave and sweet. He is in some primary way quite humane, so that although we come to know about his people, we do share with him a deep, disturbing, loving concern for them. The little girl in "We Are Seven," the mysterious Lucy of the poems written in Germany, the idiot son of Betty Foy, the old leech-gatherer in "Resolution and Independence," Matthew, and Michael, and the Cumberland beggar-they are all as simple as butterflies and sparrows, as brooks and thorn trees. Still we believe in their existence and are glad that Wordsworth has told us of them. Wordsworth was master of the natural line. Often enough, and indeed too often, it relaxes with him into mediocrity and flatness. In a world which seemed to have forgotten the very alphabet of emotion Wordsworth taught it to read afresh, to see and feel. So at any rate was the conviction of John Stuart Mill, whom Wordsworth's poems saved from the depths of intellectual depression. So with Matthew Arnold, who first spoke of Wordsworth's power to soothe and console an age fallen victim to philosophic despair.

In the subsequent generations as well Wordsworth has received praise by those who have found in him the reassurance they required. The reassurance that human life is still worth living, though most events and some men can make us doubt it. It is this very minimal need that Wordsworth had met. In a happier world he might have been free to aim at maturer ends. Yet in that happier world his lack of humour, a serious defect for one

who would be a complete poet, might have weighed more heavily against him than it does in this one. We no longer require humour in poets. We demand salvation. Of that commodity Wordsworth still supplies the purest sort. And since he was an artist, it will continue to be available in any world.

11.5 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

1. Wordsworth concept of Nature was different from the _____
 - (a) Classical Poets
 - (b) Neo-Classics
 - (c) Elizabethan Poetry
 - (d) Modern Poetry
2. Wordsworth define poetry as “Spontaneous overflow of powerful_____”
 - (a) temperament
 - (b) fear
 - (c) Feelings
 - (d) love
3. Wordsworth poetic theory is explained in his
 - (a) Preface
 - (b) Lyrical Ballad
 - (c) The Preface to lyrical ballad
 - (d) The Prelude.
4. Wordsworth most precipitated subject of treatment of Man and Nature in his poem
 - (a) French Revolution
 - (b) The Rhyme of Ancient Mariner
 - (c) Both French Revolution and The Rhyme of Ancient Mariner
 - (d) Immortality Ode
5. The best example on a small scale of Wordsworth’s autobiographical poem is
 - (a) Tintern Abbey
 - (b) Solitary Reaper
 - (c) Resolution and Independence
 - (d) French Revolution

11.5.1 Answer Key

1. Neo-Classics
2. Feelings
3. The Preface to Lyrical Ballad
4. Immortality Ode
5. Tintern Abbey.

11.6 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

- Q.1 Discuss the theory of poetic composition by Wordsworth.
- Q.2 Write a note on Wordsworth this view of the language of poetry.
- Q.3 Write a critical Analysis of “Immortality Ode”.
- Q.4 Write a note on the healing power of Wordsworth’s poetry.

11.7 SUGGESTED READING

- 1. Hugh Honour, ‘Romanticism’
- 2. M.H. Abram’s ‘The Mirror and the Lamp : Romantic Theory and Critical Tradition.
- 3. Cynthia Chase (ed.) ‘Romanticism’.

M.A. ENGLISH : SEMESTER II

COURSE CODE : ENG 212

LESSON NO. 12

POETRY - II

S.T. COLERIDGE

UNIT - III

STRUCTURE

- 12.1 Introduction
- 12.2 Objectives
- 12.3 Life and Works of S.T. Coleridge
- 12.4 Critical analysis of *Kubla Khan*
 - 12.4.1 Kulba Khan
 - 12.4.2 The Magic image of the Magic child
- 12.5 Multiple Choice Questions
 - 12.5.1 Answer key
- 12.6 Examination Oriented Questions
- 12.7 Suggested Reading

12.1 INTRODUCTION

S.T. Coleridge's achievement has been given more widely varying assessments than that of any other English literary artist. His stature as a poet has never been in doubt, *Kulba Khan* and *The Rime of the Ancient mariner* perfected a mode of sensuous lyricism that is often echoed by later Poets.

12.2 OBJECTIVES

The objective of this lesson is to familiarise the distance learner with the life and works of S.T. Coleridge. Coleridge is one among the forerunner

of the Romanticism in England and his contributions are highly significant. This lesson also comprises the critical analysis of poem 'Kubla Khan'. The distance learners are advised to read the lesson carefully and try to answer the lesson and exercise.

12.3 LIFE AND WORKS OF S.T. COLERIDGE

A popular verdict passed upon Coleridge has been that his legacy to posterity consists of a handful of golden poems" and "a will-o' -the wisp light to bemused thinkers," Although the verdict is not wholly acceptable, it brings to light the contrast between the radiant months of 1797-98 (with their afterglow in 1802) when most of the golden poems were written and the long years before and after that short span when Coleridge followed the light often flickering and uncertain, of philosophy. From the very beginning of his career as writer. Coleridge was both a poet and a philosopher He was called by Lamb, in his famous reminiscence (Christ's Hospital Five-and-Thirty years Ago), the "inspired charity boy," a "metaphysician" as well as "bard." Lovers of poetry may regret that he abandoned the fertile garden of Xanadu for "the holy jungle of metaphysics," it need to be remembered that Coleridge conceived as part of his life work the fructification of receptive minds.

In fact, not through his writings but also through his talks Coleridge impressed his ideas upon such contemporaries as Wordsworth, Hazlitt, and De Quincey and upon younger men of promise, including John Smart Mill and the recalcitrant Carlyle. How fruitful was the impregnation is obvious in many fields of inquiry: in the theory and practice of literary criticism, the theory of the state, psychology, the interpretation of German romantic philosophy, the reconciliation of Trinitarian Christianity with Neo-Platonic thought, and other speculative problems. The immense and intense, albeit undisciplined, mental activity which lay behind both the written and the spoken word has been too much obscured by the record of irresponsibility in daily life. His grandiose' plan remained unrealized, his promises broken, his pledges unredeemed. Yielding to the satisfaction of his personality, the friends who gave him financial assistance, which he was all too willing to accept, seem not to have considered

their investment wholly unprofitable. We must weigh this aspect against Southey's harsh structures, Lamb's mockery of the good intentions of the "archangel somewhat damaged," the anxieties and disappointments of Wordsworth, and Coleridge's oft-repeated self-reproaches.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834), the precocious and dreamy youngest son of a Devonshire clergyman, had acquired many of his life-long traits by the age of ten when he entered Christ's Hospital school. Already he was willing to cage for small sums of money; already he was planning himself projects beyond his powers of realization. The ability to win friends, the need for affection, and the capacity to evoke it were conspicuous. It was at school that his friendship with Lamb began, which remained for life-time except clouded momentarily. Already a "library cormorant" (as he later called himself), Coleridge was in process of substantiating his later assertion that he had read almost everything and was "deep in all out of the way books," he discovered the Neo-Platonists and unfolded to admiring auditors "the mysteries of lamblicus," His earliest sonnets, feeble in sentiment, diction and structure were his response to the influence of William Lisle Bowles, in whose insipidities he discerned a sincere nature poetry uncontaminated by fashionable artifice. Coleridge was not, however, free from the shackles of the contemporary mode. For example, his addiction to "turgid ode and tumid stanza," dogged with pompous rhetoric and frigid personification, is evident in the *Destruction of Bastille* (1789), in which we find expressed radical political sentiment. These aspects of his poetry are also evident in the *Monody on the Death of Chatterton* which was later in 1794 completely rewritten.

Coleridge entered the university of Cambridge in January, 1791, with a reputation for amazing erudition. But his career there became so erratic that his friends felt deeply disappointed. There is some evidence of fast living. There was also some indiscretions in his airing of opinions which were republican in politics and Unitarian in theology. Debts also piled up. From study also he was distracted by his love for Mary Evans (whom he had met while still at school). Consequently, in December 1793, he left the university all of a sudden. The serio-comic incident

of his enlistment in the dragoons followed. From this predicament he was rescued by his family and reinstated in Cambridge. In the summer of 1794 came, at Oxford, the first meeting with Robert Southey. The two young men, both influenced by the radical political doctrine, were soon deep in plans to emigrate to America and establish there a "pantisocratic" community free from prejudice and tradition and based on "the generalization of individual property," Coleridge's immoderate enthusiasm is reflected in some of his sonnets on Pantisocracy and in *The Fall of Robespierre* (1794), rather inadequate as drama composed in collaboration with Southey. The same impulsiveness took a tragic turn when, because matrimony was an essential factor in the American scheme, he affianced himself at Bristol to Sarah Ficker, the sister of the young woman to whom Southey was betrothed. When it was "too late" he discovered that his love for another woman, Mary Evans, was reciprocated. The dejection from high hopes which bore little relation to reality was expressed in one of the earliest and least poignant of those passages of self-depreciation which seemed to give Coleridge a perverse sort of satisfaction. Here is one such passage :

To me hath Heaven with bounteous has assigned
Energic Reason and a shaping mind,
The daring ken of Truth, the Patriot's par"
And Pity's sigh, that breathes the gentle heart
Sloth-jaundiced all.

A long irregular connection with the newspapers began with the publication in *The Morning Chronical* (Dec. 1795 - Jan. 1796) of Coleridge's a dozen Sonnets on Eminent Characters- Pitt, Priestly, Godwin, Bowles, and others. He went to London in search of employment, where he lingered long, associating with Lamb and reluctant to face his responsibilities in the west of England. In July his friend Southey compelled his return. The two poets lectured at Bristol Southey on history, Coleridge on politics and religion - the express purpose being raising money for their passage to America. But Coleridge's untrustworthiness now led to an estrangement which was not

bridged over till after Southey's return from Portugal and then without a renewal of confident intimacy. Coleridge had married Miss Fricker in October, 1795; and shortly afterward he toured England, lecturing and canvassing for subscriptions to a proposed journal of public affairs. Of this journal, *The Watchman*, ten issues appeared in the spring of 1776. By the impartiality of his attacks on both Godwin and Pitt Coleridge managed to alienate both radical and conservative readers. A weak will was unequal to the drudgery involved in the undertaking; there was too much dependence for "copy" upon parliamentary reports; subscriptions fell off and soon. *The Watchman* "ceased to cry the state of the political atmosphere".

It was at this point of time that a few guineas chance to Coleridge's hand from Joseph Cottle, who not only published but also paid for his first volume of poems, *Poems on Various Occasions* (1796). In this volume Coleridge had also intended to include *The Destiny of Nations*, which he had permitted Southey to use as part *Joan of Arc* and which he now reclaimed and expanded; but submitting to Lamb's advice he suppressed it and it was not published till 1817 in its entirety. The most ambitious piece in the volume of 1796 was "Religious Musings" upon which Coleridge had been at work since Cambridge days. In this poem Coleridge idealizes French Revolution, praises Priestley Unitarianism, and shows inclination towards Hartley's psychology and its implications. The poem is also marked by a vague current of mysticism, showing a drift away from Godwinian rationalism.

A few small poems, such as the "Song of the Pixies", show a timid venturing into the realms of the glamorous where Coleridge was soon to feel at home. The poems were well received and a second edition was called for.

In desultory search for congenial employment Coleridge went about the country, preaching in Unitarian chapels. In one of these journies he received news about the birth of his eldest son, Hartley, and composed a sonnet in which the Platonic idea of pre-existence points forward to Wordsworth's "Immortality Ode." In the autumn of 1796 he was in correspondence with John Thelwall, the radical. And it was around the same

time that he made his first admission that he was addicted to opium. A strong desire to earn a livelihood by farming led him, notwithstanding the warnings of his practical friend Thomas Poole, to move into a cottage at Nether Stowey among the Quantock hills. The year closed with his Ode to the Departing Year in which a belief that "Divine Providence regulates into one vast harmony all the events of time, however calamitous some of them may appear to mortals," struggles for expression through the conventional poetic diction.

During the spring of 1797 Coleridge remained preoccupied with the writing of a tragedy, undertaken on an invitation from Sheridan, the manager of Drury Lane. The play was named *Osorio*. Its plot was adapted, in part, from Schiller's novel *Des Geisterscher*, which was soon to contribute something to *The Ancient Mariner*. The play caters, in some measure, to the "Gothic" taste with an incongruous, but not uncharacteristic of a politico-philosophic strain. Sheridan, on the basis of obscurity of the play's later part chose to reject the play, though after keeping it under consideration for a long time. The play was revised by Coleridge many years later, and reached the stage under a different title, *Remorse*.

Meanwhile, Coleridge's friendship with Wordsworth, which had started in 1795, had developed into a deep relationship. He visited Wordsworth at Racedown in June 1797 and persuaded them to move to Alfoxden. The two friends influenced each other in many ways reflections of which are quite apparent in their respective works. The Wordsworthian influence is apparent in "The Lime-tree- Bower My Prison" both in its stylistic freedom from Augustan idiom and in the heightened sensitiveness to the minutiae of the natural world. Parallels between Coleridge also the succeeding year and the contemporary entries in Dorothy's Journal show that not to her brother alone (as he testified) but to Coleridge also the "exquisite sister" gave eyes and ears. During the golden period of just six months (between November, 1797 and May, 1798), Coleridge composed his greatest poems (called "golden") namely, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, the First Part of *Christabel*, and the fragment of *Kubla Khan*. He also outlined during the same short span a

projected tale, "The Wanderings of Cain". Besides, the two poet-friends discussed the theory of poetic diction, and reached a decision as to the respective shares of the two in the historic volume of the Lyrical Ballads (1798). Wordsworth was to give "the charm of novelty to things of every day," while Coleridge's province was to be "persons and characters supernatural, or at least romantic," but with an attachment to them of "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."

For a study in "the ways of the imagination" as exemplified in the history of the composition of *The Ancient mariner* there is no dearth of evidence in the stock of Coleridge's "cormorant reading." A host of ideas and image" had sunk for years into the deep well" of his "unconscious celebration," For his never realized project of six Wymms to the Sun, the Moon, and the Four Elements he had been storing ideas of all kinds from Neo-Platonic speculations on tutelays spirits to the latest researches reported in the scientific publications of the day. He had around this time consorted with seafaring men at Bristol. He had heard of ships guided by the dead. From Schiller and other sources his imagination had been ignited by the legend of the wandering Jew. He had already been contemplating a story upon, the doom of Cain. One can imagine how these and other numerous images must have got associated in his unconscious. Wordsworth's suggestion about the theme of retribution for the crime of slaying a bird beloved by an elemental spirit also worked upon all these images like a catalytic agent. Thus the poem got precipitated, with the ideas richly, encrusted with the associated imagery, rising to the surface of thought, there to be subjected to the conscious working of "the shaping spirit of imagination." Coleridge's deliberations with Wordsworth on the choice of poetic diction, his preference for the ballad-measure, and his imaginative apprehension of the subject, all combined to free him from the old trammels of the Augustan style. The resultant poem, *The Ancient Mariner*, became the most enchanting of all evocations of the romantic spirit of wonder. It won the "willing suspension of disbelief" from

every reader by means of the clarity of its general design, the realism of detail, and the unanalyzable amalgam of the natural and the marvelous.

Coleridge's next "golden poem," *Christabel*, was begun after, and its first Part completed, before *The Ancient Mariner*. In the second Part not composed till 1800, the imaginative tension is somewhat relaxed. In spite of Coleridge's assurances that he had the entire design in mind, the poem was never completed. Coleridge thought that he had invented the metre the line consisting of four stressed and a varying number of unstressed syllables but it was actually a revival of an old form. In its tantalizing state the story has invited considerable speculation as to the poet's intentions. Fragments of his reading of Percy's *Reliques*, Lewis's *The Monk*, and Mrs. Radcliffe's *Romances* went into the poem. It seems that classical ideas of "Lamia" and medical ideas of the vampire, conflated in the person of Geraldine, were to be crossed with the theme of vicarious suffering as expiation for a wrong. After Coleridge settled in the lake Country he introduced into Part II something of the traditions and landscape of Westmorland. The fire lore which shone more luridly in the first version of *The Ancient Mariner* than in the revised form burns mysteriously in *Christabel*.

In "Kubla Khan", Coleridge's third "golden" poem, (composed as the poet himself revealed, in an opium-induced dream) the images which had been deposited in the unconscious from Coleridge's reading about subterranean rivers, pleasure places, and other esoteric scenes and marvelous phenomena surged up and were expressed immediately in words without the exercise of conscious art. On waking he began, to write the poem but was interrupted by an intrusive stranger. Afterwards, neither the words nor the vision could be recaptured. The same Coleridge, who had persuaded himself that he would one day complete *Christabel*, made no effort to finish this other fragment of haunted and haunting beauty.

Besides these three "golden poems," Coleridge composed quite a few more memorable poems in or around 1798, including "Fire", "Famine" and "Slaughter", an excoriating attack on William Pitt; "Frost" at "Midnight", close in sentiment and beauty to Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey"; "The Nightingale"

with its lovely picture of the father stilling his infant's sobs by showing him the moon; "The three Graves", an attempt, such as Wordsworth made in *Peter Bell*, to suggest mystery and horror without recourse to the supernatural: and "France all Ode", a remarkable plea to freedom for revolutionary France. Over these and other poems we must pass without further elaboration. Coleridge's greatest work as a poet was now all but done; and the long remainder of his life must here be recounted with utmost brevity.

Before Coleridge departed for Germany in September, 1798, he had been busy with his versions of Schiller's *Piccolomini* and *The Death of Wallenstein*, a task brought to completion after his return in 1799. Coleridge returned from Germany with quantities of books as also the determination to devote himself to philosophy. He was now employed by *The Morning Post*, where he published quite a few essays on public affairs, which attracted such wide attention that Daniel Stuart, the editor, offered him an editorial position at a handsome salary. However, Coleridge refused to commit himself to a partisan policy - or to fixed obligations. In 1800 he settled at Greta Hall on the outskirts of Keswick, and prepared with Wordsworth the second edition of *Lyrical Ballads*. The habit of taking opium had by now got a firm hold on him. Love for his wife, which had never been deep-rooted, faded and died. Increasing anxiety about his health found repeated expression in Dorothy Wordsworth's journal. At this very time Wordsworth drew his portrait in the *Stanzas Written in a copy of Thompson's "Castle of Indolence."*

In October, 1802, Coleridge published his last great poem, the poignant *Dejection; an Ode*, in which he laments the loss of the faculty of response from within to the beauty of the natural world and of that "shaping spirit of imagination" which nature had given him at his birth. Coleridge's keenness to escape from Greta Hall and to seek health in a warmer climate led him to accept a secretarial appointment at Malta. This kept him away from England for more than a year. On his return the alienation from Mrs. Coleridge drifted into a legal basis. Thereafter, Coleridge mostly lived in London, where he wrote for *The Courier*. In 1808, Coleridge began the

first of various courses of lectures on Shakespeare and other poets and on metaphysical topics. During the nine months of 1809-1810 he issued *The Friend*, a journal of philosophical, political, and literary opinion, irregular in its date of appearance, and often dull in its contents, though enlivened with Satyrane's Letters, written from Germany in 1798-1799 and afterwards included in the *Biographia Literaria*.

Basil Montagne's indiscreet report of Wordsworth's confidential warning on Coleridge's habits brought about Coleridge's estrangement from Wordsworth in 1810, increasing his despondency further. At the same time, there was also a happy sign, a constant thought at first unsuccessful against opium. His lectures on Shakespeare in 1812 were attended by the world of fashion and were brilliantly successful owing in this venture a good deal to Lessing and other German critics. Coleridge emphasized in these lectures the philosophic aspect of Shakespeare. He invariably read in Shakespeare's more plays than the texts warranted. He would always ignore the outer form of the plays for the sake of what he held to be the inner reality. The dramas for Coleridge were as much of spiritual experience as aesthetic. In 1813-1814 Coleridge delivered four courses of lectures at Bristol, most of which pertained to literary subjects.

Coleridge's tragedy *Osorio*, revised and renamed *Remorse*, was produced at Drury Lane theater in London in 1813 through the persuasion and mediation of Lord Byron. A second drama, *Zapolya* (1816) was rejected. Coleridge's dark pathway was still illuminated with visionary projects. In 1814, these took the form of a great treatise on Christianity, the one True Philosophy. This design, however, came to nothing or very little. But it marked Coleridge's severance from Unitarianism and acceptance of a Neo-Platonic form of Christianity. That it was intended to be "illustrated by fragments of Autobiography" shows that he was now contemplating another work. In 1816 he put himself under the care and into the household of James Gillman a physician at Highgate. His determination was to submit to an anti-narcotic regimen "not only firm but severe." In this year "Christabel" and "Kubla Khan"

(both by now famous in literary circles from recitations and manuscript copies) were published, together with “The Pains of Sleep” written in 1803) which conveyed a picture contrasting with the glories of Xanadu. Many more poems were assembled in Sibylline leaves (1817).

After going through a number of vicissitudes, Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria* was at long last published in 1817. Despite digressions, the first volume was fairly coherent. In the second volume, however, the plan broke down and it was expanded to the proportions of the first only by a reprint of *Satyrane*, an acrimonious critique of Maturin's *Bertram*, and a rambling concluding chapter. The most important chapters of the book remain those on Wordsworthian theory of poetic diction and those formulating a theory based upon the Kantian distinction between the *Vernunft* and the *Verstand* (with heavy obligations of Schilling), distinguishing between the *Fanc* which is merely 'a mode of Memory receive its material from the laws of association and the imagination, which transcends sensational material and brings the mind into direct connection with the ultimate and supersensuous reality. *The Biographia Literaria* was harshly reviewed by Hazlitt; and Blakewood's was so outrageously personal in its attack upon Coleridge's private life that he thought of bringing suit for libel.

In his later life, Coleridge renewed contact with Southey, developed more close contact with Wordsworth, and revived for a short time the publication of “The Friend”, and delivered a last series of lectures in 1819. Coleridge also published a miscellany of philosophy, piety, and literary criticism entitled *Aids of Reflection* (1825). He also struggled, during these years, manfully and on the whole successfully, with the old enemy, opium. But he was almost crushed with the disgrace of his son - Hartley's expulsion from Oxford. He did, of course, attract, in these later years, a number of disciples belonging to the younger generation, who gathered round him and supplied moral support and intellectual satisfaction. These included Edward Irving, John Sterling, Frederick D. Maurice, and other religious - minded liberals, who observed his discourses at Highgate. In 1827-1828 there was

a St. Martin's - Summer revival of the poetic instinct and he wrote the Garden of Boccaccio and Love, Hope and Patience. The moving Epitaph for his own grave was composed in failing health in November, 1833. He died on July 25, 1834 and was buried in Highgate cemetery. Southey pursued his memory in private letters, with shocking rancor. Lamb mourned for him during the short remainder of his life. Wordsworth pronounced him "The most wonderful" man he had ever known and referred in remarkable lines to the marvelous intellectual power of :

The rapt One, of the godlike forehead,

The haven-eyed creature.

The attempt of Coleridge's literary executors to piece together the much talked of philosophical and religious magnum opus failed; but his nephew Henry Nelson Coleridge (who married the poet's daughter, Sara), gathered together the Literary Remains and published the fascinating record of his Table-Talk."

12.4 CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF KUBLA KHAN

Coleridge's poem, "Kubla Khan: OR, A Vision in a Dream. A fragment," is one of his three "golden poems," the other two being "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" and "Christabel." Coleridge prefaced "Kubla Khan" with the following:

The following fragment is here published at the request of a poet of great and deserved celebrity [Lord Byron], and, as far as the Author's own opinions are concerned, rather as a psychological curiosity, than on the ground of and supposed poetic merits. In the summer of the year 1797, the Author, then in ill health, had retired to a lonely farm-house between Porlock and Linton, on the Exmoor confines of Somerset and Devonshire. In consequence of a slight indisposition, an anodyne had been prescribed, from the effects of which he felt asleep in his chair at the moment that he was reading the following sentence, or words of the same substance, in 'Purchas's Pilgrimage' : 'Here the Khan Kubla commanded a palace to be built, and a stately garden thereunto. And thus ten miles of fertile ground were enclosed with a wall.

The Author continued for about three hours in a profound sleep at least of the external sense, during which time he has the most vivid confidence, that he could not have composed less than from two to three hundred lines. If that indeed can be called composition in which all the images rose up before him as things, with a parallel production of the correspondent expressions, without any sensation or consciousness of effort. On waking he appeared to himself to have a distinct recollection of the whole, and taking his pen, ink, and paper, instantly and eagerly wrote down the lines that are here preserved. At this moment he was unfortunately called out by a person on business from Porlock, and detained by him above an hour, and on his return to his room found, to his no small surprise and mortification, that though he still retained some vague and dim recollection of the general purport of the vision, yet, with the exception of some eight or ten scattered lines and images, all the rest had passed away like the images on the surface of a stream into which a stone has been cast, but, alas! Without the after restoration of the latter!

Then all the charm
Is broken - all that phantom-world so fair
Vanishes. and a thousand circle spread,
And each mis-shapes the other. Stay awhile.
Poor youth! Who scarcely dar'st life up thine eyes-
The stream will soon renew its smoothness, soon,
The visions will return ! And lo. he says,
And soon the fragments dim of lovely forms
Come trembling back, unite, and now once more
The pool becomes a mirror.

[From *The Picture; or, The Lover's Resolution*, II. 91-100]

Yet from this still surviving recollections in his mind, the Author has frequently purposed to finish for himself what had been originally, as it were, given to him.....but the tomorrow is yet to come.

As a contrast to this vision, I have annexed a fragment of a very different character, describing with equal fidelity the dream of Pain and disease.

With this preamble to the poem, which explains the circumstances as well as the sentiments that lie behind the incomplete poem, we know now that it is the product of a vision in a dream induced by opium. The poem runs as under:

12.4.1 Kubla Khan

In Xanadu did Kubla Khan.
A stately pleasure-dome decree:
Where Alph; the sacred river, ran
Through caverns measureless to man

Down to a sunless sea.
So twice five miles of fertile ground
With walls and towers were gridded round:
And there were gardens bright with sinuous rills,
Where blossomed many an incense-bearing tree;
And here were forests ancient as the hills,
Enfolding sunny spots of greenery

But oh! That deep romantic chasm which slanted
Down the green hill athwart a cedarn cover!
A savage place! As holy and enchanted
As e'er beneath a waning moon was haunted
By woman wailing for her demon-lover!
And from this chasm, with ceaseless turmoil seething,
As if this earth in fast thick pants were breathing,
A mighty fountain momently was forced:
Amid whose swift half-intermitted burst
Huge fragments vaulted like rebounding hail,

Or chaffy grain beneath the thresher's flail :
And' mid these dancing rocks at once and ever
It flung up momentarily the sacred river.
Five miles meandering with a mazy motion
Through wood and dale the sacred river ran,
Then reached the caverns measureless to man,
And sank in tumult to a lifeless ocean
And' mid this tumult Kubla heard from far
Ancestral voices prophesying war!
The shadow of the dome of pleasure
Floated midway on the waves;
Where was heard the mingled measure
From the fountain and the caves.

It was the miracle of rare device,
A sunny pleasure-dome with caves of ice!

A damsel with a dulcimer
In a vision once I saw:
It was an Abyssinian maid,
And on her dulcimer she played,
Singing of Mount Abora,
Could I revive with me
Her symphony and song,
To such a deep delight't would win me,
That with music loud and long,
I would build that dome in air,
That sunny dome! Those caves of ice !
And all who heard should see them there,

And all should cry, Beware ! Beware !
His flashing eyes, his floating hair!
Weave a circle round him thrice,
And close your eyes with holy dread,
For he on honey dew hath fed,
And drunk the milk of Paradise.

[1798; pub. 1816]

The poem, with its pleasure dome, its sacred river, its panting fountain, its caves of ice, its ecstatic figure with flashing eyes and floating hair who "on honey dew hath fed and drunk the milk of Paradise," is clearly about poetic creation. Coleridge symbolises the working of the imagination, the shaping spirit of the poetic material, in the figure of the fountain. The entire luxurious setting of the pleasure-dome and the surrounding parks and gardens, the picture of the sensuous East, is meant to symbolize the process of creation that the poet's imagination undertakes. This record of an opium dream: put down in the poem, interrupted by a person from Porlock, has traditionally been taken to be a beautiful but chaotic fragment, in which images from Coleridge's multifarious reading float about confusedly. But, as a matter of fact, the images cohere perfectly.

The opening description of the pleasure-dome-
In Xanadu did Kubla Khan
A stately pleasure-dome decree;
Where Alph, the sacred river, ran
Through caverns measureless to man
Down to a sunless sea-

Show that combination of pleasure and sacredness which for Coleridge as for Wordsworth was the sign of true art. The second stanza explores the kinds of passionate and marvelous experience with which poetry deals, goes on to suggest the way in which the creative imagination operates, and ends

with a hint of the vulnerability of the pleasure-dome - "And mid this tumult Kubla heard from far/Ancestral voices prophesying war!" the palace of art is always under a threat from the violence of the outside world, the world of unimaginative life.

The short third stanza brings together images of pleasure and of sacred river, and of coldness, of sun and of ice which again symbolize art or poetry :

The shadow of the dome of pleasure
Floated midway on the waves;
Where was heard the mingled measure
From the fountain and the caves.
It was a miracle of rare device,
A sunny pleasure -dome with caves of ice !

The final stanza recollects and describes a moment of poetic inspiration and expresses the wish that the poet could revive and prolong that moment so that he could raise the palace of art and dwell there in continued poetic ecstasy :

...Could I revive within me
Her symphony and song,
To such a deep delight 't would win me,
That with music loud and long,
I would build that dome in air,
That sunny dome ! Those caves of ice !
And all who heard should see them there,
And all should cry, Beware! Beware!
His flashing eyes, his floating hair!
Weave a circle round him thrice,
And close your eyes with holy dread,
For he on honeydew hath fed,
And drunk the milk of Paradise.

Thus quite appropriately the fragment of a poem concluded with a portrait of the poet (followed by others) in his mood of poetic frenzy. It is the picture of an inspired Bard, whose looks are other worldly, who seem inspired by the muses, a sort of ethereal presence among earthly being. Here is an instance of Coleridge naturalizing the supernatural, showing it within the material being of the poet, not something of a separate supernatural presence. The reverse way Coleridge adopts is to raise the common to the uncommon, the usual to the unusual, the ordinary to the extraordinary, the worldly to the other worldly. Thus, through colouring of the imagination, the poet elevates the mundane level to the celestial level of the higher reality. It is in this region that the poet lives, and it is to this region that the poetic creation belongs.

Coleridge's "Kubla Khan" is the most perfect example of what can be rightfully called the purely magical strain in his poetry. The third of his "golden poems", also called the "trilogy," generally associated with the Coleridgean form of romanticism ("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"). The peculiar art of romanticism that Coleridge developed depended for effect, in great measure, on the music of his poetry and the choice of archaic or unusual words or unusually placed words, which imparted to even things ordinary an extraordinary light of imagination. Expressions such as "sunless" in place of dark, "twice-five" rather than ten, "gridled round" in place of surrounding, "enfolding" in place of enclosing, give of the poem the touch of the unusual and uncommon, remove the familiar to the twilight territory of the fading reality and moonlit shadows.

The poet of Coleridge was well aware of the mighty world of eye and ear. Even in his philosophical writing unexpected concrete apparitions are conjured up. Tenuous spiritual relations are presented in terms of landscapes as we have seen in the poem "Kubla Khan". Thus, when he wishes to describe the grounds of poetry which he and Wordsworth will take as their own, merely

with the difference of emphasis in their approaches, he speaks of "the two cardinal points of poetry" as faithful adherence to the truth of nature, and the power of giving the interest of novelty by the modifying colours of imagination." Yet he immediately proceeds with a picture sentence where the eye understands the argument, or illustrates it : "Thus 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".

It is not possible to understand Coleridge, even as a thinker, unless we take into account his tendency to visualize thought. It is not a piece of rhapsody when he writes, "O! what a life is the eye! What a strange and inscrutable essence!" We need to take him literally in this poem. He should also be taken literally when he writes in the same poem: "To see is only a language" This language of seeing produced Coleridge's best poems, and must be considered as a distinctive trait in his habit of thinking. He himself takes us within the magic lantern of his mind when he writes of "Kubla Khan" that strangest of all poems, "if that indeed can be called a composition in which all the images rose up before him as things, with a parallel production of the correspondent expressions, without any sensation or consciousness of effort."

"Kubla Khan" as already stated, was composed after the author had taken an anodyne "in consequence of a slight indisposition." Like most men, Coleridge went through life slightly indisposed; but his sharper sensitivity and his loftier hopes demanded an excess of anodynes. He took many forms of opium, among which the most important were endless conversation with friends, metaphysical philosophy, enchanted daydreaming, and meditations on the infinite. He used the peculiar gifts of his mind to allay its weaknesses and fears. The pattern of his poems, especially "Kubla Khan" and "Christabel", shows his self induced therapy. His melancholy lassitude and sense of failure appear desperately insuperable in such poems as "Dejection," "The Pains of Sleep", and "The Pang More sharp than all". One anodyne is the gay play of language where the poet's intentions surpass his achievement. Another is the summoning

up of friends, for which Coleridge created his own form and named it the "Conversation Poem". The vast natural world also, with its soothing power and quite, Coleridge treats as a friend. Through such effusion and communion Coleridge could overcome his fears in solitude.

For Coleridge, the greatest opium of all was the day dream. Here institutions, hopes, and fears that kindle hope, flash into shapes. Intimations are given form and move through stories or allegories. Figures and scenes have the particularity and weighted sense of unstated significance of the figures in visions. Thoughts are seen as things, in coruscating colours; yet outside the central glare everything fades to phantoms, and the transitions are as unnoticed or as unpredictable as in dreams. Few poets experience for long "the somnial magic superinduced on, without suspending, the active powers of the mind." But three times at least in "the Ancient mariner", in "Christable," and in "Kubla Khan" - Coleridge reaches the inexhaustibility of great poetry.

The dominant idea in Coleridge's poetry, the lifelong mystery of an individual searching for unity in a phantasmal cosmos, can be found expressed in variants on a repeated image. The Aeolian harp vibrates and thrums at the touch of unseen winds. The mariner is alone on a wide, wide sea. Christable is drawn to the huge oak tree in the midnight wood. A pleasure dome is associated with measureless caverns; sunny spots of greenery are enfolded by forests ancient as the hills; Kubla Khan from far ancestral voices prophesying war. Always there is this lonely center of consciousness, with vastness beyond. Resembling Shakespeare's "pity, like a naked newborn babe, striding the blast," Coleridge's is a compulsive image.

12.4.2 The magic image of the magic child.

The child at the center (or the damsel, or the wanderer) is Coleridge, or his shaping imagination. He is as much the quester in "Kubla Khan" as he is the wandered in "the Ancient Mariner". The intuition shapes the image of his secret through, a living sometimes frighteningly piteous, focus of consciousness, filled within that one focus. Many of Coleridge's best known

distinctions can be seen within the terms of this one image. The act of creating the "pleasure-dome" in "Kubla Khan" is a magical act, comparable to poetic creation. Coleridge's distinction between the Fancy and the Imagination may not have proved of any real use to subsequent critics, but Coleridge himself felt passionately that Fancy mechanically combined dead elements whereas the living Imagination assimilated, modified, and fused elements into organic unity. We see an illustration of the operation of the Imagination in "Kubla Khan".

Similarly, Coleridge's distinction between Reason and Understanding becomes the poet's own, and not a mere borrowing from Kant, when he defines the Understanding to be a practical power of living and adjusting, but the Reason to be the unchanging light of truth, the Logos itself. The poet in him throws his thoughts again and again into pictures. Reason is "the irradiative power"; it is opposed to "the shaping mist, which the light had drawn upward from the ground, and which the light alone had made visible." Perhaps it was the poet's need for pictures and for thought in terms of personality which led him to exclaim: "Newton was a great man, but you must excuse me if I think that it would take many Newtons to make one Milton." From this controlling vision of a warm personal center in a mysterious universe spring the fruitful ideas in his literary criticism, art as creation, art as organism (that is, a living and growing unity) rather than as mechanical combination and proportion and rules, art as discovering. In concrete and picturesque form Coleridge's definition of art is illustrated in "Kubla Khan". The "pleasure-dome" of Kubla is a picture of art; the fountain within enfolded by greenery is the picture of the creative imagination. One can see how symbolism in Coleridge works as an unsuspected concrete specific object. It is only the poet's (or the philosopher's) ideas, that lie behind these picturesque concrete object, which make possible the comprehension of his symbols. In the case of Coleridge, therefore, it is not possible to separate the philosopher from the poet (Matthew Arnold separates the two in the case of Wordsworth).

"The poet does not required us to be awake and believe; he solicits us only to yield ourselves to a dream; and this too with our eyes open, and with our

judgement ready to awaken us; and meantime, only, not to disbelieve," says Coleridge. "Kubla Khan" once again offers an illustration of this critical dictum 'of the philosopher-poet who also has his place secure in the history of criticism.

We are offered in this poem a "dream", and then a "vision" within that dream, which requires us to be "awake and believe". The famous "willing suspension of disbelief" works upon us until the entire scale of pictures has come upon us and settled firmly in the mind, the memory, and the imagination. There is a poet within the poem, "A damsel with a dulcimer", which the poet "in a vision" once saw. This "Abyssinian maid" is a source of inspiration for the poet, becomes almost a muse for him, who would raise him to her own level, making him compose a work of art.

Could I revive within me
Her symphony and song,
To such a deep delight' twould win me
That with music loud and long,
I would build that dome in air,
That sunny dome! Those caves of ice!
And all who heard should see them there,
And all should cry, Beware! Beware!

From this voyage of discovery into the mind which creates semi-independent of the outer senses, Coleridge returns with subtle modern ideas on semantics, on the relation of words to thoughts, of images to ideas, of system to mystery, reason to riddle. No English poet-critic can be credited with larger capacities; and Coleridge could say with more justice than Johnson that no one had travelled over his mind. He is the one who stands apart from us and yet remains only at a visible distance, some one special and yet recognizable :

Waves a circle round him thrice,
And close your eyes with holy dread,

For the on honey-dew hath fed,
And drunk the milk of Paradise.

With awe and wonder we look at him, and yet we see him familiar enough.
He is, like Blake, an inspired bard, a Prophet among men.

12.5 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

1. Coleridge's enthusiasm in Pantisocracy is reflected in his _____ sonnet.
(a) Dejection : An Ode (b) Work without Hope
(c) The Fall of Robespierre (d) On a Discovery Made Too Late
2. In which journal Coleridge attacked Godwin and Pitt?
(a) The watchman (b) Weekly Dispatch
(c) The Edinburgh Review (d) Quarterly Review
3. The first tragic play written by Coleridge was _____
(a) Zapolya (b) The Fall of Robespierre
(c) Remorse (d) Osorio
4. The first collection of Coleridge's poem was titled as _____
(a) Poems on various occasions (1796) (b) The watchman
(c) This Lime-Tree Power my Prison (1797) (d) The Eolian Harp (1795)
5. Which among these poems is not the among the 'Golden Poems'?
(a) Kubla Khan (b) Dejection an Ode
(c) The Rime of the Ancient Mariner (d) Christabel

12.5.1 Answer Key

1. The Fall of Robespierre 2. The Watchman
3. Osorio 4. Poems on Various Occassions (1796)
5. Dejection : An ode

12.6 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

- Q.1 Discuss supernatural elements in Coleridge's poetry.
- Q.2 Discuss 'Kubla Khan' as a poem on the working of the poetic imagination.
- Q.3 Discuss Coleridge's use of symbolism in his poetry.

12.7 SUGGESTED READING

- 1. John Livingstone Lowes, *The Road to Xanadu* Boston and New York 1927.
- 2. I.A. Richards, *Coleridge on Imagination*, New York, 1935

M.A. ENGLISH : SEMESTER II

COURSE CODE : ENG 212

LESSON NO. 13

POETRY - II

S.T. COLERIDGE

UNIT - III

STRUCTURE

- 13.1 Introduction
- 13.2 Objectives
- 13.3 *Dejection : An Ode* a Critical analysis
- 13.4 *Frost at Midnight* a Critical analysis
- 13.5 Theory of Imagination
- 13.6 Multiple Choice Questions
 - 13.6.1 Answer Key
- 13.7 Examination Oriented Questions
- 13.8 Suggested Readings

13.1 INTRODUCTION

Dejection : An Ode is a personal poem in which the poet expresses the distress of his soul. The poet bewails that he has lost the creative energy which nature had given him at the time of birth.

13.2 OBJECTIVES

The objective of this lesson is to critically analyse the poem 'Dejection : An Ode' and 'Frost at Midnight'. The lesson also discusses in detail Coleridge's theory of Imagination and the process of poetic composition. At the end of this

lesson the distance learners will be able to answer the questions asked in the multiple choice questions.

13.3 DEJECTION : AN ODE A CRITICAL ANALYSIS

While "Kubla Khan" was a fragment of a vision seen in a dream, "Dejection: an Ode" is a full-fledged remorse over the loss of that "celestial light," the absence of which makes the poet's "genial spirits fail." The poem is the counterpart of Wordsworth's "Immortality Ode," but without the latter's "consolations" found in the "philosophic mind," in larger human sympathies beyond one's self. Here, Nature, too, is not the nursing mother, guide and philosopher, but only a medium for the reflection of man's own mind and mood. The similarities of subject and form are so acute between the two odes of these great friends that one wonders whether Coleridge had deliberately composed the poem to "answer" Wordsworth on the subject of the relationship between the inner world and the outer world, between spirit and matter, Man and Nature. But let us first read the poem, which runs as under :

DEJECTION : AN ODE

[.WRITTEN APRIL 4, 1802]

Late, late yestreen I saw the new Moon,
With the old Moon in her arms;
And I fear, I fear, my Master dear!
We shall have a deadly storm.
Ballad of Sir Patrik Spence

I

Well ! If the Bard was weather-wise, who made
The grand old ballad of Sir Patrick Spence,
This night, so tranquil now, will not go hence

Unroused by winds, that ply a busier trade
Than those which mould yon cloud in lazy flakes,
Upon the strings draft, that moans and rakes,
Upon the strings of this Aeolian lute,
Which better far were mute.
For lo! The New-moon winter-bright!
And overspread with phantom light,
(with swimming phantom light o' erspread
But rimmed and circled by a silver thread)
I see the old Moon in her lap. foretelling
The coming-on of rain squally blast.
And oh! That even now the gust were swelling,
And the slant night-shower driving loud and fast!
Those sounds which off have raised me, whilst they awed,
And sent my soul abroad,
Might now perhaps their wonted impulse give,
Might startle the dull pain, and make it move and live!

II

A grief without a pang, void, dark, and dre
A stifled, drowsy, unimpassioned grief
Which find no natural outlet no relief,
In word or sight, or tear
O Lady! In this wan and heartless mood,
To other thoughts by younder throstle woo'd
All this long eve, so balmy and serene,

Have I been gazing on the western sky,
And its peculiar tint of yellow green:
And still I gaze- and with how blank an eye!
That give away their motion to the stars;
Those stars, that glide behind them or between,
Now sparkling, now bedimmed, but always seen:
Yon crescent Moon, as fixed as if it grew
In its own cloudless, starless lake of blue;
I see them all so excellently fair,
I see, not feel, how beautiful they are

III

My genial spirits fail;
And what can these avail
To lift the smothering weight from off my breast?
It were a vain endeavour,
Thought I should gaze for ever
On that green light that lingers in the West:
I may not hope from outward forms to win
The passion and the life, whose fountains are within.

IV

O Lady! We receive but what we give,
And in our life alone does Nature live:
Ours is her wedding garment ours her shroud!
And would we aught behold, of higher worth,

Than that inanimate cold world allowed
 To the poor loveless ever- anxious crowd,
 Ah! From the soul itself must issue forth
 A light, glory, a fair luminous cloud
 Enveloping the Earth-
 And from the soul itself must there be sent
 A sweet and potent voice, of its own birth,
 Of all sweet sounds the life and element!
 O pure of heart! Thou need'st not ask of me
 What this strong music in the soul may be !
 What, and wherein it doth exist,
 This light, this glory, this fair luminous mist,
 This beautiful and beauty-making power;

 Joy, virtuous Lady! Joy that ne'er was given;
 Save to the pure, and in their purest hour,
 Life, and Life's effluence, could at once and shower,
 Joy, Lady ! is the spirit and the power,
 Which wedding Nature to us gives in dower

 A new Earth and new Heaven,
 Undreamt of by the sensual and the proud-
 Joy is the sweet voice, joy the luminous cloud-
 We in ourselves rejoice'
 And these flows all that charms our ear or sight,
 All melodies the echoes of that voice,
 All colours a Suffusion from that light.

VI

There was a time when, though my path was rough,
 This joy within me dallied with distress,
And all misfortunes were but as the stuff
 Whence Fancy made me dreams of happiness:
For hope grew round me like the twining Vine,
 All fruits, and foliage not my own, seemed mine.
But now afflictions bow me down to earth:
 Not Care. I that they rob me of my mirth;
But oh! Each visitation
 Suspends what nature gave me at my birth,
My shaping spirit of Imagination.
 For not to think of what I needs must feel.
But to be. still and patient, all I can;
 And haply by abstruse research to teal
From my own nature all the natural man-
 This my sole resource, my only plan:
Till that which suits a part infects the whole,
 And now is almost grown the habit of my soul.

VII

Hence, viper thoughts, that coil around my mind,
 Reality's dark dream!
I return from you, and listen to the wind,
 Which long has raved unnoticed. What a scream

Of agony by torture! Thou Wind, that rav'st without,
 Bare crage, or mountain-tairn, or blasted tree,
 Or pine-grave whither woodman never clomb,
 Or lonely house, long held the witches home,
 Methinks were fitter instruments for thee,
 Mad Lutanist! Who in this month of showers,
 Of dark-brown gardens, and of peeping flowers,
 Mark'st Devils' yule, with worse than wintry song,
 The blossoms, buds, and timorous leaves among,
 Thou Actor, perfect in all tragic sound,
 Thou mighty Poet, e'en to frenzy hold !
 What tell'st thou now about?
 'Tis of the rushing of an host in rout .
 With groans, of trampled men, with smarting wounds-
 At once they groan with pain, and shudder with the cold!
 And all that noise, as of a rushing crowd,
 With groans, and tremulous shudderings-all is over-
 It tells another tale, with sounds less deep and loud!
 A tale of less affright,
 And tempered with delight,
 As Otway's self had framed the tender lay-
 'Tis of a little child
 Upon a lonesome wild,
 Not far from home, but she hath lost her way:
 And now moans low in bitter grief and fear,
 And now screams loud, and hopes to make her mother hear.

VIII

'Tis midnight, but small thoughts have I of sleep:
Full seldom may my friend such vigils keep!
Visit her, gentle Sleep! With wings of healing,
And may this storm be but a mountain-birth
May all the stars hang bright above her dwelling,
Silent as though they watched the sleeping Earth!
With light heart may she rise,
Gay fancy, cheerful eyes,
Joy lift her spirit, joy attune her voice;
To her may all things live, from pole to pole,
Their life the eddying of her living soul!
O Simple spirit, guided from above,
Dear Lady friend devoutest of my choice,
Thus mayest thou ever, evermore rejoice.

[1802; pub. 1802]

In the version of "Dejection : an Ode" generally available, the poem suffers from a deliberate mutilation of the text which Coleridge wrote in order to avoid making public the precise nature of the situation (winter involved his unhappy marriage and his love for Wordsworth's sister-in-law, Sara Hutchinson, to whom the poem was written) which prompted it. However, even in the mutilated version, it is a remarkable poem, moving from a given situation described in a way reminiscent of his more conversational, meditative poems to a vivid account of the anguish with which he recognized the failure of his "shaping spirit of imagination," "his loss of the Sense of joy in Nature, of the inner exultation which alone could enable a poet to respond adequately to the natural world and see anything vital in it"; to end with an eloquently expressed prayer that Sara may have what he has been deprived of. Wordsworth's "Immortality Ode" is also about loss, but it is about gain too, and the kind of gain which turns a heedless child, joyously responsive to nature in an instinctive

way, into a mature man who can find in nature "thought that do often lie too deep for tears." The "Dejection Ode," on the contrary, in spite of its eloquent passages on joy, is an altogether more pessimistic poem. It has weight and passion, and the ode form, with its varying rhythms and stanza patterns, is brilliantly employed to convey the shifts from description of his present surroundings to retrospect, from speculation to imagination to passionate prayer for the lady to whom the poem is addressed, from introspection to announcement, and other movements which give the poem power and vitality.

Coleridge, like Wordsworth, believes that one is endowed with certain quality of mind and spirit; and, also like Wordsworth, he believes that this quality one is born with does not last for the whole length of life. On two points, however, Coleridge seems to have separate beliefs from those of Wordsworth. One of these is, that while Wordsworth assigns to Nature, the role of shaping the mind of man, Coleridge believes that all springs from within, from the soul of man, and that Nature only returns what we give it. The second point of difference is that when that "visionary gleam" or the "shaping spirit of imagination" falls the poet, while Wordsworth seeks consolation in the philosophic mind which grows through experience, Coleridge seems to remain without any consolation, and hence remains remorse ridden and despondent. In his view of Nature also, Coleridge differs with Wordsworth radically; the following lines clearly show the difference :

This must be one great end of Nature, her ultimate production of the highest and most comprehensive individuality The tendency have been ascertained, what is most general law? I answer- polarity, or the essential dualism of Nature, arising out of its productive unity, and still tending to reaffirm it, either as equilibrium, indifference, or identity. In its productive power, of which the product is the only measure, consists its incompatibility with mathematical calculus. For the full applicability of an abstract science ceases, the moment reality begins. Life, then, we consider as the copula, or the unity of thesis and antithesis, position and counterposition, - Life itself being the positive of both.

Thus, whereas in Wordsworth we find a belief in the "monism" of Nature, here it is a belief in the "dualism" of Nature. This passage illuminates what is implied in Coleridge's "Ode"-his doctrine of Imagination, which is another form of "mesothesis" or holy spirit that unites polarities and creates reality. It is this supreme power of Imagination which Coleridge finds faded in 1802 when he composes the "Ode" to express his grief and sorrow.

In a famous passage in his *Biographia Literaria* (Chapter XIII), Coleridge explains at length his concept of Imagination.

The Imagination then I consider either as primary, or secondary. The primary Imagination I hold to be the living power and prime agent of all human perception, and as a repletion in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM. The secondary Imagination I consider as an echo of the former, coexisting with the conscious will, yet still is identical with the primary in the kind of its agency, and differing only in degree, and in the mode of its operation. It dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to recreate: or where this process is rendered impossible, yet still at all events it struggles to idealize and to unify. It is essentially vital, even as all objects (as objects) are essentially fixed and dead.

Here is a sort of essence of the "Ode", now when the Imagination seems to have deserted the poet, all things appear to him "fixed and dead." Since the creative faculty is no longer there to make the poet see "unity" in "diversity," all things fall apart as a spectacle of chaotic physical world.

In another passage, still more illustrative of the nature of Imagination Coleridge explains the poet's creative power, how it operates and what it does with the raw material of life. This passage, too, has direct bearing on what is involved in Coleridge's "Dejection: an Ode." Here is the text of that passage :

The poet, described in ideal perfection, brings the whole soul of man into activity, with the subordination of its faculties to each other according to, their relative worth and dignity. He diffuses a tone and spirit of unity that blends, and (as it were) fuses, each into each, by that synthetic and magical power, to which I would exclusively appropriate the name of Imagination, This power, first put in action by the will and understanding and retained under their irremissive, though gentle and unnoticed, control, *laxis effertur habenis*, reveals itself in the balance or reconciliation of opposite or discordant qualities: of sameness, with difference; of the general with the concrete; the idea with the image; the individual with the representative; the sense of novelty and freshness with old and familiar objects; judgment over feeling profound or vehement; and while it blends and harmonizes the nature and the artificial, still subordinates art to natural; the manner to the matter; and our admiration of the poet to our sympathy with the poetry.

It is this conception of the poet which Coleridge applied to himself; and when he faced the failure of that supreme poetical faculty, he would naturally feel remorse. This is precisely what we encounter in the "Ode". The "shaping spirit of Imagination," which welds the parts of experience, is longer there now. As he says, "for in our life alone does Nature live," and the Nature's life alone do we live. The poet in Coleridge was well aware of the mighty world of eye and ear. The inner world of spirit and the outer world of matter are integrated and amalgamated by the power of Imagination. But when that power recedes, the two worlds fall apart; the whole becomes dead and disintegrated. It is this phenomenon which the "Ode" lays bare in graphic detail, marked by a tone of

deep anguish. Once the inner spring goes dry, the outer landscape becomes a dry dead spectacle of disparate pieces.

The complete realization of Coleridge's basic thought - the relation of parts to whole includes all possible experience-is, of course, impossible in any man. Almost unavoidably the whole blurs and minimizes the parts or the parts confuse the whole. Occasionally Coleridge puts them in perfect balance; as in his illuminating definition of a poem as that species of composition which proposes to itself "such delight from the whole, as is comparable with a distinct gratification from each component part." As with a poem, so with a person the wholeness of the personality is lost, so is the creative power of the poet. Coleridge's "Ode" depicts the anguish of dejection; dejection caused by the loss of that creative power which endives, not only the person of the poet, his inner world, but also Nature, the outer world, combining the two into a unified whole. Coleridge's principle of one in many and many in one is based on this very theory of wholeness. At his best Coleridge is both poet and philosopher; he must see infinity in a grain of sand, simultaneously, actually. Ordinarily, his thought seems incomplete and difficult because he struggles to make it all inclusive, and is ill-content with any partial pattern. He envisions not only the One, but the All which is at the same time One. He throws wide arches over the cosmos, dangerous as Wotan's rainbow bridge to Valhalla, daring as Milton's highway from hell to the world built over chaos.

In Coleridge's work, the search for unity never ceased. In fact, it was an all-round search, enfolding the political and scientific, the moral and artistic thought. He came to be a great admirer of Burke, after his earlier liberal distrust, because he felt that Burke envisioned more of history (including probably the future history) than 'the radical reformers. Unlike Wordsworth, he abandoned Hartley's mechanistic psychology of association in favour of more realistic theories. A comparison of the two famous "Odes" written by Wordsworth and Coleridge shows how the life-giving creative force comes from two different sources in the two poems. While in Wordsworth it issued from Nature, in Coleridge it issues from Man. Coleridge also discovered that

the systems of Bacon and Plato "are radically one and the same system," The yearning toward this unity of all myriads can be seen in an eloquent passage which comes from one of Coleridge's lectures on drama :

One great principle is common to all the fine arts, a Principle which probably is the condition of all Consciousness without which we should feel and Imagine only by discontinuous moments, and he plants Or brute animals instead of men; I mean the ever varying Balance, or balancing, or images notions, or feelings, conceived as in opposition to each other, -in short, the perception of identity and contrariety; the last degree of which constitutes likeness, the greatest absolute differences; but one infinite gradations between these two form all the play and all ,the interest of our intellectual and moral being, till it leads us to a feeling and an object more awful than it seems to me compatible with even the present subject to utter aloud; though I am most desirous to suggest it. For there alone are all things at once different and the same; there alone, as the principle of all things, does distinction exist unaided by division; there are will and reason, succession of time and unmoving eternity, infinite change and ineffable rest!

In such words as "discontinuous," "opposition," "contrariety," "difference," and "division" and such opposite words as "identity" and "likeness," the passage just quoted, as well as the "Ode" we are discussing, suggests Coleridge's struggle to find a principle that would allow him to reconcile unity with variety, the absolute and the individual. He (theoretically) finds a solution to his key-concept of polarity, which in order to establish poles, necessarily implies a single object or state- of

being to possess those poles. Coleridge seizes upon the idea of polarity eagerly, for it allows him to develop vitalistic conception of life and consciousness as conflict, action, organic growth creativity.

As is amply illustrated by the depiction of his personal dilemma in the "Ode", Coleridge once again is his own best speaker, this time from his essay on "Theory of Life," which just in a few sentences, ditches the spirit of the problem.

This must be the one great end of Nature her ultimate production of the highest and most comprehensive individuality The tendency having been ascertained, what is its most general law? I answer-polarity, or the essential dualism of Nature, arising out of its productive unity, and still tending to reaffirm it, either as equilibrium, indifference, or identity. In its productive power, of which the product is the only measure, consist its incompatibility with mathematical calculus. For the full applicability of an abstract science ceases the moment reality begins. Life, then, we consider as the copula, or counter-unity of thesis and antithesis, position and counter-position, -Life itself being the positive of both.

The yearning for unity in Coleridge often leads to mysticism. Coleridge, however, is no mystic. His conception of polarities forbids to men an undifferentiated oneness, while the Coleridgean conception of the Imagination as an active re-creative force presupposes material upon which that force works, and which it struggles to transmute and idealize and unify. As his "Ode" makes it clear, his philosophy rests clearly and confidently on a necessary interaction between an inner and an outer world. Here in the poem we have been discussing is the best illustration of that "interaction" and the "unity," which if gone, leaves the poet "cold" and "dead".

Joy, virtuous Lady! Joy that never was given,
Save to the pure, and in their purest hour,
Life, and life's effluence, cloud at once and shower,
Joy, Lady! is the spirit and the power. .
Which wedding Nature to us gives in dower
 A new Earth and new Heaven
Undreamt of by the sensual and the proud.
Joy is the sweet voice, Joy the luminous cloud-
We in ourselves rejoice !
And -thence flows all that charms our ear or sight,
All melodies the echoes of that voice.
All colours a suffusion from that light.

"That light" is, of course, the poet's "shaping spirit of Imagination", which enlivens and unifies, combines and chaos all the poles and polarities, counters ,and counterpoints, which otherwise scatter overboard in a, chores of individual identities. "All knowledge," says Coleridge, "rests on the coincidence of an object with a subject." Neither subjective nor objective comes first; and indeed, one is known as such by the presence of the other; "both are co-instantaneous and one." Who but the all-inclusive Coleridge, distrusting extremes set up as exclusive answers, would name one son Hartley after the associational mechanistic psychologist and another son Berkely after the subjective idealist? True to his own ideas, he prudently named still another son Derwent after a lake.

No wonder the "Ode" ends with a prayer for the revival of that "Joy which made all "misfortunes" "but as the stuff "Whence Fancy" made him "dreams of happiness." .

With light heart may she rise,
Gay fancy, cheerful eyes,
Joy lift her spirit, joy attune her voice;

To her may all things live from pole to pole,
Their life the eddying of her living soul!
O simple spirit, guided from above,
Dear Lady! friend devoutest of my choice,
Thus mayst thou ever, ever evermore rejoice.

13.4 “FROST AT MIDNIGHT” T A CRITICAL ANALYSIS

Like "Dejection: an Ode," "Frost at Midnight" is also an intimately personal poem, touching upon the deep chords that resound in the complete silence of the fond memories, as well as disturbing, the compassionate child care, as well as fear about the child's future, from the environment rather uncongenial, inform the poem. As usual, Coleridge inducts in the poem's natural world the presences of the supernatural, In the material world the spiritual, and in the concrete narrative the symbolism. Before we take up the poem's discussion at length, we better go through its text, which runs as under:

Frost At Midnight

The Frost performs its secret ministry,
Unhelped by any wind. The owl's cry
Came loud - and hark, again ! loud as before.
The inmates of my cottage, all the rest,
Have left me to that solitude, which suits
Abstruser musings: save that at my side
My cradled infant slumbers peacefully.
'Tis calm indeed' So calm, that it disturb
And vexes meditation with its strange
And extreme silentness. Sea, hill, and wood,
With all the umberless goings on of life,
Inaudible as dreams ! The thin blue flame
Lies on my low-burnt fire; and quivers not;

Only that film, which fluttered on the grate,
Still flutters there, the sole unquiet thing.
Methinks, its motion in this hush of nature
Gives it dim sympathies with me who live,
Making it a companionable form,
Whose puny flaps and freaks the idling Spirit
By its own moods interprets, every where
Echo or mirror seeking of itself.
And makes a toy of thought.
But O! how oft,
How oft, at school, with most believing mind,
Presageful, have I gazed upon the bars,
To watch that fluttering stranger! And as oft
With unclosed lids, already had I dreamt
Of my sweet birth-place, and the old church-tower,
Whose bells, the poor man's only music, rang
From morn to evening, all the hot Fair-day,
So sweetly, that they stirred and haunted me
With a wild pleasure, falling on mine ear
Most like articulate sounds of things to come!
So gazed I, till the soothing things, I dreamt,
Lulled me to sleep, and sleep prolonged my dreams !
And so I brooded all the following morn,
Awed by the stern preceptor's face, mine eye
Fixed with mock study on my swimming books :
Save of the door half opened, and I snatched

A hasty glance, and still my heart leaped up,
For still I hoped to see the stranger's face,
Townsmen, or aunt, or sister more beloved,
My play-mate when we both were clothed alike!
Dear Babe, that sleepest cradled by my side;
Whose gentle breathing, hark in this deep calm,
Fill up the interspersed vacancies
And momentary pauses of the thought!
My babe so beautiful! it thrills my heart
With tender gladness thus to look at thee;
And think that thou shalt learn far other lore,
And in far other scenes! For I was reared
In the great city, pent 'mid cloisters dim
And saw nought lovely but the sky and stars.
But thou my babe! shall wonder like a breeze
By lakes and sandy shores, beneath the crags
Of ancient mountain, and beneath the clouds,
Which image in their bulk both lakes and shores
And mountain crags: so shalt thou see and hear
The lovely shapes and sounds intelligible
Of that eternal language, which thy God
Utters, who from eternity doth teach
Himself in all, and all things in himself.
Great universal Teachers! He shall mould
Thy spirit, and by giving make it ask.
Therefore all seasons be Sweet to thee,

Whether the Summer clothe the general earth
With greenness, or the redbreast sit and sing
Betwixt the tuft of snow on the bare branch
Smokes in the sun-thaw; whether the eave-drops fall
Heard only in the trances of the blast.
Or if the secret ministry of frost
Shall hang them up in silent icicles,
Quietly shining to the quiet Moon.

[1798; pub. 1798]

"Frost at Midnight" is one of those poems of Coleridge we label meditative poetry. Coleridge himself called it *Sermoni propria*, meaning "more appropriate to conversation." Coming from Horace, Coleridge quotes this statement at the head of one of these poems. These poems including "Frost at Midnight" show Coleridge in pursuit of a controlled association of ideas under the guidance of a dominating emotion, stimulated by visual images. The present poem, for sure, is one of the finest examples of this. Here, we see the poet sitting in his cottage in the deep hours of the night. He is sitting by the side of his baby sleeping in his cradle. Outside, there is frost on the green grass and leaves of trees. While the babe remains asleep as a static object of nature, the poet shows awareness of a mind in action, awareness of the village and its environment of "sea and hill and wood." There is fire burning in the grate in front of the meditating poet. All these objects in the spectacle before and around him, the natural surrounding the serene environment, combine to lead the poet first to reflection on how thoughts and moods arise, then to a particular reminiscence of his school days, "an emotion recollected in tranquility." Further, the poet is led to feeling a contrast between his own urban childhood and the one he has planned for his own child, the babe sleeping in the cradle besides him.

By lakes and sandy shores, beneath the crags
Of ancient mountain and beneath the clouds"

Finally, the poet's mind reaches a benedictory hope for the child in the expression of which he returns to the frost outside with which the poem had begun.

The opening of the poem, like any dramatic composition, states the subject, creates a mood, and sets the tone. All this is achieved through a subtle selection of objects from the natural setting spread around the spot in which the poet is seated on the fire-side, with the only presence of human child. his own son, sleeping by his side in the cradle .Note how effective the poetic rendering is of the scene and setting, evoking emotional and spiritual response to the relation of man to his environment:

The frost performs its secret ministry,
Un helped by any wind. The owlet's cry
Came loud-and hark, again! Loud as before.
The inmates of my .cottage, .all at rest,
Have left me to that solitude, Which suits
Abstruser musings : save that at my side
My cradled infant slumbers peacefully.
'Tis calm indeed! So calm, that it disturbs
And vexes meditation with its strange
And extreme silentness. Sea, hill, and wood.
This populous *village!* Sea, and hill, and wood,
With all the *numberless* goings-on of life,
Inaudible as dreams! The thin blue flame
Lies on my low-burnt fire, and quivers not;
Only that film, which fluttered on the grate,
Still flutters there, the sole unquiet thing.

Methinks its motion in this hush of nature
Gives it dim sympathies with me who live,
Making It a companionable form,
Whose puny flaps and freaks the idling Spirit
By its own mood interprets, every where
Echo or mirror seeking of itself,
And makes a toy of Thought.

[My italics]

In a sense, the scene and setting, the way they are depicted, do remind as of the late eighteenth-century, pre-Romantic poet William Cowper. The only difference is that Coleridge has added to the natural description a dimension of his own philosophic musing. Here, the thought is not merely cozy or self indulgent, but exploratory. It is related to "the numberless goings on of life." The term "goings-on" was a favourite one of both Coleridge and Wordsworth. It reflects the interest each had in the relation between the individual mind and the universe at large. The film on the grate, sign of visitor's arrival in popular superstition, recalls how the sight of a similar film in his school days had led him to expect "townsman, or aunt, or sister more beloved". This section opens with a shift of movement :

But O! how oft,
How oft, at school, with most believing mind,
Presageful, have I grazed upon the bars,

In the section that follows, there is a shift in movement once again:

Dear Babe, that sleepest cradled by my side,
Whose gentle breathings, heard in this deep calm,
Fill up the interspersed vacancies
And momentary pauses of the thought ...

The "secret ministry" of the Frost (as if Frost is a priest), unhelped by wind, creates a "deep calm", which even the "owlet's cry," though "loud" does

not disturb. In this "solitude," away from society and in the lap of nature, amply suitable for "abstruser musings," the poet is able to register the "gentle breathings" of the child, who "sleepest cradled" by his side. It is one of those "unheard melodies" that are "sweeter" than those "heard". It fills up the "interspersed vacancies" and "momentary pauses of the thought".

When we reach the concluding paragraph of the poem, we find that it has brought the poem to rest in utter silence and peace. One can see how, like the best of Coleridge's compositions, it harmonises the parts into the whole, and squares the whole with the parts. The poem's unity works at various levels synchronizing mood with matter, style with subject, symbol with surface. It can be said to be a perfectly modulated poem, perhaps the most successful of his poems in this style. Note how the ending reverts back to opening, even as the openings foretells the ending :

Therefore all seasons shall be sweet to thee,
Whether the summer clothe the general earth
With greenness, or the redbrest sit and sing
Betwixt the tufts of snow on the bare branch
Of mossy apple tree, while the night thatch
Smokes in the sun-thaw; whether the eve-drops fall
Heard only in the trances of the blast,
Or if the secret ministry of frost
Shall hang them up in silent icicles,
Quietly shining to the quiet Moon.

It is a typically Romantic piece with descriptive evocation of seasons through metaphors and symbols created within the very objects of nature which despite the symbolic imports, do not lose their specificity and concreteness. The surface sensuousness remains unaffected by the under layer of symbolism. Also typically Romantic is the personification of natural objects, the best being the "clothing" of "the general earth" by "the summer" "with greenness."

The power of Romantic evocation is felt in Coleridge's conveying to the reader the feel of winter without even once making a mention of that season :

.... The redbrest sit and sing
Betwixt the tufts of snow on the bare branch
Of mossy apple tree, while the night thatch
Smokes in the sun-thaw.....

Here tufts of snow," "bare branch," "mossy apple tree," "night thatch" smoking in "in the sun-thaw": all combine into a cluster of images that create an atmosphere of winter. Also, the song of the redbrest does not disturb the silence of the "solitude" in the winter night; rather, it harmonises with the night's silence.

If we are judging Coleridge's poetry according to its success in creating sustained verbal textures (as opposed to the brilliant interplay between words and projected images in the great poems), we shall find ourselves making a return to the conversation poems. One of these poems, perhaps the best, is "Frost at Midnight," which is universally acclaimed as Coleridge's supreme achievement at this level. Nowhere does he succeed so fully in producing his various themes and modes of thought to a single organized statement. "Frost at Midnight" amply displays Coleridge's gift for rendering "the night-side of nature". The gift can be said to be in its fullness. The poem also shows, and equally amply, Coleridge's extraordinary power for displaying a piece of human thinking in the complexity of its shifting thrusts and shapings.

Sitting awake in his cottage in the lap of nature, and looking at the sleeping infant cradled by his side, Coleridge naturally finds himself looking before and after. He recalls his own childhood as well as he considers Hartley's (his son's) future upbringing. Images start up naturally and associate themselves with other images; while in a larger, familiar movement of systole and diastole the poet moves from the present moment, these particular things around him, to his remembered sense, in childhood, of the great appearances in nature, and to his hope that his son, Hartley, will be able to enjoy such scenes in a less restricted manner. Finally, he can return to the icicles now

forming themselves around his cottage and describe them again, this time in the context of the developed delight in nature that he envisages for his son.

"Frost at Midnight" is a poem which invites analysis of many features, such as the manner in which the delicate, step-by-step tracing of the argument is counter pointed by larger movements in the imagery. The poem is finally held together by the poet's abiding concern for "the sympathies of things" - ranging from the effect of beautiful landscapes upon a growing mind to the curious fact that even a small film of soot on a grate, by the simple fact of moving in an otherwise silent atmosphere, can suggest "dim sympathies with me who live."

All this relates to one of the central mysteries that fascinated Coleridge: the mystery whereby every manifestation of life is at once unified and diverse - always existing in a separate identity, yet always inseparably linked to, and assimilating itself with, all other forms of life. The rise and fall of this particular theme (the theme of the "one life") is to be associated particularly with a few years of his career, and will be more appropriately traced in individual poems like the present. It must, however, be stressed here that this theme of "one Life" was the idea which proved most successful in reconciling' all the powers of the poet as well as his interests. Among other things it brought together the work of heart and imagination. While it could be claimed as the special office of head and mind to establish the individual in a sense of his own identity and separateness from the world of nature, the corresponding ministry of heart and imagination was to remind men, through an enlivened sympathy, of their links with one another. In the head "each has a life of its own". in the heart "we are all one life."

"Frost at Midnight" also reflects Coleridge's deep and abiding concern with language and its powers. Throughout a long life he never lost his sense of wonder at the extraordinary processes by which thoughts could turn into things and things into thoughts, and at the part played by language in this process. Such preoccupations led Coleridge' continually to the very border of language the point where it merges with the mystery of perceptual process itself. For the

same reason he was fascinated by all the processes of light. As he records in *Biographia Literaria*, "the sudden charm, which accidents of light shade, which moon-light or sun-set diffused over a known and familiar landscape" was one of the phenomena to which he and Wordsworth devoted their attention; and the fruits of such discussion may be observed in his poems of the supernatural such as "Frost at Midnight." While the poet's own childhood was spent amid "cloisters dim," his child, he hopes, would grow up "in the son-thaw." Thus, the gloom of the father is contrasted to the joy of the son through the interplay of light and shade. Coleridge, however, never lost the belief that in studying the behaviour of light man was closest to points of possible correspondence between his own powers and those of nature.

The mystery of personal "radiance," whether experienced as an illumination in the mind, or as an observable physical radiance in others, was something that disturbed and attracted Coleridge all his life. At its highest it might be thought of as key to everything; the radiating figure of the inspired poet as the end of "Kubla Khan", fascinating mankind in to a harmonic chance, was its supreme artistic embodiment. In time of disillusionment, as in *Dejection : An Ode*, by contrast, it was more like a delusive will of the wisp, or the visual illusion, seen by a woodman in a snow-mist. Either way, it could be neither finally dismissed, nor every fully verbalized. The imagery of light in Coleridge's poetry has a corresponding ambiguous quality : it is seeking a direct access to the reader's imagination which can not be properly mediated by the verbal structure, and its success or failure in communication will have to do with factors which are independent of the poet's skill at handling words in systematical structures of meaning. "Frost at Midnight" is one of these poems where the despondence of past life is counterpointed by the expectation of future life, both thought home to the reader through the interplay of shade and light.

13.5 THEORY OF IMAGINATION

Whether a man shall live his old life or a new one, in a universe of death or of life, cut off and alien or affiliated and at home, in a state of servitude or of

genuine freedom- to the Romantic poet's, all depends on his mind as it engages with the word in the act of perceiving. Hence, the extraordinary emphasis throughout the age of Romanticism on the eye and the object and the relation between the two. Whatever their philosophical differences about what is and what only seem to be, the major poets coincide with Blake's view that "As a man is, so he sees," that "As the Eye-such the Object," and that "the Eye altering alters all"; therefore, that to see the word wrongly is to see the wrong word, but to see it aright is to create a new earth and new heaven.

Carlyle's discussion of "The hero as poet" is mainly an expansion of the triple significance of the Latin term *Vates* as poet, prophet, and seer. "May we not say that intellect altogether expresses itself in this power of discerning what an object is ?" A calmly seeing eye; a great intellect, in short. "The seeing eye!... To the Poet as to every other, we say first of all, see." But since to see the world anew is equivalent to making a new world, the Latin *Vates* and the Greek *poeta* (maker) fall together. "Creative, we said : Poetic creation, what is this too but seeing the thing sufficiently...." The *Vates* Poet presents us with a "melodious Apocalypse of nature." A Ruskin, who in this respect was Carlyle's disciple, put it: "The greatest thing a human soul ever does in this world is to see something, and tell what it saw in a plain way... To see is poetry, prophecy, and religion, - all in one"; it is to be a "Seer".

A number of shorter poems, like the longer works of Romantic imagination, turn on optical imagery. The poet, confronting the world, sees what he has failed to see, or no longer sees what he once saw, or sees what he once saw in a new way. Wordsworth's *Immortality Ode* is initiated by the disquieting discovery that "the things which I have seen I now can see no more," and concludes in the comfort that he now sees old things in a new light through an "eye/That hath kept watch o'er man's mortality." Coleridge defines his accidie in *Dejection: An Ode* by the fact that, when he gazes on the sky, the clouds, the stars, and the moon, "I see, not feel, how beautiful they are!" In Shelley's *Hymn to Intellectual Beauty*, the unseen power sheds a transforming but inconstant light and colour on the

world. The index of Peter Bell's inner depravity, in Wordsworth's poem, is a visual deficiency :

A primrose by a river's brim
A yellow primrose was to him,
And it was nothing more.

Coleridge's *Mariner*, on the other hand, manifests his spiritual change by a visual peripety; he had hitherto looked upon the water snakes as loathsome, but he now sees them to be beautiful: "O happy living things! No tongue/ Their beauty might declare".

The preoccupation is with a radical opposition in ways of seeing the world and the need to turn from one way to the other, which is very difficult but works wonders. "Single vision", the reliance on the "bodies" Physical, "vegetable," "corporeal", or "outward eye", which result in a lavery of the mind to merely material objects, a spiritual sleep of death, and a sensual death-in-life. To this way of seeing Coleridge and other romantic poets opposed the liberated, creative, and resurrective mode of right "thro, and not with the eye", or of sight by means of the "inward eye", The "intellectual eye," the "imaginative eye," or simply, the "imagination". This shift is from physical optics to what Carlyle in the title of one of his essays called "Spiritual 'Optics," and what Blake and others often called "Vision." Since the perception of a new world was the criterion of success in life - the condition of experience which writers who retained the traditional vocabulary called "redemption" - it is useful to know the principal ways in which this triumph of vision over optics is said to manifest itself. We have already seen how in the major and inclusive way takes place the transformation of a discrete, dead, and alien milieu into a human, integral and companionable milieu in which man finds himself thoroughly at home. But there also are some supplementary ways in which the eye, altering, is said to yield, at least momentarily, a recreated world: These are not always sharply distinct either in theory or practice, but for convenience they can be separately treated as three modes of renovative perception, namely freshness of sensation, moments of illumination, and visual Tran valuations.

Literary historians have been so occupied with Wordsworth's claim in his Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, to have written language really spoken by men, that they tend to neglect Coleridge's testimony that Wordsworth's primary motive had in fact been to exemplify a new way of perceiving the world, by investing it with "the modifying colour of imagination." Wordsworth's aim in these poems, Coleridge declares in the *Biographia Literaria* was

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 solitude we have eyes, yet see not, ears that hear not, and hearts that neither feel nor understand.

Only upon publication, Coleridge adds, did Wordsworth represent the *Ballads* (in the Advertisement of 1798) "as an experiment... in the language of ordinary life." In the expanded Preface of 1802, Wordsworth himself supplemented his earlier statement by saying that his "principal object" had indeed been, in part to throw over common incidents and situations "a certain colouring of imagination; whereby ordinary things be presented to the mind in an unusual way."

In an earlier chapter of *Biographia Literaria* Coleridge tells us that in 1796, when for the first time he heard Wordsworth read one of his poems aloud, what had immediately and profoundly impressed him was precisely the exhibition of a way of seeing which renovated reality without distorting it - the "fine balance of truth observing, with the imaginative faculty in modifying the objects observed," and the projection of the "atmosphere ... of the ideal world around forms, incidents, and situations, of which, for the common view, custom had bedimmed all the luster."

To find no contradiction in the union of old and new: to contemplate the ANCIENT of days and all his works with

feelings as fresh. as if all had then sprang forth at the first creative fiat; characterizes the mind that feels the riddle of the world. and may help to unravel it. To carry on the feelings of childhood into the powers of manhood; to combine the child's sense of wonder and novelty with the appearance which everyday for perhaps forty years had rendered familiar... this is the character and privilege of genius.. so to represent familiar objects as to awaken in the minds of others.... That freshness of sensation which is the constant accompaniment of mental, no less than of bodily, convalescence.

Meditation on this characteristic power of Wordsworth, Coleridge goes on to say, is what led him initially, to recognize that there is a distinction between imagination and fancy, and ultimately to define imagination as the faculty which balances or reconciles "the sense of novelty and freshness with old and familiar objects," as part of the total operation by which it creates, out of the materials of primary and standard perception, a new world: the imagination "dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to recreate." Wordsworth's imagination, as Coleridge puts it elsewhere, is "the modifying power in that highest sense of the word ... in which it is a dim Analogue of creation ... all that we can conceive of creation."

Coleridge's passages in the *Biographia Literaria* incorporate, in precise summation, the key terms in the Romantic lexicon of creative perception. The persistent enterprise is to make the old world new not by distorting it, but by defamiliarizing the familiar through the refreshed way of looking upon it. The prime opponent-power is "custom" - what Wordsworth in *The Prelude* repeatedly condemns as "habit," "use and custom," "the regular action of the world" - which works to general perceptual categories. The result of overcoming this "lethargy of custom," Coleridge says, is to disimprison the "wonder" in the "familiar": or in Wordsworth's alternative term, to reveal the miracle in the sheer existence of an object :

And the world's native produce, as It meet
The sense with less habitual stretch of mind
Is ponder'd as a miracle.

In Coleridge, as well as in Wordsworth, the criterion for such freshness is "the child's sense of wonder and novelty." Here, it is assumed that as a child sees now, so did all mankind do in the childhood of the human race. "You look round Mother Earth," in Wordsworth's half-ironic self description,

As if you were her first-born birth,
And none had lived before you!

Among early men, Novalis said, "there was freshness and originality in all their perceptions," and "what are children but the first men? The fresh gaze of the child is richer in significance than presentiment of the most indubitable seer." Usually, we also discover an equation, implicit or explicit, between the infancy of the individual and the condition of Adam in the Garden of Eden. In that sense, to restore the fresh and wondering vision of the child is to recover the pristine experience of paradise: "as if all," Coleridge put it, had then sprang forth at the first creative fiat.

In the Age of Wordsworth and Coleridge, as the author of *The Image of Childhood* says, "the child emerges from comparative unimportance to become the focus of an unprecedented literary interest." And he (the child) does so both for what he is in himself and as a standard reference in defining adult experience. Some critics have viewed the Romantic resort to the child as a regressive norm which celebrates infantilism. This seems too facile a view of the Romantic philosophy implied in their view of the child. The Romantic view, we know, is derived from the German philosophy of that time, propounded by Schiller and Hegel in particular. According to Schiller, the power of our nostalgia for the state of childhood is interpreted as a Sign that this is "what we were" and "what we shall incorporate the early simplicity in the "higher harmony" of maturity, According to Hegel also, "The harmoniousness

of childhood is a gift from the hand of nature : the second harmony must spring from the labour and culture of the spirit".

Although Wordsworth finds the roots of his "creative sensibility" in the infant condition in his mother's arms, and despite his evident nostalgia for the stage of childhood, he stresses that his growth to maturity involves the line/And consummation of the Poet's mind" Coleridge's too of the freshness of sensation, as given in his *Biographia Literaria* is informed by the concept of growth as a spiral progress which preserves the values of its earlier stages : "To find no contradiction in the opinion of old and new" in perception is the mark of success in carrying on the feelings of childhood into the powers of manhood." The norm is to sustain the responsiveness of the child in what Blake calls the "organized" vision of the developed imagination.

The Romantic preoccupation, especially of Coleridge and Wordsworth and Blake, with the experience of childhood has usually, and with some justification, been traced primarily to Rousseau. In his famous book *Emile*, Rousseau wrote. "Nature wants children to be children before they are men... Childhood has ways of seeing, thinking, and feeling peculiar to itself; nothing can be more foolish than to substitute our ways for them." Reference to the child as norm, however, antedated Rousseau by some seventeen centuries. As Hegel reminds us, it was not a Romantic primitivist, but Christ who posited the return to the state of a child as the condition for entering the apocalyptic Kingdom: "Except ye be converted, and become as children, ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of heaven." And by the seventeenth century the traditional parallel between the new world perceived by the regenerate adult and the new earth awaiting the redeemed in the fullness of time had been extended back - against the strong pressure of the doctrine of inherited corruption - to establish a parallel, at the other end of the temporal span, between the perception of the newborn child and that of Adam when all creation was new.

As later for Coleridge and Wordsworth, so for Thomas Traherne in the seventeenth century, custom rather than depravity is the tyrant that holds our innocent senses in bondage. "Our Misery proceedeth ten thousand times more from the outward Bondage of Opinion and Custom than from any inward corruption or Depravation, or Nature. The "splendour in the grass" and the "glory in the flower." who loss Wordsworth elegies in his Immortality Ode and Coleridge feels "dejected" in "Dejection: An Ode" is nothing but the "shaping spirit of Imagination" (Coleridge), or the "celestial light" (Wordsworth), which the child possesses and the adult loses. The adult loses it because it is darkened and obliterated by "custom... with a weight, / Heavy as frost."

For a proper understanding of Coleridge's conception of Imagination, we need also to go back to Fichte's Science of Knowledge, which begins with the concept of the ego - a pure activity that posits itself to itself as the non- ego merely that it may have a field in which it can realize itself, by an "infinite striving" against a resisting non-self towards an approachable yet inaccessible goal of absolute freedom, the relation of opposition and conflict between ego and non ego is the generative energy in Ficht's universe. His own conceptual system involves by posing a thesis, opposing this by an antithesis, and resolving the opposition in synthesis which become in turn the thesis which is opposed by a new antithesis. Schelling's, Coleridge went on to say, was "the most successful improver of [Ficht's] Dynamic System." Schelling's System of Transcendental Idealism is set and sustained in motion by the compulsion to closure of the basic opposition between the concepts of subject and object. This primal opposition involves the oppositions between intelligence and nature, between conscious and unconscious, between freedom and necessity.

The compulsion in the process of nature to convert object to subject, nature to intelligence, has its reciprocal in the dynamic compulsion within the conceptual scheme of his own philosophy to resolve the contradiction between subject and object. The resolution, in the Transcendental Idealism, Schelling

locates in the concept of the “imagination,” of the productive artist, the one faculty by which we are able both “to think and to reconcile contradictions,” and which annuls, by uniting in a single activity and product the ultimate contradiction working “at the roots of the artist’s whole being,” between nature and intelligences, conscious and unconscious, subject and object.

“Imagination” is the principal concept in the romantic philosophy, which is primarily a metaphysics of integration. The key principle of this metaphysics is that of the “reconciliation.” or ever is divided, opposed, and conflicting. It is in this context that we need to understand Schelling’s claim that “all philosophizing consisted the condition in which we were at one with nature and it is within this philosophical tradition that we can comprehend the vehemence of Coleridge’s decrial of the act of “the mere understanding” by which “we think of ourselves as separated beings, and place nature in antithesis to the mind, as object to subject, things to thought, death to life.” It must be added here that the most distinctive aspect of the Romantic thought, best represented by Coleridge, was the normative emphasis not on plenitude as such, but on an organized unity in which all individuation and diversity survive, in Coleridge’s terms, as distinctions without division. It is well, as Coleridge’s “distinguish without dividing,” and so prepare the way “for the intellectual re-union of the all in one” in the “eternal reason.”

The norm of the highest good was thus transferred from simple unity, not to sheer diversity as such to the most inclusive integration, to be effected by the “shaping spirit of imagination” at the highest point of culture, said Schiller, “man will combine the greatest fullness of existence with the highest autonomy and freedom, and instead of losing himself to the world, will rather draw the latter into himself in all its infintude of phenomena, and subject it to the unity of his reason.” As in life, so in art the unity and definiteness of beauty “does not reside in the exclusion of certain realities but in the absolute inclusion of all realities.” This complex attitude Coleridge called “multeity in unity.” It served him, as it did Schiller as the norm both for life and for beauty. He tended, like many of his German contemporaries, to rank all living things

and all human achievements and organization. The multiplicity and diversity of the component parts together with the degree of their integration into a unified whole - the prime task of imagination.

Coleridge's basic opposition is between juxtaposition of divided, and therefore dead and elementary and living process in which depart from one another, but only in order to recombine and so to generate a new entity in which both components survive, but, on a higher level of organization. The mechanical philosophy, for example, knows only of "composition and decomposition."

The relation of unproductive particles to each other... In life, much more in spirit, and in a living and spiritual philosophy, the two component counter-powers actually interpenetrate each other, and generate a higher third, including both the former,

This is the root principle throughout Coleridge's thought: all self-compelled motion, progress, and productivity, hence all emergent novelty or "creativity," is a generative conflict-in-attraction of polar forces, which part to be reunited on a higher level of being, and thus evolve, or "grow," from simple unity into a "multiplicity in unity" which is an organized whole. It is in this way that Coleridge conceives, for example, the process of cosmology ("the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM," or "absolute self"), of epistemology (the "repetition" of this creation in "the primary Imagination", or the act of perceiving in each individual mind), and of the poetic creation effected by "the secondary Imagination" (an "echo" of the primary imagination which, like that faculty; is a "synthetic power" that "reveals itself in the balance or reconciliation of opposite or discordant qualities").

For Coleridge, as for German contemporaries, to take thought is unescapably to separate that which is one in primal consciousness, so that the beginning of human rationality can be equated with the Biblical account of the fall of man.

The rational instinct, therefore, taken abstractly and unbalanced, did, in itself, (ye shall be as gods, Gen. iii. 5) and in its consequences From the original temptation, through which man fell : and in all ages has continued to originate the same even from Adam, in whom we all fell.

Coleridge's prime concern was to expedite a "Reconcilliation from the Enmity with Nature" into which philosophy, and especially the contemporary philosophy of mechanism, had fallen, when it replaced a vital and productive antithesis with an absolute and unsalvageable division between subject and object, mind and alienated nature. In accordance with this way of thinking, he represents 'the cultural history of mankind, in the recurrent Romantic apologue of the circular educational journey, as man's quest for unity between his mind and nature', which ends in the discovery that the goal of the search was its point of departure.

For Coleridge a cardinal value of the arts was that they humanized nature and so helped to repossess it for the mind from which it had been alienated. Art, he says, "is the media tress between, and reconciler of, nature and man. It is, therefore, the power of humanizing nature, of infusing the thoughts and passions of man into everything which is the object of his contemplation." "To make the external internal, the internal external, to make nature thought, and thought nature - this is the mystery of genius (the man of imagination) in the Fine Arts."

13.6 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

1. Dejection : An ode is a full-fledged remorse over the loss of the _____
 - (a) Love
 - (b) Celestial light
 - (c) Coleridge's Wife
 - (d) Poetic ability

2. Dejection was composed as an answer to Wordsworth's _____
 - (a) Daffodils
 - (b) Lucy Poem
 - (c) Resolution and Independence
 - (d) Immortality Ode

3. The poem 'Frost at Midnight' by Coleridge is attributed to his _____
- (a) Friend (b) Wife
(c) Child (d) Father
4. Who wrote Biographia Literaria?
- (a) S.T. Coleridge (b) William Wordsworth
(c) John Keats (d) None of these

13.6.1 Answer Key

1. Celestial light 2. Immortality Ode
3. Child 4. Biographia Literaria

13.7 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

- Q.1 Critically evaluate Coleridge's view of Nature in *Dejection : An ode*.
- Q.2 Show the significance of 'Silence' and 'Solitude' in Coleridge's Frost at *Midnight*.
- Q.3 Write a note on Coleridge's theory of Imagination.

13.8 SUGGESTED READING

1. Northrop Frye, Romanticism Redissolved New York 1963
2. I.A. Richards, Coleridge on Imagination New York 1935
3. Northrop Frye, A Study of English Romanticism New York 1968.

M.A. English : Semester II

COURSE CODE : ENG 212

LESSON No.14

POETRY-II

JOHN KEATS

UNIT-IV

The Age of Romanticism (1800-1850)

STRUCTURE

- 14.1 Introduction
- 14.2 Objectives
- 14.3 The Age of Romanticism (1800-1850)
 - 14.3.1 Literary Characteristics of the Age
- 14.4 Life and Works of John Keats (1795-1821)
 - 14.4.1 The Literary Career of John Keats
- 14.5 *On First Looking into Chapman's Homer*
 - 14.5.1 Critical Analysis
- 14.6 *Ode on Melancholy*
 - 14.6.1 Explanation and Critical Analysis
- 14.7 Multiple Choice Questions
 - 14.7.1 Answer Key
- 14.8 Examination Oriented Questions
- 14.9 Suggested Reading

14.1 INTRODUCTION

John Keats was one of the main figures of the second generation of Romantic Poets. He took on the challenges of writing a wide range of

poetic forms from the Sonnet to the Spensarian Romance to the Miltonic epic with his own fusion of energy, poetic self-consciousness and ironic wit.

14.2 OBJECTIVES

This lesson discusses in detail the Age of Romanticism and how it ushered amid all the social and political change taking place during 19th century Europe. John Keats remains one most important Pre-romantic writer of this time. The lesson also throws light upon his contribution and two selected poems 'On First Looking into Chapman's Homer' and 'Ode on Melancholy' are critically discussed. After going through this lesson the distance learners will be able to answer the multiple choice questions at the end of the lesson.

14.3 THE AGE OF ROMANTICISM (1800-1850)

The first half of the nineteenth century records the triumph of Romanticism in literature and of democracy in government; and the two movements are so closely associated, in so many nations and in so many periods of history, that one must wonder if there be not some relation of cause and effect between them. Just as we understand the tremendous energizing influence of Puritanism in the matter of English liberty by remembering that the common people had begun to read, and that their book was the Bible, so we understand this age of popular government by remembering that the chief subject of romantic literature was the essential nobleness of common men and the value of the individual. The brief portion of history which lies between the Declaration of Independence (1776) and the English Reform Bill of 1832, is so full of mighty political upheavals that "the age of revolution" is the only name by which we can adequately characterize it. Its great historic movements become intelligible only when we read what was written in this period; for the French Revolution and the American Commonwealth, as well as the establishment of a true democracy in England by the Reform Bill, were the inevitable results of ideas which literature had spread rapidly through the civilized world. Liberty is fundamentally an ideal; and that ideal - beautiful, inspiring, compelling, as a loved banner in the wind - was kept steadily before men's minds by a

multitude of books and pamphlets as far apart as Burn's Poems and Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man* - all read eagerly by the common people, all proclaiming the dignity of common life, and all uttering the same passionate cry against every form of class or caste oppression.

First the dream, the ideal in some human soul; then the written word which proclaims it, and impresses other minds with its truth and beauty; then the united and determined effort of men to make the dream a reality — that seems to be a fair estimate of the part that literature plays, even in our political progress.

The Romantic Movement was a European, not only an English, Phenomenon. Its repercussions were felt towards the end of the eighteenth century, but its efflorescence came at different times in different countries and in different ways. Germany was perhaps the first country to manifest a marked change in its sensibility which affected its philosophical thought more than literature. England turned romantic about the beginning of the nineteenth century and France, the witness to the famous French Revolution (1789), manifested the influence of romanticism around 1830, when the Romantic Movement was already starting to decline in England. Romanticism meant different things in different countries, and even in the same country it implied different things with different writers. Wordsworth, Shelley, Coleridge, Keats, and Byron, all are called romantics but how different is Byron from Wordsworth. A critic recommends the use of the term “romanticisms,” rather than “romanticism” in consideration of the variety of its fundamental features. Whatever be the interpretation of the term “romanticism”, it is clear that it was essentially of the nature of a reaction. In England, the Romantic Movement implies a reaction against the school of Dryden, Pope and Dr. Johnson.

14.3.1 Literary Characteristics of the Age

It is intensely interesting to note how literature at first reflected the political turmoil of the age; and then, when the turmoil was over and England began her mighty work of reform, how literature suddenly developed a new

creative spirit, which shows itself in the poetry of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley, Keats and in the prose of Scott, Jane Austen, Lamb, and De Quincey—a wonderful group of writers, whose patriotic enthusiasm suggests the Elizabethan days, and whose genius has caused their age to be known as the second creative period of English literature. Thus in the early days, when old institutions seemed crumbling with the Bastille, Coleridge and Southey formed their youthful scheme of a “Pantisocracy on the banks of the Susquehanna,”—an ideal commonwealth, in which the principles of More’s *Utopia* should be put in practice. Even Wordsworth, fired with political enthusiasm, could write,

*Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,
But to be young was very heaven.*

The essence of Romanticism was that literature must reflect all that is spontaneous and unaffected in nature and in man, and be free to follow its own fancy in its own way. Coleridge has expressed this independence in “Kubla Khan” and “The Ancient Mariner,” two dream pictures, one of the populous Orient, the other of the lonely sea. In Wordsworth this literary independence led him inward to the heart of common things. Following his own instinct, as Shakespeare does, he too

*Finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,
Sermons in Stones, and good in everything.*

And so, more than any other writer of the age, he invests the common life of nature, and the souls of common men and women, with glorious significance.

The Romantic Movement was a revolt against literary tradition. However greatly may Wordsworth and Byron differ in their conception and practice of poetry, it is indisputable that both of them reacted against the set conventions and rules of poetry formulated and traditionalised over the decades by the poets of the new classic school. It was perhaps Schlegel

who first defined romanticism as “liberalism in literature”. Most of the romantic poets were for the liberation of the individual spirit from the shackles of social authority as well as literary tradition. This emphasis on individual predilection, which in philosophical terms approaches subjectivism, renders the romantic output somewhat chaotic. When there is no tradition or writing authority, it is not surprising that the romantic poets take widely divergent paths.

The romantics starting with Blake rebelled against the curbing influence of reason which could variously manifest itself as good sense, intellect or just dry logic-chopping. Most of the romantic poets believed in a kind of transcendentalism, intuition, or mysticism, and none believed in the dictum that poetry is an intellectual exercise whose worth is entirely dependent on effective expression. “Poetry”, wrote Wordsworth, in the Preface to the second edition of *Lyrical Ballads*, “is the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge : it is the impassioned expression which is in the countenance of all science.” To the romantics a poet became a seer, a clairvoyant, a philosopher, and, in the words of Shelley, an unacknowledged legislator of mankind.

The romantics revolted against the neoclassical exaltation of wit. They gave the place of wit to imagination and that of intellect to feeling and emotion. This special stress on imagination sometimes led the romantics away from the humdrum world of actuality and its pressing problems to make them citizens of their own respective worlds of imagination and to gloat in imaginary

*Casements, opening on the foam
Of perilous seas, in Faery lands forlorn.*

The exaltation of imagination sometimes almost took the form of a revolt against realism, amounting to escapism. “The romanticist”, according to Samuel C. Chew, “is amorous of the far.” He seeks to escape from familiar experience and from the limitations of ‘that shadow-show called

reality' which is presented to him by his intelligence. He delights in the marvellous and abnormal. "This escape from actuality assumes many forms. In Coleridge, it takes the form of love of the supernatural; in Shelley, of that of the dream of a golden age to come; in Keats a striving after ideal beauty and the effort to recall the ancient Hellenic glory; in Scott it is manifested by his escape to the hoary Middle Ages; in Byron it takes the form of a haughty disdain of all humanity and absorption in his own self, amounting almost to a kind of egotism, and lastly, in Wordsworth it appears in his insistence on giving up the mechanical and spirit - throttling civilization and escaping into the untainted company of nature".

The Romantic Movement was a revolt not only against the concept of poetry held by the neoclassicist, it was also a revolt against traditional poetic measures and diction. About this part of the romantic revolt, Legouis observes : "To express their fervent passions they sought a more supple and more lyrical form than that of Pope, a language less dulled by convention, metres unlike the prevailing couplet. They renounced the poetical associations of words, and drew upon unusual images and varied verse forms for which they found models in the Renaissance and the old English poetry."

14.4 LIFE AND WORKS OF JOHN KEATS (1795-1821)

Keats was not only the last but also the most perfect of the Romanticists. While Scott was merely telling stories, and Wordsworth reforming poetry on upholding the moral law, and Shelley advocating impossible reforms and Byron voicing his own egoism and the political discontent of the times, Keats lived apart from men and from all political measures, worshipping beauty like a devotee, perfectly content to write what was in his own heart, or to reflect some splendor of the natural world as he saw or dreamed it to be. He had, moreover, the novel idea that poetry exists for its own sake, and suffers loss by being devoted to philosophy or politics or, indeed to any cause, however great or small. Partly because of this high ideal of poetry, partly because he studied and unconsciously imitated the Greek classics and

the best works of the Elizabethans Keats' last little volume of poetry is unequalled by the work of any of his contemporaries. When we remembered that all his work was published in three short years, from 1817 to 1820, and that he died when only twenty-five years old, we must judge him to be the most promising figure of the early nineteenth century, and one of the most remarkable in the history of literature.

Keats life of devotion to beauty and poetry is all the more remarkable in view of his lowly origin. He was the son of a hostler and stable keeper, and was born in the stable of the Swan and Hoop Inn, London, in 1795. One has only to read the rough stable scenes from our first novelists, or even from Dickens, to understand how little there was in such an atmosphere to develop poetic gifts. Before Keats was fifteen years old both parents died, and he was placed with his brothers and sisters in charge of guardians. Their first act seems to have been to take Keats from School at Enfield, and to bind him as an apprentice to a surgeon at Edmonton. For five years he served his apprenticeship, and for two years more he was surgeons' helper in the hospitals; but though skillful enough to win approval, he disliked his work, and his thoughts were on other things. "The other day, during a lecture", he said to a friend, "there came a sunbeam into the room, and with it a whole troop of creatures floating in the ray; and I was off with them to Oberon and fairyland," He abandoned his profession in 1817, and early in the same year published his first volume of Poems. It was modest enough in spirit, as was also his second volume, *Endymion* (1818) ; but that did not prevent brutal attacks upon the author and his work by the self-constituted critics of *Blackwood's Magazine* and *the Quarterly*. It is often alleged that the poet's spirit and ambition were broken by these attacks; but Keats was a man of strong character, and instead of quarrelling with his reviewers, or being crushed by their criticism, he went quietly to work with the idea of producing poetry that should live forever. As Matthew Arnold says, Keats "had flint and iron in him"; and in his next volume he accomplished his own purpose and silenced unfriendly criticism.

For the three years during which Keats wrote his poetry he lived chiefly in London and in Hampstead, but wandered at times over England and Scotland, living for brief spaces in the Isle of Wight, in Devonshire, and in the Lake District, seeking to recover his own health, and especially to restore that of his brother. His illness began with a severe cold, but soon developed into consumption; and added to this sorrow was another—his love for Fanny Brawne, to whom he was engaged, but whom he could not marry on account of his poverty and growing illness. When we remember all the personal grief and the harsh criticism of literary men, the last small volume, *Lamia, Isabella, The Eve of St. Agnes, and other poems* (1820), is more significant, as showing not only Keats' wonderful poetic gifts, but also his beautiful and indomitable spirit. Shelley, struck by the beauty and promise of "Hyperion" sent a generous invitation to the author to come to Pisa and live with him; but Keats refused, having little sympathy with Shelley's revolt against society. The invitation had this effect, however, that it turned Keats' thought to Italy, where he soon went in the effort to save his life. He settled in Rome with his friend Severn, the artist, but died soon after this arrival, in February, 1821. His grave, in the Protestant Cemetery at Rome, is still an object of pilgrimage to thousands of tourists; for among all our poets there is hardly another whose heroic life and tragic death have so appealed to the hearts of poets and young enthusiasts.

14.4.1 The Literary Career of John Keats :

"None but the master shall praise us; and none but the master shall blame" might well be written on the fly leaf of every volume of Keats' poetry; for never was there a poet more devoted to his ideal, entirely independent of success or failure. In strong contrast with his contemporary, Byron, who professed to despise the art that made him famous, Keats lived for poetry alone, and, as Lowell pointed out, a virtue went out of him into everything he wrote. In all his work, we have the impression of this intense loyalty to his art; we have the impression also of a profound dissatisfaction that the deed falls so far short of the splendid dream. Thus after reading Chapman's

translation of Homer, he writes, “*On First Looking into Chapman’s Homer*” (1817). In this striking sonnet we have a suggestion of Keats’s high ideal, and of his sadness because of his own ignorance, when he published his first little volume of poems in 1817. He knew no Greek; yet Greek literature absorbed and fascinated him, as he saw its broken and imperfect reflection in an English translation. Like Shakespeare, who also was but poorly educated in the schools, he had a marvelous faculty of discerning the real spirit of the classics—a faculty denied to many great scholars, and to most of the “classic” writers of the preceding century—and so he set himself to the task of reflecting in modern English the spirit of the old Greeks.

The imperfect results of this attempt are seen in his next volume, *Endymion* (1818) which is the story of a young shepherd beloved by a moon goddess. The poem begins with the striking lines :

*A thing of beauty is a joy forever;
Its loveliness increases; it will never
Pass into nothingness; but still will keep
A bower quiet for us; and a sleep
Full of sweet dreams, and health, and quiet-breathing,*

Which will illustrate the spirit of Keats’ later work, with its perfect finish and melody. The poem gives splendid promise, but as a whole it is rather chaotic, with too much ornament and too little design like a modern house. That Keats felt this defect strongly is evident from his modest preface, wherein he speaks of *Endymion*, not as a deed accomplished, but only as an unsuccessful attempt to suggest the underlying beauty of Greek mythology.

Keats’ third and last volume, *Lamia, Isabella, The Eve of St. Agnes, and other poems* (1820), is the one with which the reader should begin his acquaintance with this master of English verse. It has only two subjects, Greek mythology and medieval romance. “Hyperion” is a magnificent fragment, suggesting the first arch of a Cathedral that was never finished. Its theme is the overthrow of the Titans by the young

sun-god Apollo. Realizing his own immaturity and lack of knowledge, Keats laid aside this work, and only the pleadings of his publisher induced him to print the fragment with his completed poems. Throughout this last volume, and especially in “Hyperion”, the influence of Milton is apparent, while Spenser is more frequently suggested in reading *Endymion*.

Of the longer poems in the volume, “Lamia” is the most suggestive. It is the story of a beautiful enchantress, who turns from a serpent into a glorious woman and fills every human sense with delight, until, as a result of the foolish philosophy of old Apollonius, she vanishes forever from her lover’s sight. “The Eve of St. Agnes,” the most perfect of Keats’ medieval poems, is not a story after the manner of the metrical romances, but rather a vivid painting of a romantic mood, such as comes to all men, at times, to glorify a workaday world. Like all the work of Keats and Shelley, it has an element of unreality; and when we read at the end,

*And they are gone; aye, ages long ago
These lovers fled away into the storm.*

It is as if we were waking from a dream—which is the only possible ending to all of Keats’ Greek and medieval fancies.

It is by his short poems that Keats is known to the majority of present - day readers. The most exquisite among them are odes “On a Grecian Urn”, “To a Nightingale”, “To Autumn,” and “To Psyche.” These are like an invitation to a feast. “Ode to a Nightingale” has four things—a love of sensuous beauty, a touch of pessimism, a purely pagan conception of nature, and a strong individualism—which are characteristic of this last of the romantic poets.

14.5 ON FIRST LOOKING INTO CHAPMAN’S HOMER

Chapman (1559-1634), a great dramatist of the Elizabethan Age, was renowned for his translation of Homer’s *Iliad* and *Odyssey* from the original Greek into English. Keats had great fascination for Greek stories

and his imagination was further fired by the story of Homer's *Iliad* as translated with great power by Chapman. Keats wrote this poem during the early period of his poetic career and gives an expression to the ecstatic feeling of joy on reading Chapman's translation of Homer's great epic.

The poem is a glowing tribute to the poetic genius of Homer as his poetry had a great influence on the youthful mind of Keats. But equally is this poem a tribute to Chapman's genius in having rendered the Greek epics into English with conspicuous success.

14.5.1 Critical Analysis :

Keats begins the poem with striking metaphors and similes, he compares the great works of literature with countries, states and kingdoms, which are called golden realms. Keats says that he has wandered through various countries by reading the literature of great authors like Spencer, Shakespeare, and Milton. He has visited many western islands ruled by poets, who were inspired by Apollo, the god of poetry. After showing his vast experience of various lands, Keats mentions the vast territory governed by the Greek poet, Homer, whose intellectual excellence is universally accepted. He says, Homer has a bright and high forehead which is a sign of intellectual greatness. He had surely been acquainted with Homer's reputation as a great poet but he had not made any personal study of Homer's poetry till he came upon Chapman's English translation of Homer's work. He had travelled a lot over various kingdoms, but he had never breathed the fresh, pure air of Homer's kingdom till he was taken there by the guiding hand of Chapman. After reading Chapman's English translation of Homer's great epic, *the Iliad*, Keats felt that he had visited an absolutely new and wonderful domain of poetry.

In the second paragraph, poet compares his new and strong experience of golden realms of Homer's poetry to the feelings of an astronomer who has discovered a new planet, while gazing through his telescope. On the discovery of an unknown planet, the astronomer is

filled with wonder, surprise and a sense of mystery. Similar is Keats's feeling while reading Homer's *Iliad*. Or, Keats's feelings can also be compared to the excitement of the early Spanish explorer Cortez and his comrades, who discovered the Pacific Ocean. They were so surprised to see the wonder and vastness of their discovery, that they were dumbstruck. They could not utter a word and looked amazingly at one another and at a peak on the Isthmus of Darien. Similar was Keats's feeling of astonishment on his first introduction to Homer's poetry through Chapman's translation.

The metaphor, with which Keats starts the poem, is maintained throughout with such expressions as "States and Kingdoms", "Western Island" and "The wide expanse ruled by Homer". In the last six lines, very effective similes of wonder and ecstatic joy are conveyed. He compares his state of mind with that of an astronomer who discovers a new planet in the sky and with that of Cortez and his men, when they discovered the Pacific Ocean and this has been done in a most impressive and beautiful manner. The expression of joy and wonder could not be shown more emphatically than this comparison. This poem has been written in the form of Petrarchan sonnet as its first stanza is an octave (eight lines) and second is a sestet (six lines). Keats has earned a good name amongst the best sonnet writers in English, though he does not have too many sonnets to his credit.

Annotations :

Bard - Poet

Apollo - God of Poetry

Fealty - loyalty

Deap-brow'd Homer - The great Greek poet Homer with his broad and bright forehead, which is symbolic of intellectual excellence.

Demesne - Domain; Kingdom.

Cortez - A Spanish explorer, who is believed to be the discoverer of

the Pacific Ocean. The actual explorer of Pacific Ocean was Balboa and Cortez had explored Mexico;

Ken - Sight

Darien - A narrow neck of land which connects North America with South America. It is continuous with Isthmus of Panama.

14.6 ODE ON MELANCHOLY

Originally this poem opened with a stanza, which was subsequently cancelled. This remarkable and grisly stanza is more than the reverse of an invitation to the voyage. Its irony is palpable, its humour is in the enormous labour of Gothicizing despair which is necessarily in vain, for the mythic beast, Melancholy, cannot thus be confronted. Keats cancelled this stanza because he saw that the poem's harmony was being threatened if half of it was concerned with the useless quest after "the melancholy". By excluding the original first stanza, Keats lost a grim humor that finds only a thin echo at the poem's close. With the exclusion of this stanza, the received text has an abrupt opening. The admonition of the first stanza is against false melancholy, courted for the sake of the supposed oblivion it brings. But oblivion is not to be hired; for Keats true melancholy involves a sudden increase in consciousness, not a gradual evasion of its claims. The world's true sadness dwells with beauty and joy, for the pain of suffering is less acute than the pain of knowing that beauty and joy will soon fade.

If beauty is truth and truth beauty, then joy is sorrow and sorrow is joy. Such is the progression that leads from the "Ode on a Grecian Urn" to the "Ode on Melancholy". "Melancholy" picks up at the point where "Grecian Urn" leaves off, for it seeks to push beyond the awareness of such paradox in order to isolate a more enduring element in our experience of life and poetry. The element it illuminates is the nature of intensity itself. "Melancholy" is the outgrowth of a deepening meditation, one that attains its fullness of realization only in the closing lines. However, one senses now the force of an acquired momentum, as well as a degree of deliberate

foreshortening. It is the briefest of all the great odes. Keats wisely excised the original first stanza, and that which actually opens the poem serves only to anticipate, in a negative way, what the latter two declare, for it is these, and more especially the last, that convey the sum of the ode's meaning.

14.6.1 Explanation and Critical Analysis :

In the poem as it stands, the first stanza contains a warning against false melancholy which one might court for the sake of the supposed oblivion it brings. In a fit of melancholy, one usually turns to things that are mentioned in this stanza. But the poet does not want us to fall prey to these things, which cause forgetfulness, because then in a mood of oblivion we will be escaping from melancholy and not enjoying the full experience of melancholy. The poet warns us not to drink from Lethe, the mythological river of forgetfulness as true melancholy cannot be experienced through the forgetfulness of one's surroundings. The seeker after melancholy is urged not to squeeze the poisonous juice from wolf's-bane as it would induce a mood of drowsiness which, again, is not the proper method of experiencing melancholy. Then he makes reference to Proserpine, who was carried off by Pluto, the king of the underworld and who could not be released even by Mercury, a messenger of Jupiter, the supreme god as she had unthinkably consumed some poisonous fruit in the underworld. The poet warns a seeker after melancholy not to consume the black fruit of the poisonous nightshade, as he might also not suffer like Proserpine. He asks not to remain engrossed with the rosary of Yew barrier as they too have mournful associations. The poet again forbids man from seeking companionship of such sorrowful creatures as the beetle, the death-moth and the owl. As beetle is interpreted as an omen of death, the death-moth keeps uttering a low and mournful sound and the owl is also a symbol of darkness and sorrow, so their company should not be sought to enhance the mood of melancholy. Keats condemns this quest for a melancholy which is false. By associating with these mournful things, a man will simply begin to feel drowsy and numb, and will thus be rendered incapable of experiencing the real taste

of sorrow. The melancholy man should not try to deaden his sensibility ; on the contrary he should try to sharpen his awareness. He should allow his soul or mind to remain alert to experience the intense pain of melancholy.

In theme and imagery, “Melancholy” has sometimes been criticized as the reflection of a weaker, overly sensuous side of the poet’s nature. However the deeper aestheticism of the ode lies not so much in the overt voluptuousness of certain of its images as in the implications of its argument and its deliberate and self-conscious attitudinizing, the method it employs to dramatize those implications, to examine them and put them to the test. As the ode proceeds, the flow of logic that connects its major figures becomes increasingly extreme and makes steadily greater demands on the reader to keep pace.

The second stanza works up through various images of natural transience to one of a more complex kind. The poet suggests that true melancholy lies in the ache at the heart of felicity. It falls upon men like rain suddenly pouring from a cloud above. The cloud is shown as ‘weeping’ to give an impression of melancholy. The rain gives strength and vigour to otherwise drooping flowers, it also leads to the growth of green grass on the hill and it covers the hill like a shroud, which is again a mournful association. The poet here uses combination of opposites and paradoxes. On the one hand are the flowers in the beautiful month of April; on the other hand are the weeping clouds and the shroud in the form of the green grass. It is during the month of April when the spring season and natural beauty is in abundance, that the fit of melancholy suddenly take possession of a human being. Thus, Keats refers to the acute pain that springs from the perception of beautiful things. Then the poet suggests to have as much of sorrow as is necessary to feel satisfied and further provides us with the list of all those beautiful things which give pleasure for a little while and then lead to sorrow because of their fleeting nature. True melancholy can be experienced by looking at the glowing face of morning rose as its beauty will fade with the passing time. The rainbow of the wave is even more fleeting, for it forms as the wave rises to its crest and breaks with the receding wave. So its transitoriness also creates sad feelings in the heart. Another way of realizing

the transitory nature of beautiful things is to look at the abundance of round-shaped flower-plants as they are beautiful but short-lived. One can also have one's fill of sorrow by seizing the soft hand of one's mistress and by gazing fondly into her peerless eyes when her face is glowing with anger and when she protests vehemently against the advances of love. Like her beauty and softness, her anger is also short-lived. These beautiful objects fade quickly, and to turn to them means nourishing the melancholy fit.

Even if these objects are momentary and short living, one can still possess them. One can "glut" sorrow on a rose, and "feed deep" upon the eyes of the mistress; and these images, presenting the sense of sight in terms of taste, suggest the intensity of the response. Similarly, the phrase "globed peonies" suggests the hand cupping the flowers in a full enjoyment of their beauty. At the same time, such expressions as "glut" or "feed deep" imply a prolonging of the experience as it occurs. The word "emprison" has a similar force, indicating a desire to arrest and hold tightly.

Now the last stanza makes us apprehend the process of gradual intensification in a different way by shifting our perspective. We no longer find ourselves in contact with the natural images of the spring season, the April hillside and its budding flowers, or with the poet who still clasps his mistress in his living hand. Instead we find ourselves confronted with a succession of personified abstractions—Beauty, Joy, Pleasure, Delight and finally Melancholy herself—who appear before us almost like actors in a pageant or figures on a sculptured frieze. In this stanza, Melancholy is shown in the company of all those things which are beautiful but transitory. 'Beauty' is personified and referred to as 'She'. Melancholy is also in the company of Joy, who is regarded as a person, ready to depart with his hand to his lips in order to bid farewell. Pleasure is also accompanying Melancholy all the time but it becomes painful due to the intensity of joy. The bee flies about sucking the sweetness of flowers. The bee is a symbol of the pleasure-seeker. A pleasure-seeker, while experiencing the sensations of pleasure, discovers that the sweetness of his pleasure is

turning to poison in the very process of his testing that pleasure. Joy, when it is very intense, becomes painful because its intensity is unbearable. The poet asserts that true melancholy results from a contemplation of beautiful things and from the feeling of the transitoriness of these things. Besides, the very intensity of pleasure by being unbearable, causes pain. Thus, true melancholy is the ache at the heart of felicity. The idea of the preceding four lines is repeated here in a different form. The altar of melancholy, paradoxically speaking is to be found in the very temple, where delight dwells. In other words, melancholy and delight are inseparable from each other. Only those can see the altar of melancholy in the temple of Delight, who have enough force in their tongues to be able to break the grape of joy in order to taste the excellent savour of that grape. The idea is here conveyed metaphorically. Joy is compared to a grape. Only he can experience the delicious taste of the grape whose tongue is strong enough to be able to break it when he puts it in his mouth. Thus, the intensity of sadness can fully be experienced only by the man who is capable of experiencing the raptures of delight. The temple of delight where melancholy has her shrine may be regarded as an airy temple. In this airy temple the souls of men are like clouds hanging upon the walls of the temple as if they were the trophies won by melancholy. A trophy is a symbol of conquest. If melancholy may be regarded as the conqueror, the souls of men are the trophies. Thus, melancholy can claim to have power over those persons who are capable of experiencing the ecstasies of joy.

The paradox that affords the focus of the ode's perception can be briefly summarized. It lies in the realization that our moments of most intense joy are inseparable, if only through our awareness of their impermanence, from sorrow, that joy and sorrow partake of and intensify each other, that after a certain point they become, indeed, indistinguishable. The true 'aestheticism' of the ode lies in its demonstration that the emotions themselves, taken in the way we generally consider them, as joy, sorrow, anger, or melancholy, are themselves abstractions that have no real identity

being only general contexts for apprehending something that is more fundamental. The essence of poetical experience lies in intensity itself, the force of pure poetical expressiveness, a power that, like electricity, exists between polarities and oppositions, that reveals itself in movement and in gesture, but that resists any human effort to define or limit it.

Annotations :

Lethe - Mythological river of forgetfulness.

Wolf's - bane - the name of a poisonous plant.

Proserpine - an earthly goddess who was abducted by Pluto, the king of the underworld. On the behest of her mother Ceres, the Supreme God Jupiter sent his messenger Mercury to bring Proserpine back. She had eaten some fruit in the underworld because of which she could not be brought back from the underworld.

Death - moth - A moth which creates mournful sound and is associated with death.

Mournful Psyche - melancholic soul.

Downy - soft thick feathers of the owl.

Glut thy sorrow - fill yourself with sorrow to the brim

Globed - round - shaped.

Peonies - flowers.

The very temple of Delight - the place where pleasure and joy inhabit

Sovran - Sovereign.

Strenuous tongue - forceful tongue.

14.7 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

1. When was the manifesto of Declaration of Independence drafted?

(a) 1776

(b) 1777

(c) 1767

(d) 1775

2. Who wrote the famous work 'Rights of Man'?
 - (a) Thomas Jefferson
 - (b) Thomas Hardy
 - (c) Thomas De Quincey
 - (d) Thomas Paine

3. Keat's second volume of collected poems titled as 'Endymion' (1818) was brutally criticised by _____
 - (a) Blackwood's Magazine
 - (b) The Quarterly
 - (c) None of these
 - (d) both, Blackwood's Magazine and The Quarterly

4. The famous line "A thing of beauty is a joy forever" is from _____ poem
 - (a) On First Looking into Chapman's Homer
 - (b) Endymion
 - (c) Hyperion
 - (d) None of these

5. In which poem the poet warns us not to drink from Lethe?
 - (a) Endymion
 - (b) Hyperion
 - (c) Ode on Melancholy
 - (d) Ode on a Grecian Urn

14.7.1 Answer Key

1. 1776
2. Thomas Paine
3. both, Blackwood's Magazine and the Quarterly
4. Endymion
5. Ode on Melancholy

14.8 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

- Q.1 Discuss Keat's as a Romantic Poet.
- Q.2 "All Comprehensive Love of Beauty" is the distinguishing note of Keat's poetry.

Q.3. Discuss Keat's Hellenism in his poetry.

14.9 SUGGESTED READING

1. Amy Lowell, John Keat's 2 Vols. Boston 1925
2. Donald Parson, Portraits of Keats. Cleveland 1954
3. William Michael, The life and Writings of John Keats. London 1887

M.A. ENGLISH : SEMESTER II

COURSE CODE : ENG 212

LESSON No. 15

POETRY-II

JOHN KEATS

UNIT-IV

STRUCTURE

- 15.1 Introduction
- 15.2 Objectives
- 15.3 Hyperion
- 15.4 Keats as a Romantic Poet
- 15.5 Keats as a Poet
- 15.6 Negative Capability
- 15.7 Multiple Choice Questions
 - 15.7.1 Answer Key
- 15.8 Examination Oriented Questions
- 15.9 Suggested Reading

15.1 INTRODUCTION

The Poetry of Keats is enriched with keen interest in beauty and nature with sensual imagery. In addition to his obsession with beauty, he speculates over death with love, Valor, adventure.

15.2 OBJECTIVES

The objective of this lesson is to discuss John Keats as a Romantic poet, his theory of Negative capability and one of his most famous poem

'Hyperion'. At the end of the lesson the distance learners would be able to answer the multiple choice questions asked.

15.3 HYPERION

The first *Hyperion*, on which Keats worked off and on from August, 1818, to April, 1819, is his attempt to create an epic, a work "more naked and Grecian" than *Endymion*. If completed, *Hyperion* would probably have shown some sort of struggle of the fallen Titans against the Olympians and the ultimate victory of Apollo, the god of beauty. The theme seems plainly to be announced in the words of Oceanus in Book II, ".....for 'tis the eternal law/ that first in beauty should be first in might." But the theme was not developed; the work breaks off suddenly after 136 lines of the third book. Some years ago, it was customary to attribute his giving up the attempt to his dissatisfaction with the Miltonic style and structure he had adopted. More recently critics have seen that his philosophy had changed and that the central theme now seemed too facile, too easily optimistic. In his letters and poems written from the spring of 1819 on, he revealed his increasing belief that evil must be accepted as an essential part of nature, that joy and beauty are best found in the real world, that no escape from suffering is possible or even always desirable, that sympathy, and action to effect its purposes, are essential to our humanity, and that the kind of poetry which accepts reality and works through it and upon it is the only kind that can pour out "a balm upon the world." No doubt this view of Keats' reasons for giving up the first *Hyperion* is correct so far as it goes, and no doubt, it is not adequate by itself. It fails to express the complex of technical, literary, biographical and philosophical considerations which eventually resulted in his attempt to recast the work, with a different meaning.

The revised version of *Hyperion* was written in 1819. It was revised with the addition of a long induction in a new style, which makes it a different poem. The first version was written mostly before the great odes, the second mostly after them. As a matter of fact, the period covered by *Hyperion* is the period of Keats' most intense experience, both of joy and sorrow, in

actual life and of his most rapid development. The subject of *Hyperion* had long been in Keats' mind, and both in the text and the preface of *Endymion* he indicated his intention to attempt it. At first he thought of the poem to be written as a "romance", but his plan changed to that of a blank verse epic in ten books. His purpose was to describe the warfare of the earlier Titanic dynasty with the later Olympian dynasty of the Greek gods; and in particular one episode of that warfare, the dethronement of the Sun-god Hyperion and the assumption of his kingdom by Apollo.

The first book of *Hyperion* gives us a picture of the fallen Titans, with Saturn as the central figure, but Hyperion is the only one who remains potentially active. The second book shows them in council and the vital part of it is undoubtedly the speech of Oceanus. In which he says that Saturn was not the first power in the universe and should not expect to be the last. Chaos and darkness produced light: light brought heaven and earth and life itself into existence; and the Titans were the first-born of life. Just as heaven and earth are more beautiful than chaos and darkness.

*So on our heels a fresh perfection treads.
A power more strong in beauty, born of us
And fated to excel us ...*

The Titans should not grieve over the situation and should not envy their successors, "for 'tis is the eternal law/that first in beauty shall be first in might."

The simple Clymene follows and supports Oceanus by bearing testimony to the beauty of the young Apollo's music, which she has heard. In the fragment of the third book, the interest shifts from the Titans to the young Apollo. Mnemosyne (Memory) alone among the Titans has formed relations with the younger gods. She has watched over the childhood of Apollo, and now she finds him wavering and uncertain of his course. In his talk with her he finds the consciousness of his destiny and assumes his new-found godhead. At this point the poem breaks off.

One can judge the poem's failure only in the light of the magnitude of the assimilation Keats hoped to achieve. It may, indeed, be useful to consider, in a brief, preliminary way, some of the different goals he hoped to combine. Among other aims, his treatment of the fable of the fallen Titans and the emergence of a new race of gods represents his attempt (1) to define the poet and his function with relation to some of the major intellectual, political and historical movements of the age; (2) to sketch a hierarchy of poetic values relevant to his time and to place himself in positive relation to it by adumbrating an ideal of poethood; (3) to dramatize certain competing ideas of the poetic character and method; and (4) to formulate in poetic terms the higher ideal of beauty toward which he had for some time been moving. In scope and purpose the work was by far the most ambitious he was ever to attempt.

With epic speed *Hyperion* plunges the reader in *medias res*. A great dynastic revolution has shaken Saturn from his throne, and a new race of gods, more vital and more beautiful than their predecessors, has gained ascendancy. The opening landscape and the depiction of the fallen Saturn is one of the most carefully wrought passages in all of Keats' poetry. While closing steadily upon the solitary figure of the downcast Titan, the scene possesses a primeval vastness, something of "the same overwhelming, oppressive power." Hazlitt had observed as characteristic of the northern landscape from which Keats had only shortly returned. The extraordinary stillness of the setting and the images of numbness, cold and constriction that surround the god - summed up in the image of "the Naiad 'mid her reeds" who presses "her cold finger closer to her lips"- only suggest his loss of power and vital creativity. Indeed a conception of power in its various degrees, the ability to animate and vitalize creation, is fundamental to the scene and to the question Saturn cannot answer : "Who had power/ To make me desolate ? Whence came the strength" (i,102-103) His might is one inextricably involved with his whole sense of "strong identity, my real self" (i, 114) which, now fled from him, provides the necessary clue for

understanding the nature of his plight. For as he struggles to his feet in the hope of momentarily reasserting his sway —

*But cannot I create ?
Cannot I form ? Cannot I fashion forth
Another world, another universe,
To overbear and crumble this to nought ?
Where is another chaos ? Where ? (i. 141-45)*

We realize, we are in touch with strong creative energies once omnipotent but now outworn, or at least no longer relevant to the occasion. Saturn can only look to the past, to a heaven he has lost, for the rehabilitation of his godhead. Blinded by his egoism, he is unaware of a strong irony implicit in his words.

*it must - it must
Be of ripe progress - Saturn must be king.*

Nor, in his self-preoccupation, can he see a new and tragic beauty written large in Thea's face, a "Sorrow more beautiful than Beauty's self" unrevealed before, which already prefigures the triumph of his dispossessors.

Saturn and his fellow gods have fallen because, although they once played vital roles as symbols of that "beauteous life/Defus'd unseen throughout eternal space" (i. 317-18), they have been unable to adjust to vast new forces of sorrow and disorder. They have outlived their usefulness to a destiny they are unable to comprehend except in terms of narrow self-interest.

Throughout the action of the first two books it is the passionate desire of the Titans to discover some reason for their downfall that, as readers, we find particularly compelling. Yet the whole balance which Milton had so brilliantly defined in *Paradise Lost* between higher necessity on the one, Keats prefers, partly for dramatic reasons to leave ambiguous or to emphasize in different ways as he proceeds. Indeed, the more we are led to ponder the question of causation, the more we begin to sense its irrelevance to the larger

issues of the poem as they unfold. Primarily it is the change from a golden to a silver age, the loss of the controlling, universal modes of mythic apprehension for a historical awareness, a fall from timelessness into time that Keats had for some while come to sense as fundamental to the modern consciousness. "Earth born/And sky-engendered," the offspring of "the infant world" (i. 309-10) the titans are the children of an earlier unity and innocence, presiding over "days of peace and slumberous calm." From such contentment and placidity they have been plunged into a very different state, a world of "fear, hope, and wrath;/ Actions of rage and passion" (i, 332-33), a perturbation unfamiliar to them and with which they are unprepared to deal. With the knowledge of grief has come a new sense of transience and impermanence. Thea's complaint, "O aching time! O moments big as years" (i, 64), is similar to the distress voiced by Coelus, who can only urge his child, Hyperion, to struggle to "oppose to each malignant hour/Ethereal presence" (i. 339-40). Hyperion, "phrenzied with new woes" must bend "His spirit to the sorrow of the time" (i. 299-301). The point is not that the Titans are erring or reprehensible. They are simply helpless to contend against the change in circumstances that has overtaken them, for it was Keats' intention to use them as the background for defining a higher, more active ideal of sublimity than any they, in their complacency, could represent. The younger gods are not antipathetic to their forebears, only more vigorous and capable of facing and transcending the new complexities and oppositions the Titans cannot endure. For it was to be Keats' argument that only through the knowledge of time could time be conquered. Apollo achieves his godhead not by shrinking from the burden of the modern consciousness - the sense of sorrow, impermanence, and loss-but by being baptized into the agony of full historical awareness and its immensity of pain.

Keats' ability to dramatize the limitations of the fallen Titans is nowhere better seen than in their Council in Book Two, a scene that inevitably bears comparison with the debate in Pandemonium in Book Two of *Paradise Lost* on which it is obviously modeled. The different sophistries

within the various argument of Milton's devils are quickly recognized. However, one can easily miss the special subtlety of Keats' handling - the way in which each Titan's speech comments on the particular limitations in the viewpoints of his fellows and at the same time adumbrates an aspect of the perfection to be summed up in Apollo. To be sure, Oceanus' great speech is sometimes taken as the kernel of Keats' meaning, and it cannot be doubted that its vision of eternal change and gradual evolution toward ever higher states of being is closely related to the modified ideal of progress Keats had come to espouse.

And first, as thou wast not the first of powers,
 So art thou not the last, it cannot be:
 Thou art not the beginning nor the end.

 The ripe hour came,
 And with it light, and light, engendering

 A power more strong in beauty, born of us
 And fated to excel us, as we pass
 In glory that old Darkness. (ii, 188-90, 194-215)

There is indeed, a certain justification for the sea-gods claim that, while Saturn has been blinded by his sheer supremacy, he alone has "wandered to eternal truth" (ii. 187). Yet to accept his speech as the point of the poem is to ignore the dramatic context in which it is delivered. For all his wisdom he has not been able to preserve his godhead or to escape a scalding in the sea, while his plea for calm of mind arises from a stoic resignation that does not approach the ideal of sublimity. Keats was intent on expressing in the character of Apollo, as the ending of the fragment makes clear. Thus, Oceanus' impassiveness is juxtaposed against both the overemotional but instinctive insight of Clymene and the mighty but self-destructive power of Enceladus.

It is sometimes argued that throughout the council scene one can see Keats finding his way, that Clymene's account of fleeing from the music that has made her "Sick/of joy and grief at once" (ii. 288-89) for example, shows his groping towards the mature conception of beauty to be represented by Apollo in Book Three. Yet the weakness and sentimentality of her narration seem part of Keats' intention to dramatize the inability of the Titans, whether on the level of pure emotion, intellect, or power to achieve the mastery of Apollo. Enceladus, in many ways the least appealing of the Titans, is not simply drawn; for all its fierceness his nature is not, like Moloch's innately warlike but has become so through anguish at the loss of an innocence and calm that earlier were his chief delight. The character of Enceladus is tinged by overtones of the same Byronic titanism Keats had come to see as one further manifestation of the anguish and desperation of his day.

Comparison between the character of Hyperion and Apollo

A mystery at the centre of the poem is the character of Hyperion himself and the nature of his anguish. The meaning of the agony Apollo undergoes while he reads in Mnemosyne's eyes the "knowledge enormous" that transforms him at the climax of the fragment is unmistakable. Apollo achieves godhead and the condition of the true poet through agonizing self-surrender to the tragic knowledge of human history communicated in her gaze. By comparison, Hyperion's torments as he paces the once serene arcades of his blazing palace, now menaced by monstrous apparitions, now agonized by the muscular spasms that contort him, are both more compelling and obscure. The portrait is filled with an anxiety, frustration, and exhaustion-culminating in the god's collapse "in grief and radiance faint" following his struggle to force open prematurely the portals of the dawn - that seem a reflection of some deeper level of Keats' emotional life and possess a reality that, by contrast, makes Apollo's pain appear merely cerebral. The puzzlement of critics over the nature of the Titan's distress and the larger problem of his relation to Apollo is

generally conveyed through certain obvious questions. Had he continued the work, how would Keats have proceeded ? Would there have been a renewal of conflict? Would Hyperion have been brought directly into confrontation with Apollo and been forcibly dispossessed? Or would he have recognized the superiority of his adversary and given way without a struggle ? To which one might add, why is Hyperion, alone among the Titans, as yet unfallen ? And not least, why did Keats entitle his poem Hyperion and not Apollo?

The truth is that *Hyperion* is something more than the deliberate elaboration of a set of themes through adaptation of epic legend. It is also a poem of considerable self-involvement. It represents Keats attempt to realize the central action of his poem, the transition between two orders of deity, on the level of his own emotional and psychological life and in terms of the symbolic value each god had steadily assumed for him. It suggests, indeed, an effort that certain schools of twentieth-century psychology would describe as the struggle for reintegration of personality. Perhaps this is only to say that Keats' commitment to the work was, more than merely dramatic or intellectual, deeply personal, and that major sections of the action and characterization draw their peculiar power from different aspects of his own being. The problems and solutions he was struggling to articulate within the work were not merely theoretical ones. They were basic to the constitution of his own poetic creativity, and nowhere is the fact more clearly suggested than his characterization of Hyperion.

A major goal in Keats' undertaking of *Hyperion* was his desire to dramatize the superiority of his own ideal of the poetical character - the type of poet who has "no identity...no self," as he told Woodhouse - over other kinds, especially the one he had come to associate with Wordsworth. Yet there are aspects of the work that suggest the practical difficulties he was experiencing in controlling the very imaginative abilities he was seeking to acclaim. It is difficult to explore this aspect of the poem - the character of Hyperion himself without necessarily becoming more subjective in

approach. Yet it is hard not to connect the feverish anxiety and restlessness of the god with many of the feelings Keats was suffering in the autumn and early winter of 1818, when he was at work on the poem. One senses that, if Apollo represents an emotional and poetic ideal Keats was struggling to achieve, Hyperion conveys the nervous intensity and distraction to which the poet was actually a prey.

Apollo and Hyperion are, in fact, complementary figures. They represent the lighter and darker sides, the potential strengths and actual liabilities of the broad criterion of Negative Capability that Keats was seeking to articulate and refine into a moral ideal of the poet. The problem was that he himself was intimately involved within the struggle of the poem, that he was in different ways committed to both deities at once, that they were projections of conflicting sides of his own poetic nature he could not as yet resolve. The end of his poem, the birth throes of Apollo, was full of clear personal significance: it represented the purgation of the unstable, tormented existence he in many ways detested and the birth of the secure, serene type of creator he desired to become. Yet the confrontation between the two deities, the decisive triumph of the one over the other, was something Keats could not fully dramatize for the reason that he had not experienced it within the terms of his own being.

15.4 KEATS AS A ROMANTIC POET

Keats is probably the only romantic poet, apart from Blake, whose present rank is conspicuously higher than it was in the nineteenth century, and the rank given him by critics and poets of that period was not low. Keats speaks to us directly, we do not need to approach him through elaborate reconstructions of dead philosophies or dead poetical fashions. The romantic elements in him remained central, sane, normal - in everything but their intensity - and did not run into transcendental or pseudoromantic or propagandist excesses. It is one of Keats' essential links with some poetic leaders of our own age that he, alone among the romantic poets, consciously strove to escape from self-expression into Shakespearean impersonality. Of all the

poets in his time, Keats is one of the most inevitably associated with the love of beauty in the ordinary sense of the term. He was the most passionate lover of the world as the carrier of beautiful images and of the many imaginative associations of an object or word with whatever might give it a heightened emotional appeal.

Keats is commonly linked with the Elizabethans by virtue of his sensuous richness, but there are less obvious and not less important links than that. For one thing, in Keats as in a number of Elizabethans, it is almost impossible to draw a line between sensuous and spiritual experience. For another, Keats was the only one among the romantic poets who could quite naturally accept and carry on the allegorical interpretation of myth as he found it in Spencer, Chapman, Sandys and others; of course he does not with medieval and Elizabethan “naivete”, understand mythology in literal religious, ethical and scientific applications, but he is, by instinct and influence, in the same tradition. Like Spencer, he too loves beauty in its concrete and human forms, and sees in myth a treasury of the “material sublime”. Though Cynthia, in *I stood Tip-toe*, brings him “shapes from the invisible world,” Keats is happier among visible things.

The world of beauty was for Keats, an escape from the dreary and painful effects of ordinary experience. He escaped from the political and social problems of the world into the realm of imagination. Unlike Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron and Shelley, he remained absolutely untouched by revolutionary theories for the regeneration of mankind. Wordsworth was writing reforming poetry, Shelley advocated impossible reforms and Byron was concerned with his own egoism and the political discontent of the times, while Keats kept worshipping beauty like a devotee, perfectly content to write what was in his own heart or to reflect some splendour of the natural world as he saw or dreamed it to be. With him poetry existed not as an instrument of social revolt nor of philosophical doctrine, but for the expression of beauty.

Keats was neither rebel nor utopian dreamer. Endowed with a purely artistic nature, he took up in regard to all the movements and conflicts of

his time a position of almost complete detachment. He knows nothing of Byron's stormy spirit of antagonism to the existing order of things and he had no sympathy with Shelley's humanitarianism. The famous opening line of *Endymion*- 'A thing of beauty is joy for ever'- strikes the key-note of his work. As the world seemed to him to be hard, cold and prosaic, he habitually sought an imaginative escape from it, not like Shelley into the future land of promise, but into the past of Greek Mythology, as in "Endymion", "Lamia", and the fragmentary "Hyperion", or of medieval romance, as in, "The Eve of St. Agnes", "Isabella", and "La Belle Dame Sans Merci". The inborn, temperamental "Greekness" of Keats' mind is to be seen in his love of beauty. To him, as to the Greeks, the expression of beauty is the ideal of all art. Keats is a Greek, in his manner of personifying the forces of Nature. His Autumn is a divinity in human shape. He does all kinds of work, and directs every operation of harvest. He possessed the Greek instinct for personifying the powers of Nature in clearly defined imaginary shapes endowed with human beauty and half-human faculties. Especially he shows himself possessed and fancy-bound by the mythology, as well as by the physical enchantment, of the moon. Never was bard in youth/ so literally moon-struck. Not only had the charm of the myth of the love of the moon-goddess for Endymion interwoven itself in his being with his natural sensibility to the physical and spiritual spell of moon-light; but deeper and more abstract meanings than its own had gathered about the story in his mind. The divine vision which haunts Endymion in dreams is for Keats' symbolical of Beauty itself, and it is the passion of the human soul for beauty which he attempts, more or less consciously, to shadow forth in the quest of the shepherd-prince after his love.

Keats had no first-hand knowledge of Greek literature. He derived his knowledge of the Greek classics from translations and books of reference like Chapman's translation of Homer, and Lamprienes' *Classical Dictionary*. But though Keats sees the Greek world from afar, he sees it truly. The

Greek touch is not his, but in his own rich and decorated English way he writes with a sure insight into the vital meaning of Greek ideas. For the story of the War of Titans and Olympians he had nothing to guide him except the information that he got from classical dictionaries. But as to the essential meaning of that warfare and its result, it could not possibly be understood more truly, or illustrated with more beauty and force, than by Keats in the speech of Oceanus in the Second Book. In the dethronement of an older and ruder worship by one more advanced and humane, in which idea of ethics and of arts hold a larger place beside ideas of Nature and her brute powers - this idea has fully been brought out. Again, in conceiving and animating the colossal shapes of early gods, Keats shows a masterly instinct.

In his treatment of Nature, the passion for sensuous beauty is the dominant feature. He loved Nature just for its own sake and for the glory and loveliness which he everywhere found in it. He remains absolutely uninfluenced by the Pantheism of Wordsworth and Shelley, and loves Nature not because of any spiritual significance in her or any divine meaning in her but chiefly because of her external charm and beauty. The instinct of Wordsworth was to interpret all the operations of Nature by those of his strenuous soul. For Shelley, natural beauty was symbolical in a two-fold sense. In the visible glories of the world, his philosophy saw the evil of the unseen; and all the imagery of Nature's more remote and skeyey phenomena was inseparable in his soul from visions of a radiant future. In Keats the sentiment of Nature was simpler than in either of these two men; more direct, and more disinterested. It was his instinct to love and interpret Nature more for her own sake, and less for the sake of sympathy which the human mind can read into her with its own workings and aspirations. He was gifted with a delighted insight into all the beauties of the woods and fields.

I stood Tip-toe (1816) is the work of a young man who is literally in a transport of sensuous intoxication. At first sight, the poem may appear only "a poesy of luxuries," sometimes described, however, with a new, sure

delicacy and even largeness of expression, but the essential thing is Keats' first full affirmation of the identity of nature, myth, and poetry. His boyish passion for myth had been confirmed, as instinct ripened into understanding, by the potent authority of Wordsworth, whose inspiring discourse on mythology in the *Excursion* was a fundamental chapter in Keats' poetic bible. Yet the identifying of nature and myth had been incidental in Wordsworth. He was glad to find in the origins of myth a traditional and religious sanction for his own natural religion, but the element of pure myth was far less important to him than to Keats; he had deliberately excluded it from most of the poetry by which he lives. Wordsworth did not, until his inner vision faded, see a dryad behind every oak tree; he had little of Keats' half-sophisticated, half-primitive delight in the sheer beauty of mythological tales. And, so preoccupied was Wordsworth in philosophizing what he saw, one may doubt if he was able to surrender himself so completely and ecstatically to the beauty of nature for its own sake, if he could become, as Keats could, a stalk of waving grain.

Keats aimed at the creation and revelation of beauty, but of beauty wherever its elements existed. His conception of poetry covered the whole range of life and imagination. It is true that, because he did not live long enough, he was not able to fully illustrate the vast range of his conception of poetry. During the brief period of his creative work, he could only reveal the hidden delights of Nature, understand and express the true spirit of classical antiquity, and recreate the spell of the Middle Ages. Fate did not give him time enough to unlock the mysteries of the heart fully, and to illuminate and put in proper perspective the great struggles and problems of human life.

15.5 KEATS AS A POET

No English poet since the middle of the Seventeenth Century seems to have attracted a wider variety of readers, and for a more nearly unbroken period of time, than Keats. Keats' overriding concern is a greater honesty to human experience, in its full concreteness, and in a search for greater

fullness and richness of expression. After *Hyperion* the diversity of style increases and comes at a quicker pace. "The Eve of St. Agnes", a respite from the more demanding effort of *Hyperion*, is rapidly followed by the fragment of the "Eve of St. Mark". several minor poems, the ballad "La Bella Dame Sans Merci", and then, in April and May, by the great odes, which may be said to begin the modern lyric of symbolic debate. Within three more months, though any number of personal difficulties arose, he turned from the odes to a still different poem, "Lamia", while simultaneously creating still another new style of poetry in the Fall of "Hyperion". Keats is without doubt one of the greatest of the English Romantic poets. Matthew Arnold thought that "in the faculty of naturalistic interpretation, in what we call natural magic, he ranks with Shakespeare", and he said again, "No one also in English poetry, save Shakespeare, has in expression quite the fascinating felicity of Keats' his perception of loveliness".

Poetry for Keats, finds its origin in what he means by "Sensation". At the same time, poetry exists to express and to communicate sensation". By "Sensations", Clarence Thorpe writes in his study of the poet's mind, Keats meant "feelings or intuitions, the pure activity of the imaginations". Sensation encompasses, first of all, the "beauteous forms" of nature and the way in which these impressions, felt along the blood--stream, enter into heart and mind to unite with intellect and feeling. "Sensation" here can not be identified as any single form or action. It is, rather, inseparable from a highly complicated process, sensory, emotional, and intellectual. In its plural form it is roughly equivalent to consciousness, stimulated in part from without but also moulded or coloured from within. Keats' genius as a poet is rooted in the nature of sensation. The word describes both the source of his verse and the main region of his song.

Synaesthesia in Keats is a natural concomitant of other qualities of his poetry. Keats' verse is extraordinarily rich in sense-images, and his sense-imagery is very full and comprehensive. The imagery of Keats' poetry has two notable characteristics. In the first place, it is comprehensive,

having images of all the sensations of the sensory system-sensations of sight, hearing, touch, temperature, pressure, taste, smell, motor sensations hunger, thirst, lust, etc. In the second place, it is sensuous, being rich in images of the intimately physical sensations of touch, temperature, pressure taste, smell, and the internal sensations. He has at his command an unexampled abundance of vivid sensory images. Therefore, he slips readily from one order of sensation to another when it suits his poetic purpose, like master improviser who transposes his theme into a different key. Synaesthesia is unusually fusional and swift in action, and Keats's poetry is fusional and compact in the highest degree, the more so as it gains in maturity. The "intensity" of his verse is a result of intense compression like a molten or sublimed by enormous pressures. The synaesthetic imagery of Keats is almost always actuated by a desire to attain the fullest possible sensuous effect. It frequently appears as a tendency to ally sense-images with the sense of touch in order to make them stronger and more concrete.

Keats' first demand, in poetry as in other art, is 'intensity'. But along with intensity Keats demands another quality which may at first sight appear incompatible, namely 'unobtrusiveness'. Poetry should be great and unobtrusive, a thing which enters into one's soul, and does not startle it or amaze it with itself, but with its subject. Keats is not saying that in reading great poetry we should not be startled and amazed; we should, but not by the 'poetry' in the narrower sense of the technical vehicle of presentation. Keats is in some ways the most 'personal' of poets, yet in all his great work nothing is more remarkable than the way in which he stands aside, and allows, for example, the Nightingale to work her own way with us; we forget to admire the artistry in the beauty. There is the embalmed darkness, there is the song of the nightingale, and there are we; but Keats has withdrawn to watch his magic working.

Finally, poetry for all its intensity, should so present its beauty that it leaves the reader in the end content and not restlessly excited and dissatisfied. Its touches of Beauty should never be halfway thereby making

the reader breathless instead of content: the rise, the progress, the setting of imagery should, like the sun, come natural to him- shine over him and set soberly although in magnificence leaving him in the luxury of twilight.

15.5 NEGATIVE CAPABILITY

Keats himself defines it, “When a man is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason.” This is the man who can be content to make up his mind about nothing, to let his mind be a thoroughfare for all thoughts; who can enter into all other bodies, and not only human ones, who can feel the ‘intellect’ of a waterfall, and pick about the gravel with the sparrow. The poet, in Keats’ view, which he draws from his experience of himself, is the least poetical of beings, because he has no identity, is infinitely capacious of external impressions and reacts to all external stimuli unhampered and unrestricted by the dominance of an intellect which consciously or unconsciously selects its material for early coordination into an intended logical scheme. When a man is endowed with this negative capability he need do nothing but remain passive to set his imagination free to wander where it chooses, and there are no limits to its range.

‘I feel more and more’, says Keats, ‘every day, as my imagination strengthens, that I do not live in this world alone but in a thousand worlds. No sooner am I alone than shapes of epic greatness are stationed around me, and serve my spirit the office which is equivalent to a King’s body guard-then “Tragedy with sceptered pall, comes sweeping by”. According to my state of mind I am with Achilles shouting in the Trenches, or with Theocirtus in the vales of Sicily. Or I throw my whole being into Troilus, and repeating those lines, “I wander, like a lost soul upon the slygian Banks staying for waftage,” I meet into the air with a voluptuousness so delicate that I am content to be alone”

So much for the nature of the poet, as Keats saw it.

The “Negative Capability” letter is best understood as another

phrasing of these thoughts, with at least three further extensions. First, the problem of form or style in art enters more specifically. Second, the ideal toward which he is groping is contrasted more strongly with the egoistic assertion of one's own identity. Third, the door is further opened to the perception- which he was to develop within the next few months-of the sympathetic potentialities of the imagination.

Keats gives his first crucial statement, "The excellence of every Art is its intensity, capable of making all disagreeable evaporate, from their being in close relationship with Beauty and Truth--Examine King Lear and you will find this exemplified throughout". In the active cooperation or full "greeting" of the experiencing imagination and its object, the nature or "identity" of the object is grasped so vividly that only those associations and qualities that are strictly relevant to the central conception remain. The irrelevant and discordant (the "disagreeables") "evaporate" from this fusion of object and mind. Hence "Truth" and "Beauty" spring simultaneously into being, and also begin to approximate each other. For, on the one hand, the external reality otherwise overlooked, or at most only sleepily acknowledged, or dissected so that a particular aspect of it may be abstracted for special purposes of argument or thought-has now, as it were, awakened into "Truth": it has been met by that human recognition, fulfilled and extended by that human agreement with reality, which we call "truth". And at the same time, with the irrelevant "evaporated", this dawning into unity is felt as "Beauty". Nor is it a unity solely of the object itself, emerging untrammelled and in its full significance, but a unity also of the human spirit, both within itself and with what was at first outside it. For in this "intensity"- the "excellence", he now feels,, "of every Art" - We attain, if only for a while, a harmony of the inner life with truth. It is in this harmony that "Beauty" and "Truth" come together.

In our life of uncertainties, where no one system or formula can explain everything--where even a word is at best, in Bacon's phrase, a "wager of thought"— what is needed is an

imaginative openness of mind and heightened receptivity to reality in its full and diverse concreteness. This, however involves negating one's own ego. Keats' friend Dilke, as he said later, "was a Man who cannot feel he has a personal identity unless he has made up his mind about every thing. The only means of strengthening one's intellects is to make up one's mind about nothing- to let the mind be a thorough fare for all thoughts Dilke will never come at a truth as long as he lives: because he is always trying at it." To be dissatisfied with such insights as one may attain through this openness, to reject them unless they can be wrenched into part of a systematic structure of one's own making, is an egoistic assertion of one's own identity. The remark, "without any irritable reaching after fact and reason" is often cited as though the pejorative words are "fact and reason", and as though uncertainties were being preferred for their own sake. But the significant word, of course, is "irritable". We should also stress "capable" "capable of being in uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts" without the "irritable" need to extend our identities and rationalize our "half-knowledge". For a "great poet" especially, a sympathetic absorption in the essential significance of his object (caught and relished in that active cooperation of the mind in which the emerging "Truth" is felt as "Beauty" and in which the harmony of the human imagination and its object is attained)" overcomes every other consideration" (Considerations that an "irritable reaching after fact and reason" might otherwise itch to pursue). Indeed, it goes beyond and "obliterates" the act of "Consideration"-of deliberating, analyzing, and piecing experience together through "consequitive reasoning".

The great odes have for long been placed at the center of Keats' achievement and, for that matter, at the center of the English Romantic achievement as a whole. The odes have most to tell when they are taken not only together as a group but as an integral part of Keats's total achievement, as a nature reflection of the particular concerns with which he wrestled throughout his career. Very broadly, they are best considered as a series of closely related and progressive meditations on the nature of the creative process, the logical outgrowth of his involvement with negative capability. Needless to say, the latter phrase must now be taken to encompass something more than the capability of "being in uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason; it now embraces a set of related premises and attitudes, including even certain questions deriving from them. The larger formulation involves his habitual distrust or "Dogmas" and "seeming sure points of reasoning", his preference for "Sensation" and "Speculation" as opposed to thought, his ideal of the "Camelion Poet", and his commitment, above all, to creativity as an expression of an evolving state of consciousness. By this time the principle involves certain questions-the problem, for example, of whether the poet, in exerting his imaginative power, intensifies and distills the actual identity of his materials or whether he transforms them into abstractions from experience that are in certain ways unreal. All these conceptions and the questions surrounding them had for some time been a source of steadily deepening preoccupation. In the great odes one finds Keats taking up and rigorously exploring through verse itself the control ascertains put forward so casually and sanguinely as far back as the winter of 1817-1818 in order to test further the capacity of the imagination in forming power and with it the adequacy of his earlier theoretical speculations.

15.6 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

1. The revised version of *Hyperion* was written in
(a) 1818 (b) 1819
(c) 1919 (d) 1918

2. The first book of *Hyperion* gives us the picture of the _____
 (a) Fall of the man (b) death of Hyperion
 (c) Fallen Titans (d) Birth of Hyperion
3. Poetry for Keats, finds its origin in what he means by _____
 (a) Sensation (b) Emotions
 (c) Imagination (d) Inspiration
4. The imagery of Keat's poetry has two notable characteristics i.e.
 (a) Imaginative and creative (b) Impulsive and recreational
 (c) Witty and fanfecthed (d) Comprehensive and Sensuous
5. What does Keats mean by when he wrote "when a man is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason."
 (a) Sensuality (b) Imaginative
 (c) Negative Capability (d) None of these

15.6.1 Answer Key

1. 1819
2. Fallen Titans
3. Sensation
4. Comprehensive and Sensuous
5. Negative Capability

15.7 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

- Q.1 Discuss Keat's *Hyperion* as an overly ambitious epic left to its destiny.
- Q.2 How far Keats apply his 'Negative capability' to his poems. Discuss.
- Q.3 Discuss Keats as a Romantic poet.
- Q.4 Discuss Keats as a sensuous poet.

15.8 SUGGESTED READING

1. John Keats by Robert Gittings
2. Studies in Keats by Middleton Murry
3. Twentieth-Century Interpretations of Keat's Odes by Walter Jack Stillinger.
4. John Keats by Robin Mayhead.
5. John Keats by Sidney Colvin.

M.A. ENGLISH : SEMESTER II

COURSE CODE : ENG 212

LESSON No.16

POETRY-II

JOHN KEATS

UNIT-IV

STRUCTURE

- 16.1 Introduction
- 16.2 Objectives
- 16.3 *Ode to a Nightingale*
- 16.4 *Ode on a Grecian Urn*
- 16.5 Multiple Choice Questions
 - 16.5.1 Answer Key
- 16.6 Examination Oriented Questions
- 16.7 Suggested Reading

16.1 INTRODUCTION

John Keats in his works proposed the contemplation of beauty as a way of delaying the inevitability of death. The speaker in many of Keat's poems leaves the real world to explore the transcendent, mythical, or aesthetic realm.

16.2 OBJECTIVES

The objective of this lesson is to critically discuss 'Ode to a Nightingale' and 'Ode on a Grecian Urn'. At the end of the lesson the distance learner would be able to answer the multiple choice questions asked.

16.3 ODE TO A NIGHTINGALE

The ripeness and maturity of Keats' poetic faculty gets reflected in 'Ode to a Nightingale'. The poem is remarkable for its note of reflection and meditation and also shows the splendour of Keats's imagination. It was written soon after the death of Keats's brother Tom, who died of consumption at a very young age. Keats suffered deeply from a sense of loss and got disillusioned from this world, where young men get reduced to skeletons due to disease and die prematurely. The song of the nightingale aroused in him a longing to escape with it from this world of sorrows to the world of ideal beauty. The poem was composed while Keats was living with his friend Brown in Hampstead. A nightingale had built its nest in the garden, Keats was so impressed by the tranquil and continual joy of its song that he gave an expression to his poetic feelings in the form of this splendid poem. The central idea in the poem is to draw a contrast of the joy and beauty and apparent permanence of the nightingale's song with the sorrows of human life and transitoriness of beauty and love in this world. The principle stress is on the struggle between ideal and actual.

The poem begins with the poet in a state of "drowsy numbness" which, he says, is as though he had taken poison (hemlock). He is in a state of almost complete insensibility. He feels like one who had drunk the water of the River of Forgetfulness and become completely indifferent to his surroundings. This mood has descended upon the poet because of his deep involvement with the overwhelming joy of the bird. The poet hears the nightingale and participates in its life. The happiness he shares is so intense that for the poet it becomes the paradoxically "aching pleasure" of the "Ode on Melancholy", a pleasure felt as pain. This obliteration of conscious, waking faculties releases the imagination and sees nightingale as something more than a bird. It is a Dryad from the Arcadian world, like the "moss-lain Dryads" of the 'Ode to Psyche'. In Ancient mythology, Dryads is one of the inferior deities dwelling in groves, caves, springs, rivers, forests. It lived in trees or forests. The nightingale is addressed as 'light-winged Dryad'

because of its dwelling in the trees and its effortless flight to the heights. The nightingale's melodious song is coming from a piece of grassy land where green beech-trees have grown. It seems to be singing of summer, a lovely season in England and sings loudly but spontaneously and without much strain.

In the opening stanza, the poet's mood is one of joy and ecstasy which almost benumbs his senses. This mood is due to the rapturous song of the nightingale. The words like 'aches', 'drowsy numbness', 'dull', 'opiate', 'Lethe-wards had sunk' produce a cumulative effect of languor and it is further heightened by the very movement of the verse. Both pleasure and pain are heightened and meet a common intensity. The felicity which is permanent in the nightingale, is transient and therefore excessive in the poet. Its happiness is reiterated, recalling both the "happy, happy boughs" of the urn and also Psyche, the "happy, happy dove." And although the time is Mid-May, the nightingale sings of summer, the time of fulfillment.

In the second stanza, the poet craves for a drink of some marvellous wine which has been kept to mature and to cool deep under the ground as quality of wine is improved by keeping it in cool cellars for a long time. He yearns for a wine that will remind him of the flowers which have been used in its making and of the green vegetation of the countryside and of dancing, music, merry-making, feasting of the sun-burnt peasants of Provence, a region in France. The poet longs for a cup full of the genuine and richly-coloured wine that flows from the fountain of the Muses on Mount Helicon. He wants this wine to enable him to leave this world of reality and to escape into the forest where he can join the ideal world of the nightingale.

The theme of the second stanza is abundance or fullness. The ideal lies in completeness. The nightingale sings in full-throated ease, and the beaker is full of the true, blushful Hippocrene. The poet is desirous of getting drunk because he, in his numbness, can scarcely respond to the song and also because without a further drugging the song is not an unmingled pleasure. The wine is explicitly linked with poetry, with imagination, with

happiness and with all that the nightingale represents. In this stanza, wine resembles the nightingale in being associated with summer, happiness and song. Like the “immortal Bird”, the fullness of the beaker, suggests a desire for an intense, gluttonous experience similar to the poet’s deep reaction to the song of the nightingale. This is a richly sensuous stanza with its references to gaiety and merry making, the cool wine, the dancing, the blushing wine with its bubbles winking at the brim. The poet’s desire for wine does not mean a desire for warmth and gaiety; it is a desire for escape from the world of realities.

In the third stanza, poet wishes to forget himself and escape from the world of perplexity and sorrow into the forest to be in the company of the nightingale. Here he broods upon the feeling of disappointment, the burden of responsibilities, the weight of worries experienced by human beings in this life and of which the nightingale is unaware. Giving a pathetic description of this world, he says that here men sit and hear each other groan, old people are afflicted with palsy and young are falling a prey to fatal diseases like tuberculosis. This is the place where merely to think is to become sorrowful and beauty and love are also short-lived here. A man who has fallen in love with a beautiful woman having bright eyes has an uncontrollable and consuming passion for her. But this will not last long. The passion of the lover is as short-lived as the beauty of the beloved. The nightingale is believed by the poet to be happy because it is not human, because it has never known the weariness, the fever and fret of human existence. The mood of ecstasy with which the poem had opened changes here into a mood of deep pessimism and despair.

In the third stanza a world of privation is substituted for the golden world of the second stanza. For ease is substituted the weariness, the fever, and the fret; for abundance, a few, sad, last grey hair. The personification of age, youth, beauty, and love are vitalised by their contexts; they are comparable to “Veiled Melancholy” in her “Sovran Shrine” in the Ode on Melancholy. There can be no actual prolonging either of what is

beautiful in itself or of an intense response to it. Except in moments of escape, life inevitably involves pain, that is why poet's wish is to enter a visionary world of immortal, unmingled bliss, and the wish seems to be reinforced by his recollection of "the weariness, the fever, and the fret" of mortal experience. For the fourth stanza opens by reiterating the will to escape with greater urgency and emotional force. The vehicle of the flight is now no longer wine but Poesy, and in this context Poesy means visionary poetry, one might even call it fantasy.

After having given expression to thoughts of human sorrow in the third stanza, the poet makes a vigorous effort to get back into a happy mood in the fourth stanza. Gloomy thoughts about the human lot are now brushed aside, together with the possibility of wine. The poet decides to escape into the forest, carried on the wings of his poetic imagination, although his imaginative flight to the forest is obstructed by the rational side of his personality.

Then the poet describes the beauty of nature in the midst of which he finds himself. He looks upon the moon as a queen surrounded by her attendant fairies, that is, stars. But there is no light in the forest except that which is brought from above by the winds and which finds its way with difficulty through the thick leaves and branches of trees overgrown with moss.

The forest scene of the fourth stanza is romantically picturesque without being really pictorial; one does not visualise it, but its composition is describable in visual metaphor. The moonlight, a symbol of imagination, intermingling with darkness suggests the enchantment of mystery. The mood of deep pessimism and despair gives way to a mood of delight occasioned by his imaginative contact with the beauty and glory of nature.

The fifth stanza provides another rich feast for the senses. The poet gives a sensuous description of flowers and their sweetening effect on the atmosphere. Supposing himself to be with the nightingale and associating it with the forest and with darkness, the poet now thinks of a verdurous bower and luxuriously describes it. Due to darkness, poet cannot see what

flowers grow at his feet in the forest and what blossoms are on the fruit trees. However, by the scents that fill the dark air, he can guess that the forest is full of white hawthorns, sweet-briers, violets, and buds of musk-roses which will in due course attract multitude of flies on summer evenings. The rich beauty of the month of May, when everything is in its blossom, is showered with the fragrance that fills the atmosphere.

Like the earlier stanza about wine, the extended imagery of flowers represents a momentary release achieved through the imagination, and, indeed, the capability of the imagination is dramatized in the poetry. In the darkness the poet cannot see the flowers but precisely for that reason he can see and describe them all the better. The song-haunted darkness stimulates the imagination to “guess each sweet”. And the statement that the poet “cannot see... what soft incense hangs upon the boughs” is, of course, a typical example of Keats’s use of Synesthesia, but it is more than that : it is a vivid assertion of the power of the imagination to see more than the sensory eye can see. It converts the incense into something virtually solid so that, it presents what is very close to a visual image. The ‘darkness’, in this stanza, is described as “embalmed”. The primary sense of the word in this context is “perfumed”, but there is also the suggestion of death, (because of the practice in ancient times of embalming dead bodies) as though to be in the forest were a scented, hushed burial. In finding his way imaginatively into the dark forest, the poet has approached death.

In the sixth stanza, as the poet hears the nightingale’s song in the darkness, he remembers how, on many occasions in his life he has wished for death that would bring a release from the burden of existence. At this particular moment, death seems to be more attractive than it has ever seemed before. He would, therefore, like to die a painless death at this hour of midnight when the nightingale is singing with such intensity. The nightingale would continue to sing even when the poet is dead. He would then no longer be able to hear its song. He would become as deaf as a piece of earth to the noble hymn or mournful song that it will be singing.

In this stanza, the poet daringly returns to the idea of death, the chief among the besetting evils of the third stanza, to pursue its connotations further but in such a way as actually to reinforce the notion of the bird as an ideal of tranquillity and permanence. The release Keats meditated in death was not always conceived as merely quiet and easeful. It can also be “rich to die” in that the poet, groping for a symbol of fulfillment or intensity, thinks of death as a positive experience. In the world of process, fulfillment and death are often simultaneous. It is man’s necessary alienation from Nature that makes death so horrible. To dissolve, to fade into the warm darkness is to merge into the eternal pattern of Nature. In such a communion, death itself becomes something positive - a flowering, a fulfillment.

The thought of his own death makes the poet contrast the mortality of human beings with the immortality of the nightingale. He is contrasting the race of nightingales with a single human being. Because of the immortality of its race, the nightingale will never be destroyed as human beings and nations try to destroy one another as if they were hungry for one another’s blood. The voice of the nightingale which he now hears is perhaps the same as was heard in ancient times by emperor and clown alike. Then he makes reference to a biblical character, Ruth, who was a Moabite married to a Jew in Moab. After her husband died, she migrated to the alien land Judah in Palestine in order to share her mother-in-law’s troubles. There she gleaned corn in the fields of a kinsman. According to the poet, Ruth also heard the same song of the nightingale, when she felt depressed because of home sickness. The idea is that the voice of the nightingale has not changed since the time when the melancholy Ruth heard it centuries ago. It is the same voice which has often cast a spell upon the enchanted windows of a castle situated on the shore of a dangerous ocean in some solitary fairy lands.

The bird in this stanza, is a universal and undying voice : the voice of Nature, of imaginative sympathy and therefore of an ideal romantic

poetry, infinitely powerful and profuse. As sympathy, the voice of the nightingale resolves all differences : it speaks to high and low, to emperor and clown alike; it comforts the human home-sickness of Ruth and frees her from bitter isolation; and equally it opens the casements of the remote and magical. The nightingale has been transformed into a symbol. Like the urn in Ode on a Grecian Urn, which is compared to eternity, the bird is immortal, and its life is contrasted with the brief generations of man. The poet recognizes the bird as something no longer natural but essential, as primarily a work of art, a symbol, a value that exists in separation from the world of man. Rather than uniting the earthly and the eternal, the bird now serves to emphasize the gap between them. Throughout this stanza the nightingale, even as a symbol, continues to move farther away from the human world. It is heard first by “emperor and clown” figures presumably out of the historical past, then by Ruth in a world of Biblical legend, and finally it is heard in “fairy lands”, and these fairy lands may be the fairy lands of “La Belle Dame Sans Merci” – a place which may represent a destructive illusion. The fairy lands are ‘forlorn’ because man cannot live in them. For the same reason the song of the nightingale is no longer happy. Instead it is a “requiem” or “plaintive anthem.”

The word “forlorn” acts on the poet’s mind like the ringing of an alarm bell and reminds him of his own forlorn existence. The word interrupts the poet’s imagination and calls him back to the realities of life. He, therefore, bids farewell to the bird. The imagination of a poet cannot create durable illusions as it is supposed to do. He had gone into the forest with the help of his imagination, and now his imagination is failing. As the nightingale’s song is departing, it becomes more and more distant. Now he feels, it is coming from the fields nearby and the next moment, the song seems to be coming from near the silent stream. And then it seems still more distant. Finally, it is completely lost among the open spaces of the valley. The song is now no longer audible. The poet, therefore, wonders whether it was an actual song or he was merely seeing a vision.

The final stanza is a soft and quiet withdrawal from the heights. It is not the bird that “fades” but its song and this does not happen until the poet has been tolled back to his ‘sole self’. Thus, if the departure represents the flight of a living bird, it is also presented as the fading of a vision. Moreover, the song does not merely fade. With a final, ironic reflection upon the theme of death, it is described as “buried” as if to imply the denial of any possibility of learning it. And the poem ends with uncertainty and a question : was the process that has taken place a momentary glimpse of truth or a musing subjective half-dream; and is the poet’s inability to experience it now an awakening into reality or a lapse into insensibility?

In the Ode on Melancholy, Keats expresses his experience of the habitual interchange and alternation of the emotions of joy and pain. The same crossing and inter-mingling of opposite currents of feeling finds expression, together with unequalled touches of the poet’s feeling for Nature and romance, in this poem. The poem is best known for its revealing imaginative insight, its conquering poetic charm, its touch that strikes so lightly but so deep. It is a best example of romanticism as it has all the characteristics of a romantic poem. The rich sensuousness is overflowing and intense desire and its deep melancholy has been expressed passionately. The supernaturalism, mysticism and the suggestiveness of the poem gives romantic character to the poem. Thus, the ode contains the highest, the fullest, the most intense, the most valuable mental experience which Keats can imagine.

Annotations :-

Dryad – An inferior deity who lived in trees or forests.

Full-throated ease – The bird sings in a loud voice and without much effort.

Draught of vintage – drink of sweet wine.

Flora – goddess of the flowers and spring.

Hippocrene – the name of the fountain of the Muses on Mount
Helicon – Poet imagines that wine flowed from this fountain instead
of water.
Leaden-eyed – When eyes look dull and gloomy as their brightness has
been robbed due to pain and grief.
Bacchus – The God of wine.
Pards – leopards
Poesy – Poetry
Embalmed darkness – The darkness which is sweetened by the flowers
and the blossoms.
Eglantine – a kind of flower
Mused rhyme – Well thought-out verses.
Requiem – a dirge in which the mourners praise a dead person.
Ruth – Ruth is a biblical character. She was a Moabite married to a
Jew in Moab. When her husband died, she had to migrate to an alien
land. And when she felt home-sick while working in the fields, she
listened to the melodious song of the nightingale.
Plaintive – Conveying a complaint
Valley glades – Open spaces of the valley.

16.4 ODE ON A GRECIAN URN

In the ancient times, an urn was used to store the ashes of a dead body especially in Greece. Then that urn was buried. It was usually made up of marble or of brass and different kinds of scenes and designs were carved on its surface. Apart from being the repository of the ashes of the dead, the urn served the purpose of artistic creativity. In this poem, Keats seems to have been inspired by some of these artistic creations carved on these urns. Keats had great fascination for Greek Literature and Art. He had visited British Museum and was greatly influenced by a collection of

ancient Greek sculptures sold by Lord Elgin to the British Government in 1816. In this poem, Keats shows his deep understanding and love for Greek Art. He has further immortalized the immortal beauty carved on the urns through his poetic creation.

No one will deny that this ode, like most of Keats's poems, deals with the human and mutable on the one hand, and the immortal and essential on the other ; and that what it states has something to do with both an opposition and a fusion of these two states. On this note the poem opens, for the poet softly addresses the urn as a "Still unravish'd bride." The urn has been compared to a bride whose chastity and purity has not been touched by anybody and it still possesses the undiminished glory. The urn had been lying quietly beneath the earth for ages and still retains its beauty and splendour. It has been adopted and nurtured by silence and the slow-passing time, which conveys the idea of silent repose and great age. It has been named as Sylvan historian too because it has carved the history of countryside with forest scenes and rural carvings on it. The poet says that urn is a more powerful medium of telling tales than the rhymes created by poets and the tales told by it are the most beautiful and impressive stories about flowers and other beautiful objects of nature. In a series of questions, which are also vivid pictures, the poet gives us an idea of what those carvings represent. He refers to the human beings and the gods depicted on the urn in the beautiful valleys of Tempe and Arcadia, both of them famous for their pastoral beauty. He refers to the men in a passionate mood chasing maidens who are struggling to escape from their clutches. Then there are the flute-players playing wild and ecstatic music. Here the poet paints a picture of turbulent passion, and conveys the pulsating life depicted on the urn. It is not just the permanence or long age of the urn, which is suggested but a life of passion and ecstatic music has also been presented.

Although the ode is a symbolic action in terms of an urn, its intrinsic theme is that region where earth and the ethereal, light and darkness,

time and no-time become one ; and what the symbolic drama ultimately discovers is the way in which art (the urn) relates man to that region. This same hesitantly suggested collocation of the mortal and the immortal, and of the dynamic and the static, makes up the loose fabric of the entire first stanza. The figures on the urn are deities or mortals or both. Mortal and immortal move close to the knife-edge, but Keats's question, although it brings them together in the same context, expresses a hesitation that prevents them from fusing. The same loose mingling appears in the reference to Tempe and Arcady. Tempe being that earthly region which the gods, especially Apollo, were inclined to favour—an—earthly—heaven—and Arcady that region that men thought to approach most nearly a paradise—a heavenly earth. In each name both the divine and the mortal are present, both with inverted emphasis. Moreover, the urn itself embodies both conditions, but only in its two different roles ; and thus the opposites become associated but still fail to coalesce. The urn, although a bride, is still unravished ; the maidens, although unmarried, are in imminent danger of ravishment. We do not hear the tune, but see the instruments; the men do not pursue, but there is pursuit ; the maidens are not struggling, but there is struggle ; and the tension between “Struggle” and “escape” further moves the activity towards a taut stasis. The long period making up the stanza, beginning softly and slowly, and becoming breathlessly excited in the staccato series of questions, finally reaches its climax in the words, “wild ecstasy”. The ecstasy brings together the pursuit and the music, the human and the superhuman, and by conveying an impression of exquisite sense-spirit intensity, leads us to that fine edge between mortal and immortal where passion is so intense that it refines itself into the essence of ecstasy, which is without passion. “Ecstasy” is therefore both the end towards which the dramatic action of the symbols has been moving, and also the means of entry into the second stanza.

In the opening stanza Keats give us a contrast between something unchanging (the urn) because it is dead and something transient because it

is alive. This equipoise is continued in the second stanza, but the poet continues to toy with his dual matter, without asserting or implying that lasting permanence is superior to transient passion. The second stanza begins rather with a bold paradox which runs through the stanza; action goes on though the actors are motionless; the song will not cease; the maiden, always to be kissed but never actually kissed will remain changelessly beautiful. The music that we actually hear is undoubtedly sweet, but the music that we imagine is much sweeter. Therefore, Keats asks the pipes depicted on the surface of the urn to continue their music. The sweet music of the pipes which Keats sees on the urn is to be heard not by our sensual or bodily ears, but by our spirit or imagination. We do not know what tunes are being played by these pipes, and yet we can admire and enjoy this music more than any actual music. On the urn, Keats sees a handsome young man singing a song beneath the trees in a forest. The song will never come to an end and the leaves of the tree will also remain ever green, as this scene has been carved like that on the urn and it will remain permanently like that. Another carving on the urn shows a lover bending forward to kiss a girl but the kiss has not materialised. Keats consoles the dissatisfied lover by telling that his beloved will remain young forever and his love for her will never be consumed as it happens in the actual life. Beauty and love in real life have a short duration. But beauty and love as depicted on the urn, which is a work of art, are everlasting. Thus, in these lines, Keats has contrasted the permanence of art with the transitoriness of actual life.

Charles Patterson opposes this view of art's supremacy over life. He says that Keats does not show any preference for art over real life but simply balances one against the other. He seems to be playing with the dualism of the transitoriness of real life and the permanence of art. Earl Wasserman opines that in the second stanza all the nearly antithetical elements of the first now rush together and coalesce. There is song; and yet it is unheard, is played to the spirit, and has no tone. The silence of the urn and the sound of the pipes and timbrels have run together. The chastity and

marriage of the urn, the pursuit and escape of the human figures, are also resolved in an area where time blends with no-time. The marriage-chastity of the urn and the virginity-ravishment of the maidens now intermingle : the lover can never kiss, though winning near the goal, and yet he will love for ever.

In the third stanza, the trees depicted on the urn are laden with fresh and green leaves as it is spring season. As they are a part of artistic creation, they will never lose their beauty and youthfulness which takes place in the actual life with the changing season. Then there is the picture of a musician playing on his pipe. He will continue playing this sweet music for times to come without getting tired and without losing that happy mood in which he is at present. The lovers depicted on the urn will always remain young and passionate towards each other, they will always be breathless with the excitement of love. In real life, human beings have a feeling of intense disillusionment after they have fully enjoyed the pleasures of love as it leaves them fully satiated. They have a feeling of emptiness after this satisfaction.

According to Sidney Colvin, “The second and third stanzas express with perfect poetic felicity and insight the vital differences 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 third stanza has usually been condemned as a sentimental lingering over the scene because of the repetition of the word “happy”. But happiness, for Keats, is no cheap gaiety, but the *sonum bonum* the opposite of the weariness, the fever, and the fret that are the inherent attributes of the unhappy mortal world.

In the fourth stanza, the description of another carving is given, which shows a procession going towards a place of worship to offer a sacrifice. The priest heads this procession and leads the sacrificial young calf. The half-opened mouth of the calf makes it appear as if the animal were uttering

low cries with its head up-raised. The smooth sides of the body of the animal are decorated with garlands. Such sacrifices were common features of Greek religious ceremonies. On the carving, an empty town is shown because it is a holy morning and the people have left to offer a sacrifice at some distant altar. This town is imagined to be situated close to a river, or a sea-shore, or at the foot of a hill on the top of which, there stands a fortress. People of this town are shown going and they will never return, the town will always remain empty and silent. Not a single individual will ever be seen returning to the town to explain why the town is empty and lifeless.

The fourth stanza emphasizes, not individual aspiration and desire, but communal life. It constitutes another chapter in the history that the “Sylvan historian” has to tell. The lines which the poet speculates on the strange emptiness of the little town are among the most moving in this poem. If the earlier stanzas have been concerned with such paradoxes as the ability of static carving to convey dynamic action, of the soundless pipes to play music sweeter than that of the heard melodies, of the figured lover to have a more warm and panting love than that of breathing flesh and blood, so in the same way the town implied by the urn comes to have a richer and more important history than that of actual cities. Most of stanza four is devoted to the town, for the recollection of human passion is calling upon the poet to make a commentary upon the mortal world, not the realm of pure spirit. Yet Keats does not hate the world for not being a heaven. To him it is the source of rich beauty, an opportunity for an ethrallment in the essence of the sensuous; and it differs from heaven in its condition of being, not in its kind.

In the fifth stanza, the poet addresses the urn as “Attic shape” and “Fair Attitude”. It is an attic shape because it belongs to Greece. And it is a fair attitude as it is a beautiful piece of Greek Art, with several scenes carved on it. To Charles Patterson ‘Shape’ and ‘Fair attitude’ look like the lovely curves of the feminine body. These expressions,

according to him, call forth very delicately the lines of the feminine form in all its vital richness. The marble urn has been decorated with carvings of men and maidens. There are some rural scenes on the urn, showing weeds which have been trampled upon. The shape of the silent urn and the images carved on it compel us to give up vain speculation in the same way as the concept of eternity compels us to give up vain speculations. Keats, by comparing the urn to eternity, reinforces its value as a symbol of permanence and also tells us that it has the same capacity to divert us from rational thinking as bewilderment at the idea of eternity. Then the urn is addressed as 'cold pastoral'. It is called cold for two reasons, first because the urn is made up of marble and second because the figures carved on the urn are not alive. It is called pastoral because rural scenes are depicted on the urn. The urn will continue as an unchanging thing of beauty in the midst of the changing sorrows of rising and passing generations. Keats says that the urn will always be a friend to man. The generations of men will come and pass, and will perhaps undergo sufferings and sorrows of which we have no notion at present. But the urn will have a valuable message for those generations i.e. Beauty and Truth are not separate things but two sides of one and the same thing. The knowledge of this great fact is of supreme importance and this fact represents the very essence of wisdom. Having this knowledge, mankind needs no other knowledge.

The concluding stanza seems to have a dual significance : first, the urn is a friend to man; and second, the urn is coldly remote from man. Keats wishes us to weigh these opposing views to balance the two sets of feelings towards the urn. Keats does not wish to turn his back upon what is human, however transitory and unsatisfactory it may be. Keats wants to combine permanence of art with the warmth of human life, provided that is pleasant and beautiful. The poem does not seek to establish the superiority of art over life, but to bring before our minds the contrast between life and art, with the advantages and disadvantages of both. Art

has beauty and permanence; life is transitory but it has reality, besides of course, beauty. Keats seems to be playing with the dualism of the transitoriness of real life and the permanence of art, but he neither asserts nor implies that lasting permanence is superior to transient passion. It is only when we turn to the ode's famous concluding apothegm.

*“Beauty is truth, truth beauty - that is all
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know”*

that we come to grips with the deeper problems of interpretation it still poses for us. In all the vast body of criticism on the ode, it has always been the concluding lines that have assumed crucial importance, and they remain a major challenge in any attempt to reinterpret the poem. T. S. Eliot declares these lines as “a serious blemish on a beautiful poem”. Middleton Murry calls it a “troubling assertion” which is an intrusion upon the poem, which does not grow out of the poem, and which is not dramatically accommodated to it. Cleanth Brooks observes that first part i.e. “Beauty is truth” can help us in reaching to the conclusion that Keats’ is a pure aesthete, upholding art for art’s sake. And second part can be interpreted as Keat’s view of upholding art as a medium of propaganda. According to another interpretation, truth does not mean truth to actual life; it means truth to life as one may imagine it.

Lionel Trilling’s opinion seems most appropriate. He opines that Beauty was not an inert thing for Keats, it was not a word by which he evaded issues, but a word by which he confronted them. What he is saying is that a great poet looks at human life, sees the terrible truth of its evil, but sees it so intensely that it becomes an element of the beauty which is created by his act of perception. Keats’s statement is an accurate description of the response to evil or ugliness which tragedy makes; the matter of tragedy is ugly or painful truth seen as beauty. To see life in this way, Keats believes, is to see life truly. In fact, the meaningfulness and range of the poem, along with its controlled execution and powerfully suggested imagery, entitle it to a high place among Keats’s great odes.

Annotations

Unravished bride - A bride whose marriage has not been really consummated, and who remains untouched and pure.

Sylvan - rural

Leaf-fringed - bordered with leaves.

Tempe - the name of a beautiful valley on the eastern coast of Greece.

Arcady - Arcadia, a country in Greece which is famous for its pastoral beauty.

Drest - decorated

Attic - Athenian

Brede - embroidery

Overwrought - With carving all over its surface.

Cold pastoral - The urn is made up of marble so it is cold and it has rural scenes carved on its surface.

16.5 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

1. Keats wrote _____ soon after the death of his brother Tom.
(a) Ode to Grecian Urn (b) Ode to Psyche
(c) Ode to a Nightingale (d) Ode to Indolence
2. Which biblical character the poet refers to when he tells that the same nightingale's voice has been heard by ancient emperor and clown.
(a) Ruth (b) Moses
(c) Noah (d) Jesus Christ
3. Which poem shows Keat's deep knowledge of ancient Greek art.
(a) Ode on a Grecian Urn (b) Ode to a Nightingale
(c) Ode to Indolence (d) Ode to Psyche

M.A. ENGLISH : SEMESTER II

COURSE CODE : ENG 212

LESSON : 17

POETRY - II

P. B. SHELLEY

UNIT-V

A Biographical Sketch

STRUCTURE

- 17.1 Introduction
- 17.2 Objectives
- 17.3 P.B. Shelley : A Biographical Sketch
- 17.4 Major themes in Shelley's Poetry
- 17.5 Multiple Choice Questions
 - 17.5.1 Answer Key
- 17.6 Examination Oriented Questions
- 17.7 Suggested Reading

17.1 INTRODUCTION

P.B. Shelley was an influential English Romantic poet famous for his lyrical poetry and idealistic radical political thought. He was a key figure in the development of English Romantic poetry.

17.2 OBJECTIVES

This lesson discusses in detail the life and the major works by P.B. Shelley one of the major Romantic poet. At the end of the lesson the distance learners would be able to answer the multiple choice questions.

17.3 P.B. SHELLEY : A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Shelley shares with Byron the distinction of having been born in an old aristocratic family. The eldest son of an old county family where Shelley's ancestors had been Sussex aristocrats since early seventeenth century, this "brilliant wayward, ill-fated youth" was born on August 4th 1792. Remarks Rickett.

A mischievous, lovable lad, of independent, energetic, generous disposition, with large, beautiful blue eyes, long bushy hair, delicate features, and strong, slender figure, his whole appearance, it is said, "breathed an animation, a fire, an enthusiasm, a vivid and preternatural intelligence." Yet how many of his contemporaries have also likened him to a flower : "an unhealthy paleness, like a flower that has been kept from the light of day," was the remark of another; while a third tells us that his form, "graceful and slender, drooped like a flower in the breeze."

Shelley's early education was given at home in company with his sisters. He loved to romp and play with his siblings and feed them on imaginative stories. In 1802 he went to school at Sion House, Brentford, where he was looked upon as "a strange, unsocial being."

It was here that the scenes of the prison house began to close upon the growing boy. Medwin, his cousin and schoolfellow described Sion House 'a perfect hell' to Shelley where he developed the habit of sleepwalking for which he was punished. The two years at Sion House, however, was only a foretaste of Eton, surrounded and persecuted as he was by adolescent boys and unsympathetic, hidebound masters.

Shelley was sensitive, and deeply imaginative. He disliked sports and thus became, in the eyes of his fellows, 'Mad Shelley' and his existence at Eton became a veritable hell.

At both places his schooldays experiences, however, were somewhat unfortunate; he hated tyranny and brutal force, and the system of flogging was utterly repugnant to the boy's love of freedom and independence:

"I will be wise,
And just, and free, and mild, if in me lies
Such power, for I grow weary to behold
The selfish and the strong still tyrannize
Without reproach or check."

The choice of tutor for a boy with a disposition such as Shelley's was also an unwise one: the pupil himself tells us that "he was one of the dullest men in the establishment" :

"And from that hour did I with earnest thought
Heap knowledge from forbidden mines of lore,
Yet nothing that my tyrants know or taught
I cared to learn."

Withal, he became a good Greek scholar, produced a considerable amount of Latin verse, and with still greater zest pursued his experiments in chemistry and electricity, that culminated in many boyish pranks - from an electric shock to a tutor to the setting on fire of a haystack, "because he wanted to have a hell of his own." It was his delight to dress his sisters and himself "in strange costumes to personate spirits or fiends, to take a fire-stove and fill it with some inflammable liquid, and to carry it flaming into the kitchen." And "it seemed too probable," says his sister, "that some day the house would be burned down."

From Eton Shelley went up to University College, Oxford in the autumn of 1810. However, by that time he had had *Zastrozzi*(1810); and *Original Poetry* by Victor and Cazire (with his beloved sister Elizabeth) published. *St. Irvyne* or *The Rosicrucian*, a Gothic romance like *Zastrozzi* was published in 1811. Meanwhile the Oxford printers published his collection of poems '*The Posthumous Fragments of Margaret Nicholson*'. The poem, *The Wandering Jew*, after it was returned by Campbell with discouragement was sent to Ballantyne and Co. of Edinburgh. However, the events moved too swiftly to admit of the Edinburgh company issuing the poem.

On the very first evening at Oxford in October 1810 Shelley met another beginner called Thomas Jefferson Hogg (1792-1862) from Norton, Yorkshshire. The two of them instantly took such liking for one another that they spent their days and evenings together almost to the complete exclusion of others. They were inevitably seen as oddities. The two friends, however, were quite unlike one another. Hogg was self-centered and worldly, self-confident and gross in nature. Shelley was an idealist. Yet Hogg was devoted to him and they collaborated in writing *The Necessity of Atheism* (1811).

Bitterly opposed to the existing state of society; Shelley was a diligent student, read hard if not along the lines prescribed by the university, and with frank independence and candour spoke and wrote as he thought. It is therefore needless to say that when his pamphlet, 'The Necessity of Atheism', appeared, it caused considerable friction with the authorities, but, having the courage of his convictions, he asked them to discuss the subject with him, and was met with an indignant refusal; he must subscribe to the college rules of faith or depart. Refute his pamphlet he would not, so he was dismissed, and with his friend Thomas Jefferson Hogg, left Oxford for London with the impression that the world is against him and a determination from henceforth to be against the world.

Shelley was but nineteen when he first met Harriet Westbrook. She quickly aroused his sympathy by hints of tyranny and persecution from members of the home circle. She became obsessively attached to him asking for his protection now and then and a few months later they eloped to Edinburgh. At first they appear to have been quite happy : "My wife," say Shelley, "is the partner of my thoughts and feelings," Later the relations were strained and they were separated.

For long Shelley had cherished a wish to meet and be with the Lake Poets - Wordsworth, Coleridge and Southey. So he took a cottage at Keswick and was invited by the Duke of Norfolk to Greystoke. Here they lived in near penury with a paltry allowance given to them by their parents. At Greystoke Shelley had met Calvert who introduced him to Robert Southey

(1774-1843). Shelley had always admired Southey and his 'Thalaba the Destroyer' (1801) had long been his favourite. Shelley was to model his *Queen Mab* (1813) after Milton and Thalaba. 'Here is a man at Keswick', wrote Southey, 'who acts upon me as my own ghost would do; he is just what I was in 1794. 'Southey also contributed to Shelley's domestic comfort in material ways. However, Shelley was somewhat disappointed with Southey's platitudes upon morality, faith and the impracticality of the youth.

While at Keswick Shelley's thoughts turned to Ireland and he contemplated going there for the sake of Catholic emancipation. He wrote his, 'Address to the Irish People' and early in February set off for Dublin in spite of the dissuasion of Calvert and Godwin. Always on the side of liberty, in 1812 the cause of Catholic Emancipation in Ireland claimed Shelley's attention, and with his wife and her sister he crossed the Channel. An address to the Irish People was printed and circulated, in which he asked them, "Does not your heart bound at the bare possibility of your posterity possessing liberty and happiness?.... Oh! If your hearts do not vibrate at such as this; then ye are dead and cold - ye are not men." Fifteen hundred copies of Shelley's 'Address' were printed which he distributed freely in Dublin. He also wrote 'Proposals for an Association' which was published on March 2, 1812. Shelley had been introduced to Curran and through him he made himself known to the leaders. On the 28th of February he joined O' Connell in addressing the people and spoke for an hour. Shelley was greeted both with hisses and applause - applause for bringing out the wrongs of Ireland, hisses for his plea for religious tolerance. In Dublin Shelley also involved himself in acts of practical philanthropy. However, Godwin dissuaded him from his activities. 'Shelley' Godwin wrote him, 'you are preparing a scene of blood.' Shelley left Ireland on 4 April 1812 and settled ten days later at Nantgwilt near Cwn Elan, the seat of his cousins, the Groves. Here he meet T.L. Peacock (1785-1866) for the first time. Peacock introduced him to his London publisher Hookham and inculcated in Shelley a love for the Greek and Latin classics.

In June, Shelley migrated to Lynmouth in Devon. It is at Lynmouth that Queen Mab is first heard of. The idea of Shelley's first major poem to be published, Queen Mab was conceived in December 1811 and composed between June 1812 and February 19, 1813, when Shelley wrote to his publisher friend that it was finished and transcribed.

With Godwin and his family Shelley was on intimate terms, and the gradual estrangement from the now uncongenial companionship of his wife and her sister, threw him more and more into the Godwin circle and the society of Godwin's daughter, a girl of sixteen, "fair and fair haired, pale indeed, and with a piercing look," with whom, finding much in common, he fell passionately in love. Peacock, who was a witness to Shelley's life at this time describes the state of agitation he found him in:

'Between his old feeling towards Harriet, from whom he was not been separated, and his new passion for Mary, he showed in his looks, in his gestures, in his speech, the state of mind suffering like a little kingdom the nature of an insurrection'.

Gradually the rift widened between Shelley and his wife, and in June 1814 they agreed to separate; Harriet went to her father at Bath, and Shelley quite openly left London with Mary Godwin. The tragic circumstances of Harriet's death, two years later, are well known.

Shelley and Mary took a pleasant cottage at Bishopsgate near the entrance to Windsor Park. From there they made a boating trip upstream on the Thames and after coming back Shelley wrote his first great poem Alastor, or, The Spirit of Solitude (1816). It is a non-political poem of haunting beauty written under the influence of Wordsworth's The Excursion (1814) published recently.

In 1816, immediately after the death of his wife, Shelley spent some days with Leigh Hunt at Hampstead, 'Alastor' was published, and on December 30 married Mary Godwin in London; early in the following year he made frantic efforts to regain the control of his motherless children now residing

with Harriet's father, but the law, in the person of Lord Eldon, then Chancellor, decided that he was "unfitted for parental responsibilities." Smarting with indignation, worried in mind, ill in body, and socially ostracized, Shelley and his wife left England in March 1818, with no prospect, as he wrote bitterly, of returning to a country where "I am regarded as a rare prodigy of crime and pollution, whose look even might infect."

The Shelley's settled in Albion House at Marlow (February, 1817). Hogg and Peacock were their close friends and Leigh Hunt (with his large family) frequent visitors. Through Hunt Shelley met Keats (1795-1821) and Horace Smith (1779-1849), a prolific but minor novelist and poet. Peacock introduced him to the study of Plato who thereafter became his lifelong companion along with Homer, the Greek tragedian and the Bible. Mary put together at Marlow her useful 'History of Six Week's Tour' and wrote her famous 'Frankenstein'. She also gave birth to Clara on September 2, 1817. While at Albion House Shelley wrote his longest poem Laon and Cythna, his idealized and idiosyncratic version of the French Revolution transposed to an Oriental setting. In order to avoid prosecution it was published with alterations in 1818 as 'The Revolt of Islam'.

The Shelley couple were not ideally happy at Albion House. Mary felt uneasy and embarrassed in the presence of Claire who was Byron's paramour and not Byron's wife. She had put Shelley's reputation at stake. So they wanted to go to Venice and turn over Allegra, Byron's illegitimate child to Byron to rear as his own (which he did). Besides, Shelley's health was deteriorating. He suffered from anxieties. Hence he left England along with his family on the 11th or 12th March 1818, never to return.

It was Italy that saw the flowering of Shelley's genius. It gave him the sudden confidence that comes from experience and maturity. The change from England was also welcome. He wrote,

"No sooner had we arrived in Italy than the loveliness of the earth & the serenity of the sky made the greatest difference in

my sensation - I depend on these things for in the smoke of cities & the tumult of humankind and the chilling fogs and rain of our own country I can hardly be said to live." (April 1818)

While at Este, Byron's villa, Shelley entered the greatest creative period of his life. He wrote 'Lines on the Euganean Hills', 'Julian and Maddalo' and the first act of 'Prometheus Unbound'. Shelley wrote the second and third acts of *Prometheus* amid the vast ruins of the Baths of Caracalla in Rome and started writing The 'Cenci' which was completed in August 1819. In Rome on 7 June, 1819 William, his son died 'after an illness of only a few days' as Shelley wrote to Peacock, 'haunted by calamity as I have been, that I should never recover any cheerfulness again.' (June 1819).

Then Shelley moved to Leghorn. Here he heard about the political unrest and agitation in England and what is known in history as the Peterloo massacre (August 16). Shelley wrote 'The Mask of Anarchy' in September 1819 which was, however, not published until 1832. On 2 October the Shelleys moved to Florence where his last child Percy Florence was born (12 November). He was named after the poet and the city of his birth and succeeded to the baronetcy.

Shelley wrote his famous 'Ode to the West Wind' in Florence in October and the next month wrote a parody of Wordsworth's Peter Bell (written in 1798 but published with a dedication to Southey in 1819): It was called Peter Bell the Third as Keats' friend John Hamilton Reynolds' second 'Peter Bell' had already appeared. It was to lampoon Wordsworth's Peter Bell. Shelley mocked Wordsworth's defection from the radical cause and called him 'a solemn and unisexual man.' This poem also was suppressed until 1839. In December Shelley wrote the fourth act of *Prometheus* and on 27 January, 1820 the family traveled to Pisa. This was to be their last station, except for occasional trips to Leghorn and Lucca and the final summer at Casa Magni on the Bay of Spezia.

The last four years of Shelley's life (1818-1822), spent mainly in Italy with his friends Byron and Leigh Hunt, were also the most prolific in

his work; he had believed thoroughly in his own early work, frequently quoting Milton's words, "There is something in my writings that shall live for ever"; towards the end he became somewhat pessimistic, and used to say that, "produce what I may, I am doomed to be unread." Though not indifferent to fame, the attack of an anonymous critic afforded him "exquisite entertainment," and while "perhaps justly condemned," wrote Shelley, "I feel that I am there sitting, where he durst not soar."

The 'Pisan circle' which Shelley had formed included Professor Pacchiani, Princess Argiropoli, Sgricci, Taffe, Prince Mavrocordato - who was responsible in large measure for *Hellas* (1821), Shelley's lyrical drama on Greek revolt against the Turks and above all Emilia Viviani, a beautiful 17 year old heiress 'tyrannized' in a convent at Pisa who made Shelley write his breathtakingly beautiful poem *Epipsychidion* (1821). The title of the poem remains a puzzle perhaps because it is addressed to epi-psyche the 'soul out of my soul' or beloved and also because of its ironic reference to the 'Epithalamium' the conventional marriage song such as Spenser wrote. In this poem Shelley attacked the institution of marriage as 'the dreariest and longest journey' and praised 'Free' or 'True' love (ll. 148-73). The most important addition in January 1821 to the circle was Edward Williams and his wife Jane. They remained Shelley's companions till the end. His poems on Jane - 'With a Guitar, To Jane,' 'To Jane, The Invitation', 'When the lamp is shattered', 'To Jane (The keen stars were twinkling)', and 'Lines written in the Bay of Lerici' - were not shown to Mary and have the quality of the poems written and meant for one alone to read. Mention must be made of Edward John Trelawny (1792-1881) who joined the Pisan Circle on January 14, 1822 whose chief claim to memory was his record of the lives of Shelley and Byron. Shelley had gone to Ravenna to persuade Byron to come down to Pisa to join the circle which he did on 1 November, 1821.

On April, 1822 and so the Shelleys began their projected summer at San Terenzo, facing Lerici, on the Gulf of Spezia a little early. They rented

Casa Magni and occupies it on April 8. Shelley wrote 'The Triumph of Life' going off by himself in his shallop in moonlight. Mary had never found Shelley in a happier mood. 'If' wrote Shelley, 'the past and future could be obliterated, the present could content me so well that I could say with Faust to the passing moment, "Remain thou, thou art so beautiful."

Two months had passed by in this retreat and Shelley's old friend Leigh Hunt (1784-1859) was to arrive in Italy to edit 'The Liberal' from Pisa. The plan had been conceived by Shelley and was to be supported by Byron. In order to meet the Hunts Shelley, along with Edward Williams and his sailor-boy Charles Vivian set sail for Leghorn on 1 July 1822.

"I always go on until I am stopped," said Shelley, "and I am never stopped", had he been less headstrong and fearless he would probably have taken the advice of those friends who endeavoured to restrain him from leaving Leghorn in that frail boat so unskillfully handled, "the smoke on the water, and the devil brewing mischief." In the white fog the Ariel was soon enveloped, and nothing more was seen of boat or occupants until two months later, when the bodies of Shelley and his friend Williams were found upon the shore of the lake; In one of Shelley's pocket was a volume of Aeschylus and in the other, Keats's poems folded back to back as if the reader had been in the act of reading it when he hastily thrust it away with the intention of coming back to the line where he had left.

Shelley's body was buried in the sand, to be cremated later in the presence of his friends, with a strange ritual of wine poured over the body : "This, with the oil and salt, made the yellow flames glisten and quiver. The heat from the sun and fire was so intense that the atmosphere was tremulous and heavy." The ashes were collected, and with the heart, that Trelawney had snatched from burning, were placed in a box and eventually buried in Rome. "The fine spirit that had animated us and held us together is gone," wrote Trelawney, "and left to our own devices we degenerated space."

17.4 MAJOR THEMES IN SHELLEY'S POETRY

The main themes of Shelley's poetry are - a passionate devotion to nature, in the best tradition of his age but beyond that he had a keen interest in science for its own sake and for its power to ameliorate the lot of man. A radical egalitarian approach to social and political questions of his time, qualified by an ever developing abhorrence for worldly affairs, an agnostic approach to religion with a touch of Platonism and a strong belief in pantheism and an encomiastic admiration for ancient Greece. All these interests helped to strengthen his faith that man although shackled can learn to live freely, happily at peace in a classless society with no tyrant or church to show servility to :

"Equal, unclassed, tribeless, and nationless.
Exempt from awe, worship, degree, the king
Over himself, just, gentle, wise."

Arthur Compton-Rickett rightly remarks :

"Shelley exhaled verse as a flower exhales fragrance, and just as the fragrance of a blossom varies in quality and power, so did Shelley's verse varies in poetic merit. The essential point is that there was no effort or laborious artistry about it at any time. He may not always have been a great poet; much in Queen Mab is second rate poetry but he was always a poet. Rhythm came as naturally to him as breathing. This distinguishes him at once from his contemporaries, several of whom served a laborious apprenticeship to the poetic Art. Keats especially, whom one always thinks of in connection with Shelley, for personal reasons, strove long and arduously before he arrived at that consummate art that conceals art in such flawless gems as the Ode to Autumn."

"One other thing distinguishes Shelley from his contemporaries. He is a reformer as well as a poet. Little interested in the past, mindful only of the present when it jarred on his social idealism, his eyes are fixed intensely on the future. To renovate the world, to bring about Utopia, that is his

constant aim, and for this reason we may regard Shelley as emphatically the poet of eager, sensitive youth, not the animal youth of Byron, but the spiritual youth of the visionary and reformer. In his earlier years Godwin was the figure who most readily impressed his mobile imagination, and in many of the poems dealing with social subjects *Queen Mab*, and *The Revolt of Islam* he is little more than Godwin made musical. In later life Wordsworth's influence is more clearly discernible. But the most potent inspiration came from Greek literature, first brought before his notice by his kindly friend and critic, Peacock."

Two notes dominate all Shelley's work, epic, narrative, and lyric alike - his devotion to liberty, and his whole hearted belief in love as the prime factor in all human progress. The Revolution to Shelley was much more than a political upheaval; it was a spiritual awakening, the beginning of a new life. All that was evil in life he traced to Slavery. Natural development for him was the only development. He believed that men would never be men, never give what was best in them until they could give it out freely. Master yourself, he cries, and external freedom will enable you to realize your utmost capabilities. These are the thoughts underlying 'The Revolt of Islam', 'The Masque of Anarchy', 'Julian and Maddalo', and the noble lyric drama, *Prometheus Unbound*. Liberty, in Shelley's eyes was freedom from external restraint. It is opposed to licence, for to "rule the Empire of Self" was, with Shelley, a moral necessity. What then, if force is withdrawn from Society, is to take its place? Shelley's answer is, Love. Love is to reign supreme, for only in an atmosphere of love can liberty efficiently work. Love is, with Shelley, a transcendental force kindling all things into beauty. In his treatment of it we miss the more concrete touch of Keats, and the homeliness of Wordsworth's steady affection.

W.H. Auden divides Shelley's poems into two classes : the personal and the humanitarian.

To the class of personal poetry belong most of Shelley's wonder lyrics the "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty", "Lines Written Among the Euganean

Hills”, “Stanzas Written in Dejection”, “To a Skylark”, “The Cloud”, and the “Ode to the West Wind”. His longer personal poems include : “Alastor”, descriptive of the unsatisfied yearnings and death of a solitary poet; largely autobiographical yet containing Shelley's rebuke to those 'who attempt to live without human sympathy, “Julian and Maddalo”, a poem in the familiar style, in which Julian stands for the writer himself, and Maddalo for Byron; Epipsychidion, a poem of supreme beauty of diction and versification, addressed to an Italian girl, Emilia Viviani, whom for the moment he had idealized into a symbol of perfection.

His humanitarian poems include “Queen Mab” written in (1813), The Revolt of Islam Prometheus unbound, Hellas etc. In “Queen Mab” (1813) Shelley's Godwinian creed is proclaimed through the lines of legendary personages. The poem attacks Christianity for professing love while inciting its followers to religious bigotry. The corrupting influence of kings and priests is also exposed in the poem. It is a crude poem asserting religious dogmas, government, tyranny and war. It is an outcry against the unspiritual forces that weigh down mankind and was written under the influence of Southey's Orientalism. The poem proclaims 'necessity' as the only God. The poet imagines the spirit of a girl separated from her body in sleep interacting with Queen Mab, herself a spirit, who proceeds to speak at length upon the baneful and wicked conventional religious beliefs. The poem is a violent and immature expression of revolutionary faith but they are in it some passages of fine feeling and imagination. Although Shelley came to think of this poem as a 'boyish squib' and declared that it contained no poetry it was much admired by Bernard Shaw.

Life at West Marlow brought Shelley into intimate contact with social misery and the outcome may be seen in *The Revolt of Islam* (1817-18) - which originally appeared under the title, *Laon and Cythna*. It is a long rambling narrative poem written in Spenserian stanzas, violently attacking Theism and Christianity. It expresses the poets unwavering faith in revolutionary principles, proclaiming a bloodless revolution and the

regeneration and salvation of man through one. As its preface says, it celebrates love as the only law which should not only redeem but also govern the moral world. It is the story of man's revolt against tyranny and through his unselfish devotion to an ideal, gives a glimpse of the Golden Age. The *Revolt of Islam* was Shelley's first long poem showing maturity, splendour and power. With its passionate plea for freedom it abounds in fine imagery and musical cadences. It does indeed tell a story, but the story - of Laon and his lower Cythna, who champion the cause of freedom against the tyrants and misanthropes of this world and find triumph in their martyrdom - is only a veil for Shelley's own searching and impassioned idealism. One of the central motifs of the poem is the liberation of women from the shackles of inferiority imposed upon them by society. (Cythna asks : "Can man be free if woman be a slave")

In *Prometheus Unbound* (1818-1819) the Shelleyan thirst for freedom, reappears in a noble and expansive setting. It is poetic drama containing a series of lyrics and choruses. It is based on an ancient Greek myth. While Aeschylus's *Prometheus bound* is about Prometheus, heroic friend and lover of mankind who is ultimately released from the rock where the tyrant Zeus had chained him, Shelley's *Prometheus* is an allegorical figure of the progressive man's desire for intellectual enlightenment and spiritual liberty. This drama is Shelley's most characteristic work, in both thought and style. In Shelley's treatment, *Prometheus symbolizes*, not a superhuman benevolent character but mankind itself-heroic, just, chivalrous, thirsting after liberty and spiritual happiness, but chained and tortured by a jealous Jupiter. When the time arrives, Demogorgon (necessity) hurls the tyrant from his throne and Prometheus, amidst the songs of Earth and the Moon, is united to Asia, the spirit of love in nature.

This story offered to Shelley an opening for his doctrine of love as the central principle of things and the key to the ideal future of humanity.

The figure of Prometheus had appealed powerfully to other idealists of the revolutionary age. Goethe had seen in him the human creator, shaping

men in his own image and scorning God. Beethoven found noble music for the theme. To Byron, in 1816, he was a symbol of the divineness, the heroic endurance and the "funeral destiny" of man. To Shelley, he stood for man creating and enduring, endowing the gods themselves with wisdom and strength, and suffering their vindictive rage. But for Shelley, no symbol of humanity could suffice which excluded the perfected man of the future whom he anticipated with confidence. Aeschylus had made Prometheus finally surrender to Jupiter, and be reconciled with him. This conclusion was intolerable to Shelley who said that "the moral interest of the fable would be annihilated if we could conceive Prometheus unsaying his high language and quailing before his successful and perfidious adversary.

The story of Prometheus had therefore to be modified in order to fit in with Shelley's boundless faith in the perfectibility of man. A Prometheus who was to symbolize the perfected man of the future had necessarily to triumph over his enemy. Prometheus had to be depicted as not just a being of pure reason but a being of absolute love. The sublime doctrine of love was foreign to Aeschylus and to the Greek myth; but the legend which we made Prometheus the son of Earth provided Shelley with a useful symbol. The Earth born Prometheus must partake of the spirit of love which pervades the earth. Even towards his enemy, Jupiter he cannot therefore, adopt an unrelenting attitude, though it is his task to destroy the power of evil symbolized by Jupiter. Shelley's Prometheus acts partly as the spirit of love, hating the spirit of hate, and ruthlessly pursuing it to its doom, and partly as the sublime Christ like sufferer who wishes 'no living thing to suffer pain', and will not curse even his persecutor.

Here, as elsewhere, Shelley shows himself as a child of the French Revolution, in believing that it is only some external tyranny - the power of priests and kings, the weight of custom, the pressure of superstition - which keeps mankind from rising to its ideal stature. Here Shelley's faith in the inevitable elimination of evil from the world and its consequent domination by love receives transcendent expression. The nobility of mood and the heroic

enthusiasm of the drama make it eternally inspiring. And for its spirit of evolutionary idealism the verse of the poem is a glorious vesture. The unearthly beauty of its imagery and the ethereal music of its songs and choruses makes this not only Shelley's highest poetic achievement but the most powerful statement of his moral philosophy.

It is in its lyric that *Prometheus Unbound* reaches its greatest altitudes, for Shelley's genius was essentially lyrical. The final Act of this drama comes as near to the essential quality of music as words can, while still preserving a diamond core of impassioned thought.

If *Prometheus* is mainly remarkable for its lyrical greatness, Shelley was soon to show in *The Cenci* (1819) that he was not lacking in dramatic power.

It is a realistic tragedy based upon a morbid and sordid Italian story which gives a detailed account of the horrors which ended in the extinction of one of the noblest and richest families of Rome in the year 1599. In brief, the story was the murder of an incestuous and inhuman father by the daughter, Beatrice, with the law's savage revenges. When Shelley saw the artist Guido's portrait of Beatrice at the Colonna Palace, he was profoundly touched, and thought her to be one of the loveliest specimens of the workmanship of Nature. Shelley's drama is a poetical and moral commemoration of what may be called the martyrdom of Beatrice. This drama is something of an elegy in honour of the heroism of Beatrice Cenci.

She strike down the criminal, not with the fierce vengeance of Medea, but as the instrument of divine justice :

Because my father's honour did demand, My father's life.

She is as sure as Antigone that her guilt is innocence, yet fight her accusers with the rare cunning of an advocate; she confronts the faltering murderers with more than the fierce energy of Lady Macbeth, yet has her moment of a young girl's anguish at the thought of passing for ever from the sunshine into a wide, grey, lampless, deep, unpeopled world.

The story of Beatrice Cenci is just such an one as would have stirred the Jacobean dramatists, who loved a theme at once tragic and morbid, and

Shelley's drama has been compared with the work of Webster and Tourneur, both of whom were known to the poet. But Shelley's imagination lacked both the passionate intensity of Webster and the coarse, undisciplined violence that accompany his genius. Webster would have made the play much more vital; at the same time he would have made it too horrible. Shelley, deliberately eschewing here poetic beauties and giving it that touch of aloofness inherent in all his work, makes it not horrible merely terrible. *The Cenci*, in fact, with its austere atmosphere and undeviating thread of tragedy, has more points in common with the Greek than the romantic drama.

Although Shelley had no genuine sense of humour he had a queer, elfish spirit of mockery, and this breaks out (perhaps as a relief to the strain of *The Cenci*) in his next work, *Peter Bell the Third*. Here Shelley attacks at once the reactionary politician and the 'dull' poet, but the reactionary who had once hailed with rapture the dawn of the revolution, and the dull poet who had once stood on the heights of poetry. Wordsworth was dull because he had been false to his early ideals. He conveys this by identifying Wordsworth with *Peter Bell*, who was Shelley's own symbol of the dull man, was an ingenious satiric device. Under cover of it, moreover, Shelley delivers some shafts of criticism which are illuminating as well as piercing, and he can pointedly recall the earlier Wordsworth who made songs 'on moor and glen and rocky lake/And on the heart of man'.

The loveliness of an Italian flower garden in spring and its autumn decay, inspired a Shelleyan myth in *The Sensitive Plant* (1819). As in *Adonais*, the elegiac note at the transitory nature of beauty and the seeming frustrated of love merges here in a serene note of assurance that beauty and love do not fade but are eternal. The poem has "a delicate exotic grace and many haunting lines". Greatest however, are the lyrical pieces where Shelley's genius always exults.

The Ode to the West Wind (1819) originates directly in that impassioned institution which is the first condition of poetry; the wild autumn

wind sweeping through the forest possesses his imagination and becomes a living symbol of the spiritual forces which regenerate the fading or decadent life of nations, bring succour and alliance to forlorn heroic spirits, and scatter their burning words, like ashes from an unextinguished hearth, among mankind. Nowhere does Shelley's voice reach a more poignantly personal note of more perfect spontaneity. Yet, this ode is no less his masterpiece in calculated symmetry of structure, matching here the artistry of Keats' *Grecian Urn or Autumn*. We hear together the forlorn wail and the prophetic trumpet blast.

The Ode to the West Wind is not greater artistically - that were impossible; but it has an intellectual and human interest designedly absent from the shorter piece. The logical development of the imaginative idea is so admirable that it deserves the fullest attention. Walking along the banks of the Arno, the poet has seen from the wood hard by the rising autumnal storm carrying with it its freight of leaves. Surging along comes this beneficent destroyer, scattering the back, scarlet, and yellow leaves far and wide:

"Yellow, and black, and pale, and hectic red, Pestilence-stricken multitudes : O thou,
Who chariotest to their derk wintry bed
The winged seeds, where they lie cold and low,
Each like a corpse within its grave, until
Thine azure sister of the spring shall blow
Her clarion o'er the dreaming earth, and fill (Driving sweet buds like flocks to feed in air)
With living hues and odours plain and hill :
Wild Spirit, which art moving everywhere;
Destroyer and preserver; hear, O hear!"

The "wild Spirit" is then both "a destroyer and preserver". As the wind purifies the woods, so does the wind sweeten the sky, clarify the ocean, and make stronger and sounder the heart of man.

With each fresh variation of the original thought the poet gives us a flood of superb imagery, strengthening the main theme, never weakening by far fetched conceits. We pass in turn over earth, sky, and sea, the music growing fuller and more majestic as the poem sweeps on, "O lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud." And as in the visible world so in the poet's soul, the wind is both Destroyer and Preserver :

"Make me as thy lyre, even as the forest is :
What if my leaves are falling like its own!
The tumult of thy mighty harmonies
Will take from both a deep, autumnal tone,
Sweet thought in sadness...
Drive my dead thoughts over the universe
Like withered leaves to quicken a new birth!"

Then from the individual the poem passes to the universal. The old world must go, a new world must come with the Spring, laden with fresh sweet promises for suffering humanity:

"O, wind, If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?"

Thus does this wonderful lyric end. There is no greater lyric in our language.

The Cloud is a nature myth of flawless beauty. Shelley quits the guidance of Greek divinites, and with Blithful ease, makes a myth for himself. There is nothing abstruse or esoteric about it - all the familiar aspects of the cloud which 'changes but cannot die' are translated by a kind of brilliant poetic nut into plastic image.

Hellas (1821-22) - It is a lyrical drama inspired by the Greek declaration of independence from the Turkish Yoke. Intellectually Shelley's sympathies were always with Greek thought. *Hellas* is magnificent because of its impassioned music, for some, the emotional final chorus is the one thing that matters in this drama. It is the last of Shelley's major poems with political

undertones. Not only does it celebrate the Greek war against the Turks as a portion of the cause of civilization and moral improvement but also holds up as an example to the modern world, the wonderful achievement of Athens in the fifth century B.C. and to describe a new Athens symbolizing liberty and dedicated to the dissemination of fraternal love. It also has metaphysical undercurrents when it asserts that thought is the sole reality and that all else in the world is a shadow and a dream. "As a garner of lyrical song it is a worthy pendant to Prometheus unbound, reflecting not merely the superb lyrical invention of the poet but his live and intense humanitarianism".- Arthur Compton Rickett.

Shelley's *Julian and Maddalo* (1824) - can in many ways be taken as a central text of English Romanticism. It is described as 'a conversation', and its couplets reflect a chatty and intimate tone. The two characters, Julian and the Count Maddalo, clearly represent Shelley himself and Byron. Their conversation is naturalistic, rather than idealistic, and takes in the life and atmosphere the two characters observe as they ride on the sands, or sail around Venice. The city, and in particular its lunatic asylum ('the madhouse and its belfry tower') take on a universal significance as the discussion ranges around free will, religion, progress, frustration, and love.

The poem opens with freely rippling conversational verse, in which the scene, the ride, the two speakers the child Allegra, and the talk are brought to life as firmly as any realist could desire. Then the poem veers away from Julian and Maddalo into the unstable world of the third main character who is a madman in a lunatic asylum on a small island. In the madman's outpourings against a false woman, some have detected a version of Shelley's own attitude towards Harriet. Shelley makes his madman speak of venom and poison, and "plague of blistering agony"; and it is an imagery that might suit the moments in Shelley's own life when he acts or speaks in a sort of distraction. The lines:

Me - who am as a nerve o'er which do peep
The else unfelt oppressions of this earth.
Have pardonably been quoted often enough as though they were
Shelley's definition of himself and not of his moment.

Rossetti rightly characterized this poem as the most perfect specimen in the English language of the "poetical treatment of ordinary things". The description of a Venetian sunset, touched to sadness amid all its splendour by the gloomy presence of the mad-house, ranks among Shelley's finest word paintings :

Oh!
How beautiful a sunset, when the glow
Of heaven descends upon a land like thee,
Thou paradise of exiles, Italy,
Thy mountains, seas, and vineyards, and the towers,
Of cities they encircle!- etc. etc.

It may also be mentioned that one of the few familiar quotations from Shelley's poems occurs in *Julian and Maddalo*:

Most wretched men
"Are cradled into poetry by wrong :
They learn in suffering what they teach in song."

In 1821, came *Adonais*, a noble and eloquent elegy, deliberate and concentrative in its method, the finest of Shelley's non-lyrical pieces. In it he commemorated the death of Keats'.

The two poets had never been intimate, and neither thought of the other's poetry, as a whole, so highly as it deserved. But Shelley put *Hyperion* on a level with the grandest poetry of his time. Grief for a dead friend has hardly more part in *Adonais* than in *Lycidas*; but it is, in a far greater degree, an impassioned lament for a poet. The death of Edward King gave Milton an

occasion for a meditation of unequalled splendour upon poetic fame; the death of Keats is felt by Shelley as a calamity for poetry, and for everything in Nature and humanity to which poetry gives enduring expression, and the very soul of poetry seems to utter itself, now in sorrow, now in retributive indignation, through his lips. It is something more than literary artifice, or the example of antique elegy, that leads him to picture Muses and seasons, dreams, desires and adorations, joining in his lament.

"All he had loved and moulded into thought
From shape and hue and odour and sweet sound
Lamented Adonais;"

And, Adonais being for Shelley, chiefly the poet of Hyperion, his chief mourner is the heavenly Muse, Urania. Even the persons who are represented beside his grave, Byron, Hunt, Moore, Shelley himself, are there not as friends but as fellow poets. The stately Spenserian stanza, to which Shelley communicates a new magnificence of his own, accords well with the grandeur of the theme. Solitary as he was, and echoless as his song, for the moment, he knew that he was speaking out of the heart of humanity, and not merely 'antheming a lonely grief'. And, in the triumphant closing movement, he gave expression more sublime than either Milton or any ancient elegist had found, to the immortality of poetry.

Nowhere is Shelley's Pantheism more manifest than as in Adonais.

The Godwinian doctrine of free love is descramble in the poem 'Epipsychidin' but the doctrine is ennobled to the sublime. Shelley had translated the symposium of Plato and believed in the Platonic idea that love permeates the universe and cannot be expressed completely in the facet of any one human form. In Emilia Viviani, Shelley thought he realized the visionary beauty which from 'youth's dawn', had beckoned and whispered to him all the wonder and romance of the world. She is no mere symbol but the embodiment of beauty and womanhood that is universal and enduring.

"His Defence of Poetry (written in prose) ranges far beyond the scope of literature. Poetry reveals the order and beauty of the universe; it is impossible without imagination and without love, and these are the secrets, also, of all goodness, of all discovery, of all creation. 'A man to be greatly good, must imagine intensely and comprehensively... the great secret of mortals is love'. The Defence is a noble statement not only of Shelley's own poetic ideals, but of what is most poetic in poetry at large."

"The urbane lyricism of the Hymn of Apollo, and the harshly self-conscious, internalized dramatic quality of The Triumph of Life, are both central to Shelley. Most central is the prophetic intensity. Religious poet as he primarily was, what Shelley prophesied was one restored Man who transcended men, gods, the natural world, and even the poetic faculty. Shelley chants the apotheosis, not of the poet, but of desire itself:

"Man, one harmonious soul of many a soul,
Whose nature is its own divine control,
Where all things flow to all, as rivers to the sea..."

"The Hymn of Pan" is one of the most finished of Shelley's short lyrics. It was written, along with its companion piece, "the Hymn of Apollo", for the opening scene of Mary Shelley's verse play "Midas". In the opening scene of this play, old Tmolus judges a musical contest between Apollo with his lyre, and Pan with his pipe.

Roughly speaking, "the Hymn of Pan" is a dramatic monologue, an *apologia pro vita sua*, an account of Pan's past success as a musician, aimed at arousing the sympathy of his present listeners. The places he has visited the audiences he has charmed, the variety of his songs, all these are sketched in some detail. Traditionally a forest and mountain god, he has extended his range to include a low and world of "river-girt islands" and "moist river-lawns".

It is somewhat of a paradox that a poet to whom human love is the vital inspiration of his art should prove so elusive in his love lyrics. The sentiment is

so rarefied, so readily does he pass from the personal to the universal, so engrossed is he with love as an abstract ideal, that as a love poet, as we ordinary understand the term, he is curiously unsubstantial and ineffective.

In some ways Shelley is intensely human, vividly passionate; but he is far more easily stirred by an idea than by a person; and his singularly subtle intellect exercises a cooling and impersonal influence upon his imaginative life.

Other persons worth mentioning are the mosque of Anarchy, England in 1819 and the 'With of Allas'.

W.H. Hudson says : "As a lyric poet, Shelley is among the very greatest. His song is pure inspiration, a thing of lightness, melody, and grace. With such work formal criticism has little concern: to analyse is futile, to praise is superfluous. As a poet of ma, he dwells habitually in a sphere far removed from that of ordinary passions and motives, and in a rarefied atmosphere which it is sometimes difficult to breathe; his verse overflows with his splendid enthusiasm for humanity, but his individual creations are but shadows in a shadow world. Nonetheless, he always makes love the one great agency in the regeneration of mankind. The contrast at this point between Shelley and Byron is eminently suggestive: Byron's heroes are haughty misanthropes, who live entirely for themselves; Shelley's are noble, unselfish enthusiasts who, like Laon and Prometheus, willingly sacrifice themselves for the sake of man. Shelley's poetry on Nature lacks the intimate familiarity with earth's common things which we find in Wordsworth and Keats; but it is specially great in the treatment of large landscape. For him, as for Wordsworth, Nature is the incarnation of the divine. His atheism was, in fact, only the denial of the mechanical deity of the current theology. In his earlier years, Shelley put no check upon his opulent imagination, and his work is often overburdened with and made obscure by the profusion of his thick-coming fancies. The increasing restraint of his later writings attests his steady progress in his art.

17.5 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

1. P.B. Shelley was born on _____
(a) 4th Aug 1729 (b) 4th Aug 1790
(c) 4th Aug 1792 (d) 4th Aug 1799
2. Which work of Shelley was inspired by Milton and “Thalaba the Destroyer” by Southey?
(a) Zastrozzi (b) Queen Mab
(c) Ozymandias (d) Prometheus Unbound
3. Shelley’s longest poem ‘Laon’ and ‘Cythna’ an idiosyncratic version of the French Revolution transposed to an oriental setting is _____
(a) Zastrozzi (b) The Triumph of Life
(c) The Masque of Anarchy (d) The Revolt of Islam
4. _____ is Shelley’s lyrical drama on Greek revolt against the Turks.
(a) Hellas (1821) (b) Prometheus Unbound (1820)
(c) Ozymandias (1818) (d) The witch of Atlas (1820)
5. Which work by P.B. Shelley is considered as one among the central text of English Romanticism?
(a) Prometheus Unbound (b) England in 1819
(c) A Defence of Poetry (d) Julian and Maddalo

17.5.1 Answer Key

1. 4th Aug 1792
2. Queen Mab
3. The Revolt of Islam
4. Hellas (1821)
5. Julian and Maddalo

17.6 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

- Q.1 Discuss P.B. Shelley as a Prominent Romantic Poet.
- Q.2 Describe Shelley as an egalitarian poet.
- Q.3 How does Shelley's treatment of nature differ from that of the earlier Romantic poets?

17.7 SUGGESTED READING

- 1. *Life of Percy Bysshe Shelley* by Thomas Medwin.
- 2. *Percy Bysshe Shelley : A Biography* by James Bleri.
- 3. *Shelley, A Life Story* by Edmund Blunden
- 4. *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period* by William St Clair.

M.A. ENGLISH : SEMESTER II

COURSE CODE : ENG 212

LESSON : 18

POETRY - II

P. B. SHELLEY

UNIT-V

STRUCTURE

- 18.1 Introduction
- 18.2 Objectives
- 18.3 *Prometheus Unbound*-Summary
- 18.4 *Prometheus Unbound* Act-I
- 18.5 *Prometheus Unbound* Act-II
- 18.6 *Prometheus Unbound* Act-III
- 18.7 *Prometheus Unbound* Act-IV
- 18.8 *Prometheus Unbound* and Critical Views
- 18.9 Let Us Sum up
- 18.10 Multiple Choice Questions
 - 18.10.1 Answer Key
- 18.11 Examination Oriented Questions
- 18.12 Suggested Reading

18.1 INTRODUCTION

Prometheus Unbound is a four act play by P.B. Shelley published in 1820. It is inspired by Aeschylus's *Prometheus Bound* and concerns Prometheus' release from Captivity.

18.2 OBJECTIVES

The objective of this lesson is to critically analyse *Prometheus Unbound*. This lyrical drama is comprehensively elaborated with Act-wise critical insight followed by critical remarks put forwarded by critics and scholars. At the end of this lesson the distance learner will have a fair idea of the topic at hand and would be able to answer the multiple choice questions.

18.3 PROMETHEUS UNBOUND - SUMMARY

Prometheus Unbound is a four act play by Percy Bysshe Shelley first published in 1820, concerned with the torments of the Greek mythological figure Prometheus and his suffering at hands of Zeus. It is inspired by Aeschylus's *Prometheus Bound* and concerns Prometheus' release from captivity. Unlike Aeschylus' version, however, there is no reconciliation between Prometheus and Zeus. Instead, Jupiter (Zeus) is overthrown, which allows Prometheus to be released.

The ancient Greek dramatist, Aeschylus, had written a play *Prometheus Bound*, in which he had dealt with the myth of Prometheus, the champion of humanity, and his oppressor, Zeus. He had also written a sequel to this play, in which he showed the final reconciliation between the champion of humanity and the oppressor of humanity. He could not imagine Prometheus, the Titan "Unsay[ing] his high language and quailing before his successful and perfidious adversary." Shelley treated the theme of liberation from an absolutely different point of view. He, in his play, depicts Prometheus as the vindicator of love, justice and liberty, and as being opposed to Jove, the tyrannical oppressor, and creator of all evil.

Shelley's play is a closet drama, meaning it was not intended to be produced on the stage. In the tradition of Romantic Poetry, Shelley wrote for the imagination, intending his play's stage to reside in the imaginations of his readers.

Background

Mary Shelley, in a letter on 5 September 1818, was the first to describe her husband Percy Shelley's writing of *Prometheus Unbound*. On 22 September 1818, Shelley, while in Padua, wrote to Mary, who was at Este, requesting "The sheets of 'Prometheus Unbound,' which you will find numbered from one to twenty six on the table of the pavilion." There is little other evidence as to when Shelley began *Prometheus Unbound* while he was living in Italy, but Shelley first mentions his progress in a letter to Thomas Peacock on 8 October 1818: "I have been writing - and indeed have just finished the first act of a lyrical and classical drama, to be called 'Prometheus Unbound'."

Shelley stopped working on the poem following the death of his daughter Clara Everina Shelley on 24 September 1818. After her death, Shelley began to travel across Italy, and would not progress with the drama until after 24 January 1819. By April, the majority of the play was completed, and Shelley wrote to Peacock on 6 April 1819: "My Prometheus Unbound is just finished, and in a month or two I shall send it". Shelley also wrote to Leigh Hunt to tell him that the play was finished the work by another death, that of his son William Shelley, who died on 7 June 1819.

On 6 September 1819, Shelley wrote to Charles and James Ollier to say, "My Prometheus,' which has been long finished, is now being transcribed, and will soon be forwarded to you for publication." The play was delayed in publication, because John Gisborne, who Shelley trusted to go to England with the text, delayed his journey. It was not until December 1819 that the manuscript with the first three acts of *Prometheus Unbound* was sent to England. The fourth act was incomplete by this time, and on 23 December 1819, Shelley wrote to Gisborne, "I have just finished an additional act to 'Prometheus' which Mary is now transcribing, and which will be enclosed for your inspection before it is transmitted to the Bookseller."

While in Italy, Shelley became concerned about the progress of publishing *Prometheus Unbound*. He wrote many letters to Charles Ollier

from March until April asking about the drama's progress and wanted to know if the text was accurate because he was unable to check the proofs himself. Both Percy and Mary Shelley were eager to hear when the book was published, and inquired Gisborne's wife, Thomas Medwin, and John Keats about its release throughout July 1820. It was not until late August that they received word that the book was published. They were eager to read the published version and found one by November 1820.

After he procured a copy, Shelley wrote to the Olliers on 10 November 1820: "Mr. Gisborne has sent me a copy of the 'Prometheus', which is certainly most beautiful printed. It is to be regretted that the errors of the press are so numerous, and in many respects so destructive of the sense of a species of poetry which, I fear, even with this disadvantage, very few will understand like." A correct edition was sent on 20 January 1821 along with a letter from Shelley that explains "the Errata of 'Prometheus,' which I ought to have sent long since - a formidable list, as you will see". Shelley did not forget the printing errors and even criticized Charles Ollier later when Shelley sent *Adonais* to be published.

Shelley's own introduction to the play explains his intentions behind the work. He defends his choice to adapt Aeschylus's myth - his choice to have Jupiter overthrown rather than Prometheus reconciled with Jupiter. In his Preface, he writes.

"I have presumed to employ a similar license. The "Prometheus Unbound" of Aeschylus supposed the reconciliation of Jupiter with his victim as the price of the disclosure of the danger threatened to his empire by the consummation of his marriage with Thetis. Thetis, according to this view of the subject, was given in marriage to Peleus, and Prometheus, by the permission of Jupiter, delivered from his captivity by Hercules. Had I framed my story on this model, I should have done no more than have attempted to restore the lost drama of Aeschylus; an ambition which, if my preference to this mode of treating the subject had incited me to cherish, the recollection of the high comparison such an attempt would challenge

might well abate. But, in truth, I was averse from a catastrophe so feeble as that of reconciling the Champion with the Oppressor of mankind. The moral interest of the fable, which is so powerfully sustained by the sufferings and endurance of Prometheus, would be annihilated if we could conceive of him as unsaying his high language and quailing before his successful and perfidious adversary.”

The only imaginary being, resembling in any degree Prometheus, is Satan; and Prometheus is, in my judgment, a more poetical character than Satan, because, in addition to courage, and majesty, and firm and patient opposition to omnipotent force, he is susceptible of being described as exempt from the taints of ambition, envy, revenge, and a desire for personal aggrandizement, which, in the hero of *Paradise Lost*, interfere with the interest. The character of Satan engenders in the mind a pernicious casuistry which leads us to weigh his faults with his wrongs, and to excuse the former because the latter exceed all measure. In the minds of those who consider that magnificent fiction with a religious feeling it engenders something worse. But Prometheus is, as it were, the type of the highest perfection of moral and intellectual nature impelled by the purest and the truest motives to the best and noblest ends.

This Poem was chiefly written upon the mountainous ruins of the Baths of Caracalla, among the flowery glades and thickets of odoriferous blossoming trees, which are extended in ever winding labyrinths upon its immense platforms and dizzy arches suspended in the air. The bright blue sky of Rome, and the effect of the vigorous awakening spring in that divinest climate, and the new life with which it drenches the spirits even to intoxication, were the inspiration of this drama.

The imagery which I have employed will be found, in many instances, to have been drawn from the operations of the human mind, or from those external actions by which they are expressed. This is unusual in modern poetry, although Dante and Shakespeare are full of instances of the same kind; Dante indeed more than any other poet, and with greater success.

But the Greek poets, as writers to whom no resource of awakening the sympathy of their contemporaries was unknown, were in the habitual use of this power; and it is the study of their works (since a higher merit would probably be denied) to which I am willing that my readers should impute this singularity.

One word is due in candor to the degree in which the study of contemporary writings may have tinged my composition, for such has been a topic of censure with regard to poems far more popular, and indeed more deservedly popular, than mine. It is impossible that any one, who inhabits the same age with such writers as those who stand in the foremost ranks of our own, can conscientiously assure himself that his language and tone of thought may not have been modified by the study of the productions of those extraordinary intellects. It is true that, not the spirit of their genius, but the forms in which it has manifested itself, are due less to the peculiarities of their own minds than to the peculiarity of the moral and intellectual condition of the minds among which they have been produced. Thus a number of writers possess the form, whilst they want the spirit of those whom, it is alleged, they imitate; because the former is the endowment of the age in which they live, and the latter must be the uncommunicated lightning of their own mind.

The peculiar style of intense and comprehensive imagery which distinguishes the modern literature of England has not been, as a general power, the product of the imitation of any particular writer. The mass of capabilities remains at every period materially the same; the circumstances which awaken it to action perpetually change. If England were divided into forty republics, each equal in population and extent to Athens, there is no reason to suppose but that, under institutions not more perfect than those of Athens, each would produce philosophers and poets equal to those who (if we except Shakespeare) have never been surpassed. We owe the great writers of the golden age of our literature to that fervid awakening of the public mind which shook to dust the oldest and most oppressive form of

the Christian religion. We owe Milton to the progress and development of the same spirit: the sacred Milton was, let it ever be remembered, a republican and a bold inquirer into morals and religion. The great writers of our own age are, we have reason to suppose, the companions and forerunners of some unimagined change in our social condition or the opinions which cement it. The cloud of mind is discharging its collected lightning, and the equilibrium between institutions and opinions is now restoring or is about to be restored.

As to imitation, poetry is a mimetic art. It creates, but it creates by combination and representation. Poetical abstractions are beautiful and new, not because the portions of which they are composed had no previous existence in the mind of man or in Nature, but because the whole produced by their combination has some intelligible and beautiful analogy with those sources of emotion and thought and with the contemporary condition of them. One great poet is a masterpiece of Nature which another not only ought to study but must study. He might as wisely and as easily determine that his mind should no longer be the mirror of all that is lovely in the visible universe as exclude from his contemplation the beautiful which exists in the writings of a great contemporary. The pretence of doing it would be a presumption in any but the greatest; the effect, even in him, would be strained, unnatural and ineffectual. A poet is the combined product of such internal powers as modify the nature of others, and of such external influences as excite and sustain these powers; he is not one, but both. Every man's mind is, in this respect, modified by all the objects of Nature and art; by every word and every suggestion which he ever admitted to act upon his consciousness; it is the mirror upon which all forms are reflected and in which they compose one form. Poets, not otherwise than philosophers, painters, sculptors and musicians, are, in one sense, the creators, and, in another, the creations, of their age. From this subjection the loftiest do not escape. There is a similarity between Homer and Hesiod, between Eschylus and Euripides, between Virgil and Horace,

between Dante and Petrarch, between Shakespeare and Fletcher, between Dryden and Pope; each has a generic resemblance under which their specific distinctions are arranged. If this similarity be the result of imitation, I am willing to confess that I have imitated.

Let this opportunity be conceded to me of acknowledging that I have what a Scotch philosopher characteristically terms a 'passion for reforming the world:' what passion incited him to write and publish his book he omits to explain. For my part I had rather be damned with Plato and Lord Bacon than go to Heaven with Paley and Malthus. But it is a mistake to suppose that I dedicate my poetical compositions solely to the direct enforcement of reform, or that I consider them in any degree as containing a reasoned system on the theory of human life. Didactic poetry is my abhorrence; nothing can be equally well expressed in prose that is not tedious and supererogatory in verse. My purpose has hitherto been simply to familiarize the highly refined imagination of the more select classes of poetical readers with beautiful idealisms of moral excellence; aware that, until the mind can love, and admire, and trust, and hope, and endure, reasoned principles of moral conduct are seeds cast upon the highway of life which the unconscious passenger tramples into dust, although they would bear the harvest of his happiness. Should I live to accomplish what I purpose, that is, produce a systematical history of what appear to me to be the genuine elements of human society, let not the advocates of injustice and superstition flatter themselves that I should take Aeschylus rather than Plato as my model.

The having spoken of myself with unaffected freedom will need little apology with the candid; and let the uncandid consider that they injure me less than their own hearts and minds by misrepresentation. Whatever talents a person may possess to amuse and instruct others, be they ever so inconsiderable, he is yet bound to exert them: "if his attempt be ineffectual, let the punishment of an unaccomplished purpose have been sufficient; let none trouble themselves to heap the dust of oblivion upon

his efforts; the pile they raise will betray his grave which might otherwise have been unknown." (Conclusion of Preface)

The story of Prometheus offered to Shelley an opening for his doctrine of love as the central principle of things and the key to the ideal future of humanity. The figure of Prometheus had appealed powerfully to other idealists of the revolutionary age. Goethe had seen in him the human creator, shaping men in his own image and scorning God. Bethoven found noble music for the theme. To Byron, in 1816, he was a symbol of the divineness, the heroic endurance and the "funeral destiny" of man. To Shelley, also he stood for man creating and enduring, endowing the god themselves with wisdom and strength, and suffering their vindictive rage. But, for Shelley no symbol of humanity could suffice which excluded the perfected man of the future whom he anticipated with confidence. Aeschylus had made Prometheus finally surrender to Jupiter, and be reconciled with him. This conclusion was intolerable to Shelley who said that "the moral interest of the fable would be annihilated if we could conceive Prometheus unsaying his high language and quailing before his successful and perfidious adversary."

The story of Prometheus had therefore to be modified in order to fit in with Shelley's boundless faith in the perfectibility of man. A Prometheus who was to symbolize the perfected man of the future had necessarily to triumph over his enemy. Prometheus had to be depicted as not just a being of pure reason but a being of absolute love. The sublime doctrine of love was foreign to Aeschylus and to the Greek myth; but the legend which made Prometheus the son of Earth provided Shelley with a useful symbol. The Earth born Prometheus must partake of the spirit of love which pervades the earth. Even towards his enemy, Jupiter, he cannot, therefore, adopt an unrelenting attitude, though it is his task to destroy the power of evil symbolized by Jupiter. Shelley's *Prometheus* act partly as the spirit of love, hating the spirit of hate, and ruthlessly pursuing it to its doom, and partly as the sublime Christ-like sufferer who wishes 'no

living thing to suffer pain', and will not curse even his persecutor. In the great first Act, hanging in torture on the cliffs of Caucasus, he seeks to recall the curse upon Jupiter which he had once uttered. But he will not disclose the secret which alone can avert Jupiter's ruin. To the threats and arguments of Mercury - in the most Aeschylean and least undramatic scene of the poem - and to the torments of the furies, he remains inflexible. The catastrophe accordingly follows; Jupiter topples from his throne, as it were, at a touch' indeed, the stroke of doom is here so instantaneous and so simple as almost to approach the grotesque. Jupiter's fall is the signal for the regeneration no less instantaneous, of humanity Man's evil nature simply vanishes; Prometheus is "unbound".

Prometheus's keenest pangs are of the soul, pity for the sufferings of other men and, worse than blood and fire pity for their indifference towards their fate:

Hypocrisy and custom make their minds
The fanes of may a worship now outworn.
They dare not devise good for man' estate,
And yet they know not that they do not dare.

And as his pains are spiritual, so while he is still bound, are his joys. The Earth, his mother sends the spirits of heroes and martyrs to cheer him. Lovely shapes of faith and hope hover round him. And he knows that there awaits him, still afar and invisible, his bride Asia, the spirit of love in Nature, "Lamp of the earth". The love that is "blindly wove through all the web of being" is incomplete until the love that pervades. Nature has also triumphed in man. Everything in the drama seems to support Shelley's faith that love, even here and now, is the substance of things, and evil a phantasmal shadow. "The speech is almost everywhere lyrical in temper where not in form, and the ardour of Shelley suffuses itself into the atmosphere, compelling even the forces of evil to speak in accents like his... Jupiter speaks in lovely images of stars and sun as if he, too, were a lover of Asia, the lamp of the earth; the

fury, in the very act of tormenting Prometheus, speaks as one who herself suffers what she inflicts,"

Finally, in the fourth Act, added as an after-thought some months later, this implicit lyricism becomes a sustained rapture of song. Considered as the closing act of a drama, it is otiose for it adds nothing to the action. But it is rather to be regarded as the final movement of a symphony, a completion necessary in the logic of emotion, though superfluous in the logic of event. In the great choric songs of the earth and the moon, and in the triumphant strains of the Hours and the Spirits of the mind, Shelley reaches the sublimest note of his lyric. No modern poet has come nearer than he to making 'the morning stars sing together'. Almost all his other modes of song, from the simplest to the most intricate, are to be found in the earlier Acts; and on the deep organ tone of Demogorgon, proclaiming that love and wisdom and endurance are the eternal truth of things, the poem closes.

18.4 PROMETHEUS UNBOUND ACT-I

Act I begins in the Indian Caucasus where the Titan Prometheus is bound to a rock face and he is surrounded by the nymphs Panthea and Ione. As morning breaks, Prometheus cries out against the "Monarch of God and Daemons", Jupiter and his tyrannous kingship. He and Jupiter regard the earths with sleepless eyes. The whole creation is Jupiter's slave and they worship and praise him with bent knees and their craven hearts are broken because of fear and hopelessness. But Prometheus would not be vanquished. In vain has Jupiter tried for vengeance. For three thousand years Prometheus has borne torture and solitude without respite and his painful moments have stretched into hours but 'scorn and despair "are his empire".

"O'er mine own misery and thy vain revenge.
Three thousand years of sleep-unsheltered hours,
And moments aye divided by keen pangs

Till they seemed years, torture and solitude,
Scorn and despair, - these are mine empire:
More glorious far than that which thou surveyest
From thine unenvied throne, O Mighty God!"

The glaciers tear his flesh till his body is numb to the bones and ghostly spectres haunt him.

"The ghastly people of the realm of dream,
Mocking me: and the Earthquake-fiends are charged
To wrench the rivets from my quivering wounds
When the rocks split and close again behind:"

But one day an hour will arrive when Jupiter, the cruel tyrant will be forced to surrender and kiss the bloodied feet of Prometheus who would not mock at such a slave but rather take compassion on him.

"Disdain! Ah no! I pity thee. What ruin
Will hunt thee undefended through wide Heaven!
How will thy soul, cloven to its depth with terror, [1.55]
Gape like a hell within! I speak in grief,
Not exultation, for I hate no more,
As then ere misery made me wise."

From his bound position, Prometheus claims to be greater than Jupiter before relating his suffering to the conditions of nature, including the Earth, Heaven, Sun, Sea, and Shadow. He turns to how nature has aided in his torture along with the constant tearing at his flesh by "Heaven's winged hound", the hawks of Jupiter. As he accounts his sufferings more and more, he reaches a peak of declaring that he would "The curse/Once breathed thee I would recall." Four voices, from the mountains, springs, air, and whirlwinds, respond to Prometheus through describing how they see the world and how "we shrank back : for dreams of ruin/ To frozen caves our

flight pursuing/ Made us keep silence". The Earth then joins in to describe how all parts of the world cried out "Misery!".

Jupiter's thunderbolts terrorized men and all the elements in nature quailed in fear. Waters in the springs dried up and became red with blood of slaughtered victims. The spirits who had wandered free were now captives of Jupiter and the dying sailor's agonizing words "Ah! woe is me" tore through the earth and every where it was darkness and ruin.

Prometheus reflects on the voices before returning to his own suffering at Jupiter's hands and recalling his love for the Oceanid Asia and how he drank deep of life from the love in her eyes. Shortly after, he demands to hear his curse against Jupiter, But the earth tells him it could not be told - She then recounts how the Magus (the wise) Zoroaster met his own image and how the shadows of all forms in earth are united after death and the Earth tells Prometheus "I dare not speak like life, lest Heaven's fell King/ Should hear, and link me to some wheel of pain/ More torturing than the one whereon I roll" and also that he is "more than God/ Being wise and kind". Prometheus asks who he is talking to, and the Earth admits to being the mother of all who suffer under Jupiter's tyranny. Prometheus praises her, but demands that she recall the curse he laid upon Jupiter. The Earth responds by describing Zoroaster and that there are two realities: the current and the shadow reality that exists "Till death unite them and they part no more". She then mentions Demogorgon, "the supreme Tyrant" of the shadow realm, and asks Prometheus to call upon "Thine own ghost, or the ghost of Jupiter, Hades, or Typhon or what mightier Gods/ From all-prolific Evil" if he wishes to hear his curse spoken again. Taking her advice, Prometheus calls upon the Phantasm of Jupiter, and Ione and Panthea describe the phantasm's appearance soon after. The phantasm with awful shape appears clothed in dark people and looks like one who is cruel and does not suffer injustice. The phantasm first asks, "Why have the secret/ powers of this strange world/ Driven me, a frail and empty phantom, hither/ On direst storms?" Prometheus commands the phantasm to recall the curse against Jupiter, and the phantasm obeys:

"Fiend, I defy thee! with a calm, fixed mind,
All that thou canst inflict I bid thee do;
Foul Tyrant both of Gods and Human-kind,
One only being shalt thou not subdue....
Thou art omnipotent.
O'er all things but thyself I gave thee power,
And my own will....
I curse thee! let a sufferer's curse
Clasp thee, his torturer, like remorse;
'Till thine Infinity shall be
A robe of envenomed agony;
And thine Omnipotence a crown of pain,
To cling like burning gold round thy dissolving brain."

He curses the all powerful Jupiter that his malignant spirit which heaps atrocities of mankind and who fills this world with sorrow from his high abode, shall suffer and his curse would hound him like remorse and his eternal power would be engulfed in poisonous pain.

After hearing these words, Prometheus cannot believe that he had uttered that vile curse and those venomous words. And Earth says that they were his. He repents saying that grief had made him blind and claims, "I wish no living thing to suffer pain". The Earth laments that Prometheus is vanquished by Jove and the spirits echo the words, and Ione responds by claiming that he has not been, Ione consoles them saying that it is just a fleeting spasm, the Titan cannot be conquered so easily but both are interrupted by the appearance of Mercury. With him appear a group of furies who hope to torture Prometheus, but Mercury threatens and keeps them from interfering as he brings his message from Jupiter: "I come, by the great Father's will driven down,/ To execute a doom of new revenge."

Mercury enters with the furies with 'hydra tresses and Panthea says that the furies are the blood thirsty hounds of Jupiter who feed on the blood of tortured souls. One Fury says that it has come with

"The hope of torturing him smells like a heap
Of corpses, to a death-bird after battle."

Although Mercury admits to pitying Prometheus, he is bound to oppose Prometheus who stands against Jupiter. He asks Prometheus to reveal a secret of Jupiter's fate only Prometheus knows, and Prometheus refuses to submit to Jupiter's will.

Mercury admonishes Prometheus that it is hopeless to defy the omnipotent Jove and that he has been armed visit Prometheus with unimagined pains. But all this Prometheus can avoid if he would reveal the secret known only to Prometheus and which may "Which may transfer the scepter of wide Heaven, The fear of which perplexes the Supreme"

Prometheus refuses to submit to Jupiter's will and replies that he had revealed every thing to Jupiter and in recompense he shackled him and tortured him. Jupiter cannot be grateful and he would not submit before him because let other gods be sycophants to the criminal Jupiter whose power would be short lived because Justice will vanquish every wrong with pity and not punishment.

He says that while his beloved man is trampled down the tyrant can receive no good. Mercury tries to barter with Prometheus, offering him the pleasure of being free from bondage and being welcomed among the gods, but Prometheus refuses.

"I would not quit
This bleak ravine, these unrepentant pains."

Mercury pities him, saying that his pain would continue for a long time and Prometheus says. They last while Jove must reign : "no more no less"

At the refusal, Jupiter makes his anger known by causing thunder to ring out across the mountains. Mercury departs at the omen, and the furies begin to taunt Prometheus by saying that they attack people from within before they attack Prometheus without.

The furies use their fearsome power threatening Prometheus with dreadful pains and unspeakable agonies that would befall him. They had the power to sink cities into howling ruins, trample the mighty sea, Bring shipwreck and famine and spout fire and blood.

"We are the ministers of pain, and fear,
And disappointment, and mistrust, and hate,
And clinging crime; and as lean dogs pursue
Through wood and lake some struck and sobbing fawn,
We track all things that weep, and bleed, and live,
When the great King betrays them to our will."

Prometheus replies

"Pain is my element, as hate is thine;
Ye rend me now: I care not."

The Chorus mocks Prometheus and scorns him. They say his words killed truth, peace and pity.

"Dost thou faint, mighty Titan? We laugh thee to scorn."
Because when he gave knowledge to man

"Dost thou boast the clear knowledge thou waken'dst for man?
Then was kindled within him a thirst which outran
Those perishing waters; a thirst of fierce fever,
Hope, love, doubt, desire, which consume him for ever."
Cities overflow with despair, joy is passed and the future is
dark and

'And the future is dark, and the present is spread
Like a pillow of thorns for thy slumberless head.'

A dreadful groan swells up from Prometheus's heart as storms tear the deep oceans when the fiends torture him. Panthea's lines draw an analogy with Christ the Saviour and Redemmer

"A woeful sight : a youth
With patient looks nailed to a crucifix"

Prometheus then urges the fury to give remittance from anguish to mankind.

"Fix, fix those tortured orbs in peace and death,
So thy sick throes shake not that crucifix,
So those pale fingers play not with thy gore."

But the Fury replies that worse things would befall him and mankind.

"Blood thou canst see, and fire; and canst hear groans;
Worse things, unheard, unseen, remain behind."

The fury then tells Prometheus how terror lives in each human heart how hypocrisy has become the norm, how the good crave power and the powerful need goodness and those who love are devoid of wisdom and the rich and strong who would preach justice are confused and cannot do anything to alleviate the suffering of their fellowmen.

Prometheus is pained
"Ah woe! Ah woe! Alas! pain, pain ever, for ever!
I close my tearless eyes, but see more clear
Thy works within my woe-illumèd mind,
Thou subtle tyrant! Peace is in the grave."

After that all of the furies but one leaves, Panthea and Ione despair over the Prometheus's tortured body. Prometheus describes his torture as

part of his martyrdom and tells the fury, "Thy words are like a cloud of winged snakes;/ And yet I pity those they torture not.", to which to fury departs.

Prometheus then goes on to elucidate the two woes. And amidst 'Truth, Liberty and Love there was' strife deceit and fear and tyrants chose the latter and this was a sliver of truth that he had witnessed.

Soon after, Prometheus declares that peace comes with death, but that he would never want to be mortal. The Earth responds to Prometheus, "I felt thy torture, son, with such mixed joy/ As pain and virtue give." At that moment, a Chorus of Spirits appears and celebrate Prometheus's secret knowledge,

The first spirit says that it came swiftly hearing the mingled cry of Freedom! Hope! Death! Victory!

But one sound permeated everything
Was moving; 'twas the soul of Love;
'Twas the hope, the prophecy,
Which begins and ends in thee."

The second spirit saw many mighty being feet rent apart by thunder and blown about like chaff over the ocean.

The third spirit had come from the bedside of a sage when a vision surrounded by flames came and he recognized it as 'Pity, eloquence and woe,"

The fourth spirit rushed to Prometheus where he was dreaming of love on a poets lips.

Ione then perceives two nebulous forms coming like two doves with their soft smiles dazzling the air like the light of a star. They are the other two spirits which have arrived like some swift, "Cloud borne on air passing" -

"That planet-crested shape swept by on lightning-braided pinions,
Scattering the liquid joy of life from his ambrosial tresses:"

Desolation comes on silent feet and stokes the hope of the most gentle.

They then break into accounts of dying individuals and the ultimate triumph of good people over evil. The spirits together tell Prometheus, an act which shall happen because of Prometheus's secret.

"Thou shalt quell this horseman grim,
Woundless though in heart or limb."

Prometheus then question as to how this would be?

And the spirit tell him that as sure as the buds bloom when spring arrives with the snow melting and the herdsmen know that the white thorn would soon bloom then wisdom Justice, Love and Peace will begin and end with Prometheus.

The spirits depart, leaving Ione

Prometheus speaks eloquently of his love for Asia and laments that she is far away from him. The morning is heavy upon him and sleep is denied him but he accepts his fate to be

"The saviour and the strength of suffering man,
Or sink into the original gulf of things:
There is no agony, and no solace left;
Earth can console, Heaven can torment no more."

He can feel neither pain nor solace and heaven can no longer torture him. Only love brings hope for him.

The first Act of *Prometheus Unbound* ought thus to be seen as and hatred while remaining firm and calm in his opposition to the evil principle, is now ready for the arrival of the Great Hour of man's redemption. The classical symmetry of the first Act might be shown by pointing out that Shelley has balanced the visitation of the Furies with the chorus of fair Spirits who prophesy that love and unselfishness will in the end prevail. The Act closes with a speech of Panthea's which as it refers to the place of

Asia's exile, may be regarded as transitional, since Act II is to deal with Asia's visit to Demogorgon. The most striking aspect of the first Act is that Shelley has suffused a myth of pagan origin with deeply felt Christian symbolism. He has begun with Aeschylus and ended by the representation of an ethic which is close to that of the New Testament.

18.5 PROMETHEUS UNBOUND ACT-II

The second and third Acts of Prometheus Unbound are the inevitable outcome of the first' Act II Scene I begins in an Indian Caucasus valley where the oceanid Asia heralds the welcome spring which has brought tears to her eyes and wild flutterings haunt her sad heart. She calls spring 'a child of many winds which arrives suddenly the flashes in a dream. She proclaims. This is the season, this the day, the hour; At sunrise thou shouldst come, sweet sister mine, and Panthea enters. Some of the most lyrical lines of unparalleled beauty describing dawn can be found here. The orange light of dawn is breaking over the purple mountains and the still, calm waters of the lake are seen reflected through a chasm. The light shines and faints on the lapping waves and

"The roseate sunlight quivers: hear I not
The Aeolian music of her sea-green plumes
Winnowing the crimson dawn?"

Asia expresses her delight and tells Panthea of how longingly she had waited for Panthea. Panthea says, she was deep slumber dreaming pleasant dreams.

Panthea describes to Asia how life for her and Ione had changed since Prometheus love and how she had longed for his love

"Which wrapped me in its all-dissolving power,
As the warm aether of the morning sun
Wraps ere it drinks some cloud of wandering dew.

I saw not, heard not, moved not, only felt
His presence flow and mingle through my blood"

Asia asks Panthea to "lift/ Thine eyes, that I may read his written soul!" to which Panthea agreed, and the dream of Prometheus was revealed to Asia. Asia witnesses another dream in Panthea's eyes, and the two discuss the many new images of nature that both of their minds are filled with and the words "Follow! Follow!" are repeated in their minds. Their words are soon repeated by Echoes, which join in telling the two to follow. Asia questions the Echoes, but the Echoes only beckon them further, "In the world unknown/ sleeps a voice unspoken;/ By they step alone/ Can its rest be broken", and the two begin to follow the voices. Scene II takes place in a forest with a group of spirits and fauns. Although the scene transitions to the next quickly, the spirits describe Asia's and Panthea's journey and how "There those enchanted eddies play/ Of echoes, music-tongued, which draw,/ By Demogorgon's mighty law,/ With melting rapture, or sweet awe,/ All spirits on that secret way".

The spirits describe the dense forest through which Panthea and Asia traverse where neither sun nor moon can penetrate the interwoven bowers.

The spirit describe the love-lorn nightingales dying sick with sweet love' on the music filled bosom of its mate. And then the bird trills in its sweetest voice lifting the weak languid melody till it reverberates so sweetly that to the listeners the joyous music becomes pain. The magic of the music follows the laws of the mighty Demogorgon and echoes with awe and rapture.

The fauns are found conversing and wondering where the spirits who make such gossamer like music live and the other faun replies :

"The oozy bottom of clear lakes and pools,
Are the pavilions where such dwell and float
Under the green and golden atmosphere."

The realm is a deep abyss spewing fire and the future prophesying vapours are thrown up from there and

"Which lonely men drink wandering in their youth,
And call truth, virtue, love, genius, or joy,
That maddening wine of life, whose dregs they drain
To deep intoxication;"

Asia eulogizes that this place is an apt one for the one invested with so much power and magnificence. Here heart adores and worships this wonderful sight. A rapturous description of this dazzling landscape "with dim twilight-lawns, and stream-illumèd caves, And wind-enchanted shapes of wandering mist" follows.

Dawn like some island scattered up by the foam of the ocean is rising and with it the avalanche of snow rushes down as thought upon thought is piled up till it reveals some great truth which shakes the world.

The spirit & bekor Asia and Panthea to descend to the chasm below and act as their guide.

Scene III takes place in mountains, to which Panthea declares, "Hither the sound has borne us - to the realm/ Of Demogorgon". After Asia and Panthea are overwhelmed by their surroundings and witness the acts of nature around the mountains, a Song of Spirits begins, calling them "To the deep, to the deep,/ Down, down!" Asia and Panthea descend, and Scene IV begins in the cave of the Demogorgon. Panthea describes Demogorgon upon his ebon throne: "I see a mighty darkness/ Filling the seat of power, and rays of gloom/ Dart round, as light from the meridian sun,/ Ungazed upon and shapeless; neither limb,/ Nor form, nor outline; yet we feel it is/ A living Spirit."

Demogorgon tells Asia to ask what she would like to know and Asia questions Demogorgon about the creator of the world, Demogorgon declares that God created all, including all of the good and all of the bad.

She further demands to know who created. "Thought, passion, reason, will and imagination and love and who made terror madness, crime and remorse." To which Demorgorgon replies "He reigns" Asia asks - who reigns?

"Utter his name: a world pining in pain
Asks but his name: curses shall drag him down."

She recounts how at first there was light and love on Heaven and on earth and how time fell from Saturn's throne and enslaved all creatures on earth. Saturn and Jupiter denied man knowledge and power which was his birthright.

Asia declared that

"The skill which wields the elements, the thought
Which pierces this dim universe like light,
Self-empire, and the majesty of love;
For thirst of which they fainted. Then Prometheus
Gave wisdom, which is strength, to Jupiter,
And with this law alone, "Let man be free,"
Clothed him with the dominion of wide Heaven.
To know nor faith, nor love, nor law; to be
Omnipotent but friendless is to reign;"

She criticizes Jupiter for all of the problems of the world: famine, disease, strife and death. Prometheus, she continues, gave man fire, the knowledge of mining, speech, science, and medicine.

Jupiter caused the elements to play havoc in the world caused war and strife to rage and Prometheus sent love to flow like elixir in the human heart giving him hope and joy.

Prometheus saw this mad disquietude and idle shadows

"And waked the legioned hopes
sleep within folded Elysian flowers,
Nepenthe, Moly, Amaranth, fadeless blooms,
That they might hide with thin and rainbow wings
The shape of Death; and Love he sent to bind
The disunited tendrils of that vine
Which bears the wine of life, the human heart"

With thought and science man shook the thrones of earth and heaven
and from the harmonious thought sprang sweet music which removed all
mortal inquietude. Empowered thus, man chiseled divine forms out of
marble and mothers drank deep of the mortal love and through their snow-
like columns flowed

"The warm winds, and the azure aether shone,
And the blue sea and shadowy hills were seen.
Such, the alleviations of his state,
Prometheus gave to man, for which he hangs
Withering in destined pain:"

Prometheus gave man knowledge of medicine and herbs also : disease
and death slept under their influence. He revealed to man the secrets of the
orbiting of the planets, taught him to control the tempestuous seas. Armed
with this profound knowledge man founded cities. For this Prometheus pays
a heavy price. Asia then asks Demogorgon if Jupiter trembled like a slave
when Prometheus cursed him. Demogorgon answered

"All spirits are enslaved which serve things evil
Thou knowest if Jupiter be such or no."

Demogorgon claims that - Jove is the supreme of living things. When
Asia continues to exhort Demogorgon for answers he says that the abyss
contained all imageless truth but

"Fate, Time, Occasion, Chance, and Change? To these
All things are subject but eternal Love."

The meaning of these lines is quite clear : "love is the only power which is beyond all powers and is not subject to Fate and Chance, while the deep truth which Asia wants to know is imageless and has no approachable or visible form".

Asia declares that Demogorgon's answer is the same as that her own heart had given her, and then asks when Prometheus will be freed. Demogorgon cries out "Behold!" and Asia watches as the mountain opens and chariots move out across the night sky, which Demogorgon explains as being driven by the immortal Hours. One Hour stays to talk to Asia, and Asia questions him as to who he is. The Hour responds,

"I am the shadow of a destiny
More dread than is my aspect: ere yon planet
Has set, the darkness which ascends with me
Shall wrap in lasting night heaven's kingless throne."

With Panthea singing paens of the young spirit that guides them with hope and gives solace to their souls with its soft dulcet smile. The spirit of the Hours arrives with his chariot, at the command of Demogorgon to collect them. Asia questions as to what the Hour means, and Panthea describes how Demogorgon has risen from his throne to join the Hour to travel across the sky. Panthea witnesses another Hour come, and that Hour asks Asia and Panthea to ride with him. The chariot takes off, and Scene V takes place upon a mountaintop as the chariot stops. The Hour claims that his horses are tired, but Asia encourages him onwards. However, Panthea asks the hour to stay and "Tell whence is the light/ Which fills the cloud? the sun is yet unrisen", and the Hour tells her "Apollo/ Is held in heaven by wonder; and the light... Flows from thy mighty sister."

The lines that precede the encounter are one of the many marvelous lyrics in the drama. The lyric continues in the same vein with a voice in the all

singing another lyric in praise of Asia's radiant beauty. : "Life of Life"! The lips enkindle. Asia is compared to the lamp of earth whose light clothes dim shapes with brightness and makes the souls she loves "Walk upon the winds with lightness".

Panthea wonders at the strange radiant beauty of Asia and says that the elements are harbinger of some good change to come. The Nereids had predicated that when Asia had arisen from a veined shell floating on the limpid sea among the Aegean Isles then love had burst forth from her being till sorrow eclipsed Asia's radiant beauty with darkness. But Asia is not alone in her grief Panthea partakes of it and tells Asia that love is moving through the world. Asia responds and says that love never jades or wearies and makes a fades reptile equal to god but

"They who inspire it most are fortunate,
As I am now; but those who feel it most
Are happier still, after long sufferings,
As I shall soon become."

Voices sing praise of Panthea and Asia.

Asia enveloped in love compares her soul to an enchanted boat which like a swan, sleep induced, floats upon the sweet singing of the voices while the air around her is vibrating with melodious sweetness and her soul seems to glide through this paradise of wilderness. There is no star to guide her course but love which moves on the winds and the waves.

A song fills the air singing the "Life of Life", a song about the power of love. Asia tells of her current state and describes, "Realms where the air we breathe is love, which in the winds on the waves doth move,/ Harmonizing this earth with what we feel above." It is through her love that she witnesses how people move through time, and ends with the idea of a coming paradise. All his harmony and all is one experience.

As the first Act closes Panthea has referred to Asia, waiting in "that far Indian vale/The scene of her sad exile", for the winter of Prometheus's suffering has ended, and Asia's transforming powers are accordingly released. During the first Act, which opens in the dark night of Prometheus's soul, morning has broken. Now dawn and the spring have come to Asia's vale.

The significance of Asia's sisters, Ione and Panthea, like the meaning of Demogorgon, has been variously interpreted, but it seems clear that Shelley intended them to represent, in mounting order, degrees of love and perceptiveness within the human mind. The lesser of the two is clearly Ione, who is sub-consciously aware of the approaching change in the heart of the cosmos without being able to define what it is that vaguely disturbs her usual calm. Panthea's perceptions are far clearer than those of Ione, and it is this quality which enables her to act as the intermediary between Prometheus (representing the mind of man) and Asia (representing the idea of divine love).

Asia's questioning of Demogorgon elicits answers which are oracular. Asia asks a series of questions: Who made the living world? Who made all that it contains? Who made the powers of the human mind: thought, passion, reason, will, imagination? Demogorgon's answer is always the same: God the Creator is to be supposed here to have done his work long ago and we are to believe that he takes no part in the current action. Asia next inquires into the origin of mental evils, the various ways in which the powers of the human mind are perverted and abused. Who made terror, madness crime, remorse, despair, hatred, self contempt, pain and the fear of hell - in short, all horrors which unsettle the human mind? Once more Demogorgon's answer is always the same : He reigns since Jupiter reigns, there can be no doubt of Demogorgon's meaning. It is evident that God the creator does not reign in man's universe.

We now learn, through Asia, of the events preceding Jupiter's reign and the chaining of Prometheus. Heaven, Earth, Light, and Love were all

that existed before the birth of Time. This age was followed by the period of time under Saturn, in which earth's "primal spirits" merely vegetated, having neither knowledge, power, thought, self governance, nor love. The age of Saturn ended when Prometheus taught man science and art, medicine, astronomy and navigation, but at the same time gave wisdom and power to Jupiter, with disastrous results.

As she concludes her account, Asia returns to the problem of the origin of evil, urging Demogorgon to name the real culprit. Could it be that of evil, urging Demogorgon to name the real culprit. Could it be that Jupiter who trembled like a slave at Prometheus's original curse? Who is Jupiter's master? Is Jupiter also a slave? Demogorgon replies; "all spirits are enslaved which serve things evil". But Asia still seeks the culprit's name. "Whom called'st thou God?" She asks, as if she half-suspected that God, the Creator and Jupiter had some alliance. Demogorgon says: "I spoke but as we speak, for Jove is the supreme of living things". This reply of Demogorgon might well imply that God the Creator has nothing to do with the origin of evil, which arose with the reign of Jupiter, long after the Creator's work was done. Who, then, is the master of Jove, if God is not? Demogorgon gives a vague reply: "The deep truth is imageless." But he does assert that all things are subject to Fate Time, Occasion, Chance, and Change, except eternal love. The presumption therefore is that Jupiter is somehow subject to Fate (or Necessity), and that the occasion has now arrived when through the happy chance of Prometheus's self mastery the great change can take place, and eternal Love (Asia) can be re-united with mankind (Prometheus).

This occasion is now at hand. Demogorgon points to the immortal Hours, one of whom, having a bright aspect and dove-like eyes, is to carry Asia to Prometheus and another, with a dark and dreadful aspect, will bear Demogorgon to Olympus.

The second Act closes with a scene describing Asia's transfiguration.

18.6 PROMETHEUS UNBOUND ACT-III

Act III with its language is a striking contrast to the lyricism of the previous act. Act III Scene I takes place on top of Olympus, with Jupiter sits upon his throne before other gods. With a language totally unlyrical, Jupiter speaks to the gods and calls them to rejoice over his omnipotence. He claims to have conquered all; nevertheless he admits that he could not conquer the soul of man while like unextinguished fire,

"Yet burns towards heaven with fierce reproach, and doubt,
And lamentation, and reluctant prayer,
Hurling up insurrection, which might make
Our antique empire insecure, though built
On eldest faith, and hell's coeval, fear;"

And the soul remains supreme over all miseries heaped on it by Jupiter's curses and anger, and Jupiter still hopes to crush it but is awed by the strange wonder "of That fatal child, the terror of the death" and at the destined hour the dreadful mighty will come down again and trample out the spark. He commands Ganymede to pour forth heavens ambrosia and tells the Gods to celebrate.

"Till exultation burst in one wide voice
Like music from Elysian winds."

He then summons Thetis to ascend the throne beside him. He then refers to

"Two mighty spirits, mingling, made a third
Mightier than either, which, unbodied now,
Between us floats, felt, although unbeheld,"

And accompanied by the thundering of his fiery wheels Demogorgon descends on Mount Olympus in his chariot. To Jupiter's question 'Awful shape, what art thou? Speak! Demorgorgon replies "Eternity."

He proclaims himself to be Jupiter's child just as Jupiter was Saturn's and claims to be more powerful than Jupiter. He admonishes Jupiter not to use his thunderbolts against him because if vanquished none would be able to succeed the tyranny of heaven after him. And in spite of that if Jupiter still wanted to be trodden and trampled like writhing worms under Demogorgon's feet then Jupiter could confront him. Jupiter pleads for mercy and claims that not even Prometheus would have him suffer. "Gentle, and just, and dreadless, is he not the monarch of the world?" When Demogorgon does not respond Jupiter declares that he shall fight Demogorgon and Jupiter at first mocks Demogorgon but as he moves to attack the elements refuse to help him and so Jupiter falls.

Scene II takes place at a river on Atlantis, and Ocean discusses Jupiter's fall with Apollo. Apollo says that the terror mirrored in Jupiter's eyes' was 'Like the last glare of day's red agony,' Ocean then replied that from now onwards her kingdom will heave, unstained with blood. The streams would flow gurgling and the sea God Proteus and his nymphs will guide ships at sea. No sailors would die of blood and groans. There would be no desolation "but by the light of wave-reflect flowers, and floating odours, And music soft, and mild, free, gentle voices, And sweetest music, such as spirits love." And Apollo replies that even his mind would be free of sorrow and he would listen to the happy singing of the morning star. Ocean and Apollo part.

Scene III takes place on the Caucasus after Hercules has unbound Prometheus. Prometheus requests the Hour to take Ione, with the conch shell of Proteus, over the earth so she can "breathe into the many-folded shell, Loosing its mighty music; it shall be/ As thunder mingled with clear echoes: then/ Return; and thou shalt dwell besides our cave."

Hercules tells Prometheus

"Most glorious among Spirits, thus doth strength
To wisdom, courage, and long-suffering love

And three, who art the form they animate, Minister like a slave.
Prometheus gratefully thanks Hercules saying Thy gentle words
Are sweeter even than freedom long desired, And long delayed."

He then tells Asia of his love and that they would be with each other for ever and describes to her a cave which they would call their dwelling among fragrant, leaves flowers and fountains.

"A simple dwelling, which shall be our own;
Where we will sit and talk of time and change,
As the world ebbs and flows ourselves unchanged."

He then tells how they would smile or shed tears and search for hidden thoughts and "Touched by the skill of the enamoured winds, Weave harmonies divine then would be no discord in their lives." He then resolves to improve man's life and describes eloquently the progeny immortal Of Painting, Sculpture, and rapt Poesy, And arts, though unimagined, yet to be". And man would grow wise and kind.

Ione, on the instructions of Prometheus gives her the curved shell which Proteus had made for Asia's nuptials and which has a sweet and strange sound.

He calls upon the mother Earth and she responds that she feels life and joy through her withered, old and icy frame. Now all flora and fauna, all children of mother earth will rejoice in her sustaining arms. The warmth of an immortal youth shoots down Circling. And mankind which drew disease and pain from my wan bosom, Draining the poison of despair, shall take, And interchange sweet nutriment";

She then proclaims, "And death shall be the last embrace of her/
Who takes the life she gave, even as a mother/ Folding her child, says,
'Leave me not again.'

Asia questions Earth as to why she mentions death, and the Earth responds that Asia could not understand because she is immortal. She then

describes the nature of death, of war, and faithless faith. She then calls forth a spirit, her torch bearer, who would guide Prometheus, Asia, and the others to a temple that was once dedicated to Prometheus and will become their cave to dwell in. Scene IV takes place in a forest near the cave, the place the spirit guided them. Prometheus describes how the spirit was once close to Asia, and Asia and the spirit begin to talk to each other about nature and love. The Hour comes and tells of a change: "Soon as the sound had ceased whose thunder filled/ The abysses of the sky and the wide earth,/ There was a change: the impalpable thing air/ And the all-circling sunlight were transformed,/ As if the sense of love dissolved in them/ Had folded itself round the sphered world."

Ione describes the luminosity of the emerald which shines on the head of the nebulous form guiding them and asks Panthea who it is and Panthea replies

"It is the delicate spirit, That guides the earth through heaven."

The spirit of the Earth runs to Asia and asks her if she can enfold him in her loving embrace. It then tells Asia that it has grown wiser and happier. Now it says that it can walk freely among man who once was disguised by ill thoughts. Earlier the world was full of venomous creatures and malicious beasts and hard hearted men and false women who made him sick at heart but now when he had traversed a great city a sweet voice had called and all the foul disguises fell from those human beings and they underwent a metamorphosis and all things had put their evil nature off. And Asia assures, the spirit of the Earth that they would never part.

The spirit of the Hour enters and tells of the change that has transformed everything and with love permeating the Universe he could clearly read into its mysteries.

"None frowned, none trembled, none with eager fear
Gazed on another's eye of cold command,

Until the subject of a tyrant's will
Became, worse fate, the abject of his own,"

Men no longer feared each other or were servile or abject. No one talked false talk and travesty was no longer to be found among men. Nor was man a cynic any longer who had earlier wiped out love and hope from his heart, till there remained

"Those bitter ashes, a soul self-consumed,
And the wretch crept a vampire among men,
Infecting all with his own hideous ill;"

There remained no thrones, altars, judgement-seats, and prisons; sceptres, tiaras, swords, and chains.

Love had wiped out pride, jealousy envy, shame and bitterness.

He then describes a revolution within mankind: thrones were abandoned and men treated each other as equals and with love. Mankind no longer feared Jupiter the tyrant, men no longer acted as tyrants themselves, and

"The painted veil, by those who were, called life,
Which mimicked, as with colours idly spread,
All men believed and hoped, is torn aside;
The loathsome mask has fallen, the man remains
Sceptreless, free, uncircumscribed, but man
Equal, unclassed, tribeless, and nationless,
Exempt from awe, worship, degree, the king
Over himself; just, gentle, wise: but man
Passionless; no, yet free from guilt or pain".

There were no conquerors or conquered mankind no longer feared Jupiter the tyrant, men no longer acted as tyrants themselves. Nations were no longer, panic stricken and there was no more blood shed fear or hatred.

This was the ideal vision of Shelley's utopia. This speech reaffirms the sense of life through love and creativity. This prophecy announces a forth coming process of overall rebirth and regeneration of the world in which there is no room for oppression.

From this point on it remained to Shelley to explore the consequences of Jupiter's fall. In scene III, Hercules unbinds Prometheus. Thus does strength aid and serve "wisdom, courage and long suffering love". Now the Titanic Psyche (Prometheus) is re-united to his Epipsyche (Asia), and Prometheus assures Asia that from this time onwards they will never be separated.

18.7 PROMETHEUS UNBOUND ACT-IV

Act IV belongs to various choruses, semi choruses and unseen spirits. Now that Prometheus is liberated. Jupiter has been overthrown, it is the right time for joyous celebration.

Act IV opens as a voice fills the forest near Prometheus's cave as Ione and Panthea sleep. The voice describes the dawn before a group of dark forms and shadows, who claim to be the dead Hours, begin to sing of the King of the Hours' death. Ione awakes and asks Panthea who they were, and Panthea explains. The voice breaks in to ask "where are ye" before the Hours describe their history. Panthea describes spirits of the human mind approaching, and these spirits soon join in with the others singing and rejoice in love.

The Spirits sing thus -luminous clouds straddle the skies while stars are resplendent in their spheres, the waves are rising and ebbing in a panic stricken glee and they dance in joy ness while the trees in the forests are singing fresh songs and even the storms mock the mountains with the thunder of gladness. The Chorus sings 'Once the Hours were like bloodhounds pursuing the day like a wounded deer' and 'And it limped and stumbled with many wounds', Through the nightly dells of the desert year.'But now the Hours would celebrate with the spirits of might and pleasure and dance and unite with them. Panthea welcomes the spirits of

the human mind. 'Wrapped in sweet sounds, as in bright veils, approach.'
The Chorus of hours and spirits join in the festivities of gladness.

The Chorus of Spirits exclaims with rapture that they came from the mind of human kind which till late was befuddled and confused but now it is a pellucid ocean of emotions. 'A heaven of serene and mighty motion.' From those deep wonderful recesses of the mind thoughts watch the merry dance of the Happy Hours.

For eons they had flown and weaved through a vale of blood tears, fear and loathing but now their whole being is serene and the dew on their wings is like a soothing balm.

"And beyond our eyes, The human love lies,
Which makes all it gazes on Paradise."

They then dance and sing in mirthful ghee of splendor and harmony.
The chorus of spirit with its task done it now free to soar around the world.
Eventually they decide to break their song and go across the world to proclaim love.

"And our singing shall build
In the void's loose field
A world for the Spirit of Wisdom to wield;
We will take our plan
From the new world of man,
And our work shall be called the Promethean."

The Chorus of Hours and Spirits takes over the song and sets out to scatter it.

However, the central part of this act is taken up with an exchange between the Earth and the Moon, through which Shelley gives expression to joy, trying the impossible through the union of image and magic to

express something that is beyond expression. "Of lovely grief, a wood of sweet and thoughts"

Pantheon then describes how the two melodies are parted and Ione interrupts by describing a beautiful chariot with a winged infant whose.

"White its countenance, like the whiteness of bright snow,
Its plumes are as feathers of sunny frost,
Its limbs gleam white, through the wind-flowing folds
Of its white robe, woof of ethereal pearl.
Its hair is white, the brightness of white light
Scattered in strings; yet its two eyes are heavens
Of liquid darkness, which the Deity
Within seems pouring, as a storm is poured
From jagged clouds, out of their arrowy lashes,
Tempering the cold and radiant air around,
With fire that is not brightness; in its hand
It sways a quivering moonbeam."

Panthea resumes describing a sphere of music and light containing a sleeping child who is the spirit of the Earth.

'And you can see its little lips are moving,
Amid the changing light of their own smiles,
Like one who talks of what he loves in dream.'

Vast majestic beams of light shoot out from the star upon the forehead of this infant.

"Which whirl as the orb whirls, swifter than thought,
Filling the abyss with sun-like lightnings,"

These radiating shafts of light reveal the secrets hidden in the profound recesses of the earth and make bare.

"Infinite mines of adamant and gold,
Valueless stones, and unimagined gems,
And caverns on crystalline columns poised
With vegetable silver overspread;"

Panthea then describes how the dilapidated ruins, war weaponry, emblazoned trophies flags and tombs of the dead - the result of war and destruction, wrecked and plundered cities unknown creatures, fishes serpents, alligators, behemoths who once terrorized the earth - were all changed by these shafts of radiance. And they ceased to exist and they 'yelled gasped, and were abolished'

Some God, Whose throne was in a comet, passed, and cried,
"Be not!" And like my words they were no more.'

The earth interrupts and describes

'The joy, the triumph, the delight, the madness!
The boundless, overflowing, bursting gladness,
The vaporous exultation not to be confined!'

The Moon responds by describing a light which has come from the Earth and penetrates the moon. It tells how all of the Moon is awakening and singing. The Earth explains how all of the world. 'Laugh with a vast and inextinguishable laughter.'

The earth recalls how earlier the tyranny of Jupiter's 'Sceptre' repressed everything crushing human being till they became one void mass battering and blending. Crowned with cloud, and snow, and fire, all palaces, obelisks and temples, mountains forests were mired into loathing and hatred.

The moon also rejoices. Its frozen lifeless mountains have changed into leaping fountains and her oceans flow and sing and she feels the flowering stalks and blossoming bright flowers sprouting on the Earth grew as if they grew on the moon.

"Music is in the sea and air,
Wingèd clouds soar here and there,
Dark with the rain new buds are dreaming of:
'Tis love, all love! "

Love penetrates the earth
'Through tangled roots and trodden clay doth pass
Into the utmost leaves and delicatest flowers;
Upon the winds, among the clouds 'tis spread,
It wakes a life in the forgotten dead,'

Love has chased away the chaos created by hate and fear and pain
which have fled like gossamer shadows.

The Earth's voice full of boundless, over flowering bursting gladness
penetrates the moon's frozen frame and a spirit from his heart bursts
forth. The Earth continuous her song of pure joy and universal love
dedicated to man.

'Man, one harmonious soul of many a soul,
"Whose nature is its own divine control,
Where all things flow to all, as rivers to the sea;
Familiar acts are beautiful through love;
Labour, and pain, and grief, in life's green grove
Sport like tame beasts, none knew how gentle they could be!'

His mean spirit and selfish passions have all melted away.

'Love rules, through waves which dare not overwhelm,
Forcing life's wildest shores to own its sovereign sway.'

Panthea and Ione interrupt the Earth and the Moon by describing the
passing of the music as a nymph rising from water. Panthea then claims,
"A mighty Power, which is as darkness,/ Is rising out of Earth, and from
the sky/ Is showered like night, and from within the air/ Bursts, like eclipse

which has been gathered up/ Into the pores of sunlight". Demogorgon appears and speaks to the Earth, the Moon, and "Ye kings of suns and stars, Dæmons and Gods,/ Ætherial Dominations, who possess/ Elysian, windless, fortunate abodes/ Beyond Heaven's constellated wilderness".

Panthea intervenes with the announcement of Demogorgon's reappearance in the closing scene after the Earth and the moon have finished their hymn on the harmony that awaits man in his union with nature. Demogorgon's final speech is a "triumphant apt finale"

Man who was once a tyrant and a slave to other tyrants, a deceiver and a gullible dupe, a mortal decay from his cradle to his grave is now a winner.

"This is the day, which down the void abysm
At the Earth-born's spell yawns for Heaven's despotism,
And Conquest is dragged captive through the deep:
Love, from its awful throne of patient power
In the wise heart, from the last giddy hour
Of dread endurance, from the slippery, steep,
And narrow verge of crag-like agony, springs
And folds over the world its healing wings.
Gentleness, Virtue, Wisdom, and Endurance,
These are the seals of that most firm assurance
Which bars the pit over Destruction's strength;
And if, with infirm hand, Eternity,
Mother of many acts and hours, should free
The serpent that would clasp her with his length;
These are the spells by which to reassume
An empire o'er the disentangled doom.
To suffer woes which Hope thinks infinite;

To forgive wrongs darker than death or night;
To defy Power, which seems omnipotent;
To love, and bear; to hope till Hope creates
From its own wreck the thing it contemplates;
Neither to change, nor falter, nor repent;
This, like thy glory, Titan, is to be
Good, great and joyous, beautiful and free;
This is alone Life, Joy, Empire, and Victory."

The concluding fourth Act of the play, generally regarded as an afterthought, is not really an integral part of the drama. But it seems to be necessary as an exposition of Shelley's philosophical ideas and as containing several ideas not made explicit earlier in the play. No reader can object to the generally objected view that "the final stanza not only sums up the major themes of the drama but also makes it clear that it is a continuing struggle of love and forbearance and hope". For Maurice Bowra Demogorgon's speech contains "hints that not only is there no end to evil but that evil is even necessary to create goodness, and the highest goodness lies in an unending struggle." Carlos Baker in his essay. "The Heart of Cosmos: Prometheus Unbound", seeing *Prometheus Unbound* as a drama of the mind, interprets the concluding two stanzas in this way: "If the forces of moral good can reassume their former dominance through a degeneration in the strength of that mind. But as long as gentleness, wisdom, virtue, and endurance remain in man, he will always have weapons with which to combat moral evil." He concludes that Shelley's drama "provides poetic affirmation for his belief in a kind of optimism in which we are our own gods".

18.8 PROMETHEUS UNBOUND AND CRITICAL VIEWS

If one looks for dramatic action in the play he will be disappointed. Frye even says that this is a drama without action, but on one level of meaning there is action : it "symbolizes man's happy reconciliation with the ideal

world of love, truth and beauty from which evil has divorced him" The same scholar further adds that for Shelley, the Platonic idealist, "love, beauty and truth exist transcendently. Evil also exists transcendently, but can be expelled from the mind through an effort of will. The Furies that torture Prometheus, though externalized in the drama, are the mental disturbances of which he is aware in his own mind." Baker's view of the essential meaning of the drama is almost the same : "The removal of the repressive force which now manacles and tortures the human mind would not only provide an opportunity for the rebirth of the power of love in that mind, but would also enable man to realize his tremendous potential of intellectual might and spiritual pleasure . . . which has for so long been stifled by a sea of hate, selfishness, and despair." For him Prometheus Unbound was "conceived and developed as an ethical and psychological drama" in which Shelley "managed to combine his two most persistent themes, the necessity of social reform and the necessity of societal love, in such a way that they supplement and complement one another." The result was a splendid poem. Harold Bloom asserts its high relevance :

"Though it is very much a poem of Shelley's own revolutionary age, Prometheus Unbound transcends the limiting context of any particular time, or rather becomes sharply relevant in any new time of troubles. Shelley, always a revolutionary temperament, is not teaching quietism or acceptance. But he shows, in agonizing, deeply inward ways, how difficult the path of regeneration is, and how much both the head and the heart need to purge in themselves if and when regeneration is ever to begin." (Oxford Anthology)

Maurice Bowra in his essay on Prometheus Unbound makes a point that "the dramatis personae belong to no actual world.. They are incarnate ideas, but ideas presented in visible shapes, principles made more attractive through the lineaments which Shelley gives to them." The reader finds no difficulty in identifying principles and ideas with certain names and characters. He readily discovers in Jupiter the incarnation of the principle of evil, a salve to his own omnipotence. Demogorgon remains a mystery.

His resounding name seems to have pleased Shelley's auditory imagination. "Eternity", as he calls himself when questioned by Jupiter, does not satisfy us completely. When Necessity is added to it as 'amoral law' his part in the play and his role in the universal order are definitely made acceptable. Another problem that Shelley had to solve was that of "relating his abstract thoughts to human experience and human feelings". There are moments when his ideas "elude us, at least as real experience." As for feelings they are either intimately related to his ideas or implicit in his abstract notions. The result is not discordance but "a single harmony." Reality as the brotherhood of free men which *The Spirit of the Hour* foretells. The concluding lines of *Prometheus Unbound* are the most explicit poetic rendering of many clear statements Shelley made in his poetry and prose about the revolution that he saw as a long term process and not a sudden solution to the problems mankind has to cope with.

While Milton's Satan embodies a spirit of rebellion, Prometheus is a vindicator and, as Maud Bodkin claims, "The theme of his heroic struggle and endurance against hopeless odds wakens in poet and reader a sense of his own state as against the odds of his destiny". However, Satan's character is flawed because his aims are not humanistic. Satan is like Prometheus in his struggle against the universe, but Satan loses his heroic aspect after being turned into a serpent who desires only revenge and becomes an enemy to mankind.

The character Demogorgon represents, according to Bodkin, the Unconscious. It is "the unknown force within the soul that, after extreme conflict and utter surrender of the conscious will, by virtue of the imaginative, creative element drawn down into the depths, can arise and shake the whole accustomed attitude of man, changing its established tensions and oppressions." The Demogorgon is the opposite of Jupiter who, "within the myth, is felt as such a tension, a tyranny established in the far past by the spirit of a man upon himself and his world, a tyranny

that, till it can be overthrown, holds him straightened and tormented, disunited from his own creative energies."

In his *Prometheus*, Shelley seeks to create a perfect revolutionary in an ideal, abstract sense (thus the difficulty of the poem). Shelley's *Prometheus* could be loosely based upon the Jesus of both the Bible, Christian orthodox tradition, as well as Milton's character of the Son in *Paradise Lost*. While Jesus or the Son sacrifices himself to save mankind, this act of sacrifice does nothing to overthrow the type of tyranny embodied, for Shelley, in the figure of God the Father. Prometheus resembles Jesus in that both uncompromisingly speak truth to power, and in how Prometheus overcomes his tyrant, Jupiter; Prometheus conquers Jupiter by "recalling" a curse Prometheus had made against Jupiter in a period before the play begins. The word "recall" in this sense means both to remember and to retract, and Prometheus, by forgiving Jupiter, removes Jupiter's power, which all along seems to have stemmed from his opponents' anger and will to violence.

Prometheus, then, is also Shelley's answer to the mistakes of the French Revolution and its cycle of replacing one tyrant with another. Shelley wished to show how a revolution could be conceived which would avoid doing just that, and in the end of this play, there is no power in charge at all; it is an anarchist's paradise.

Essentially, *Prometheus Unbound*, as re-wrought in Shelley's hands, is a fiercely revolutionary text championing free will, goodness, hope and idealism in the face of oppression.

18.9 LET US SUM UP

The leading characters in *Prometheus Unbound* are both characters in a drama and symbolic universals. Prometheus may be regarded as the mind of man, and Jupiter and Asia as ideas in the mind of Prometheus (although one should not speak of the "mind of Prometheus", because Prometheus himself is mind, that is, the human mind seen in its universal aspect). Two other characters, God the Creator (who is merely alluded to and remains passive in

the play) and Demogorgan (who is Necessity conceived as moral law) stand somewhat apart from, though they are closely linked to, the mind of man. The first has endowed that mind with invaluable faculties; the second is linked closely enough to the mind to respond to any major changes which occur there. In other words, Prometheus would be perfectly justified in saying, by the time we reach Act III, that once his self reform was complete, the rest happened by Necessity.

The essential meaning of *Prometheus Unbound* is fairly simple the removal of that repressive force which now restricts and tortures the human mind would not only provide an opportunity for the rebirth of the power of love in that mind, but would also enable man to realise his tremendous potential of intellectual might and spiritual pleasure which has for so long been stifled by fear, hate, selfishness and despair. Shelley is not suggesting that these things have happened, but only that they ought to happen. *Prometheus Unbound* is one of those "dreams of what ought to be or may be" in the distant future. Shelley works out his vision of man's achievement of ethical perfection in a broad pseudo-historical perspective, the ground-work for which is provided by Asia's exposition in Act II. He pays no attention to specific historical details, but moves upon a highly imaginative mythological plane. The mind of man in the Age of Saturn was underdeveloped, and man simply vegetated. Subsequently, in the Age of Prometheus, man acquired knowledge and power. But at the same time "fierce wants", "mad disquietudes and shadows idle of unreal good" began to appear. Prometheus's granting Jupiter dominance upon only one condition, namely, that man is to be free, means in effect that the mind of man allowed its fierce retaining the power of freedom of choice. The mind may at any time shake off these agonies if the inward conditions of that mind can be made right. Yet man's capacity for self-deception is so strong that the almost limitless possibilities inherent in an act of self-reform have long been ignored. Hence the mind of man has been subjected to the severest torture. Eventually, however, the Great Hour arrives. The mind resolves to rid itself

of the attitudes which have kept it chained in the darkness. With this resolution the way for the expulsion of the mind's demon is prepared. This resolution and this preparation provide Shelley with the ethical scheme of Act I. Precisely at the moment of the expulsion (represented in a preliminary way by the departure of the last of the Furies, and finally by the fall of Jupiter), the way is made ready for the entry into the human mind of a harmonising power long since lost (dramatically represented by Prometheus's re-union with Asia). The mind is ultimately released by its own strength (Hercules). We are given to understand that the mad disquietudes may return, although such a contingency is for the time unlikely.

How far is man able to control his own destiny? Shelley answers this philosophical question in the following manner: If the mind of man can rid itself of hatred and vengeance, the mind will be cleansed of "fear and pain", and consequently become receptive to the harmonising power of love. Supreme mental well-being will then ensure; order will succeed disorder; and harmony will take the place of chaos.

In describing Shelley's view of the problem of evil, Mary asserted that he thought it necessary only for mankind to resolve "that there should be no evil, and there would be none". With certain qualifications this is true. But the qualifications must be clearly stated. One of these is that, even under the new dispensation (assuming as he does, that power is achieved on a world-wide scale) man will still have to contend with "chance and death and mutability". Secondly, as may be inferred from Demogorgon's final exhortation to the assembled cosmic hosts, there is no absolute guarantee of a permanent expulsion of moral evil. Jupiter, the spiritually destructive force, has been cast down into the pit. But there is always the possibility that at some distant point of time in the future some infirmity will develop in mankind to set this destructive force free once more, and that evil would once more hold sway.

If the forces of moral good were capable of being set in motion only through a regeneration in the mind of man, the forces of moral evil can

reassume their formal dominance only through a degeneration in the strength of that mind. But as long as gentleness, wisdom, virtue, and endurance remain in man, he will always have weapons with which to fight moral evil.

18.10 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

1. Who has chained Prometheus?
 - A. Jupiter
 - B. Apollo
 - C. Demogorgon
 - D. Bacchus
2. Shelley has drawn a resemblance of Prometheus with -
 - A. Christ
 - B. Sisyphus
 - C. Hercules
 - D. Aeschylus
3. Who is Prometheus's beloved
 - A. Panthea
 - B. Earth
 - C. Ione
 - D. Asia
4. Shelley's Prometheus is inspired by the work of
 - A. Plato
 - B. Homer
 - C. Aeschylus
 - D. Sophocles
5. Demogorgon is symbolic of -
 - A. Necessity
 - B. Honesty
 - C. Virtue
 - D. The Arch Fiend

18.10.1 Answer Key

1. Jupiter
2. Jesus
3. Asia
4. Aeschylers
5. Honesty

18.11 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

- Q.1. Write a detailed critical summary of *Prometheus Unbound*.

- Q.2. What is Asia's role in *Prometheus Unbound*?
- Q.3. *Prometheus Unbound* glorifies the rebellious impulse towards freedom in The human spirit. Explain.
- Q.4. *Prometheus Unbound* is a play in verse in which the poetry takes precedence over the drama. Elalsouate.
- Q.5. Critically discuss *Prometheus Unbound* as a lyrical drama about power and tyranny.

18.12 SUGGESTED READING

1. Shelley's Mythmaking by Harold Bloom.
2. *Prometheus Unbound* : An Interpretation by Carl Grabo
3. *Necessity and the Role of the Hero in Shelley's Prometheus Unbound* by Stuart. M Sperry.
4. Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound* by Lawrence Zillman.

M.A. ENGLISH : SEMESTER II

COURSE CODE : ENG 212

LESSON No. 19

POETRY-II

MATTHEW ARNOLD'S

UNIT-VI

MATTHEW ARNOLD'S "BACCHANALIA"

STRUCTURE

- 19.1 Introduction
- 19.2 Objectives
- 19.3 Biography of Matthew Arnold
- 19.4 Matthew Arnold as a poet/Victorian poet
- 19.5 Matthew Arnold's literary works
- 19.6 Introduction to the Poem "Bacchanalia"
- 19.7 Text of "Bacchanalia"
- 19.8 Glossary
- 19.9 Summary of the Poem "Bacchanalia"
- 19.10 Paraphrases
- 19.11 Critical Appreciation of "Bacchanalia"/ Title/Theme of the Poem "Bacchanalia"
- 19.12 Poetic Technique of Matthew Arnold in the Poem "Bacchanalia"
- 19.13 Multiple Choice Questions
 - 19.13.1 Answer Key
- 19.14 Examination Oriented Questions
- 19.15 Let Us Sum Up
- 19.16 Suggested Reading

19.1 INTRODUCTION

“Bacchanalia” is a poem by Matthew Arnold published in his poetic collection *New Poems* in 1867. “Bacchanalia” is a representation of Victorian era, its life, people’s feelings and emotions seen through the eyes of Matthew Arnold.

19.2 OBJECTIVES

Objective of this lesson is:

- i) to explain the learners the features of Victorian poetry.
- ii) to discuss Matthew Arnold as a Victorian poet.
- iii) To enable the learners to critically analyse the poem “Bacchanalia” as a Victorian poem.

19.3 BIOGRAPHY OF MATTHEW ARNOLD

Matthew Arnold was born on December 24, 1822 at Laleham, on the Thames River. Son of Dr. Thomas Arnold, famous Head Master of Rugby School and educational reformer, Arnold became exposed at an early age to the combined influences of liberal studies and contemporary society. As a boy, Arnold spent many of his school holidays at Fox How, near Grasmere, where Nature exercised a profound influence on him. In 1841 Arnold began his studies as a scholar at Balliol College, Oxford. For Oxford Arnold retained an impassioned affection. During his residence at Oxford, his friendship became stronger with Arthur Hugh Clough, another Rugby old boy who had been one of his father’s favorites. Arnold attended John Henry Newman’s sermons at St. Mary’s but did not join the Oxford Movement. His father died suddenly of heart disease in 1842. He won the Newdigate Prize with his poem “Cromwell” (1843) and was graduated with second-class honours degree in *Literae Humaniores* in 1844. In 1845, after a short interlude of teaching at Rugby, he was elected Fellow of Oriel College, Oxford. In 1847, he became Private Secretary to Lord Lansdowne, Lord President of the council. In 1851 he was appointed Inspector of Schools, a position he maintained for 35 years.

Two months later of his appointment as an Inspector of Schools, he married Frances Lucy, daughter of Sir William Wightman, Justice of the Queen's Bench. The Arnolds had six children: Thomas (1852-1868); Trevenen William (1853-1872); Richard Penrose (1855-1908), an inspector of factories; Lucy Charlotte (1858-1934) who married Frederick W. Whitridge of New York, whom she had met during Arnold's American lecture tour; Eleanore Mary Caroline (1861-1936); Basil Francis (1866).

Matthew Arnold, as an Inspector of schools, engaged in incessant travelling throughout the British provinces and also several times was sent by the government to inquire into the state of education in France, Germany, Holland, and Switzerland. Two of his reports on schools abroad were reprinted as books, and his annual reports on schools at home attracted wide attention, written, as they were, in Arnold's own urbane and civilized prose.

19.4 MATTHEW ARNOLD AS A POET/ VICTORIAN POET

Before discussing Matthew Arnold as a poet/Victorian poet, let's have a look on the characteristics of Victorian poetry.

Victorian poetry (1800-1901)

Victorian poetry is the poetry written during the period of Queen Victoria's reign (1837-1901). During the Victorian age, numerous poetic ideals were developed, such as the increased use of the sonnet as a poetic form. Victorian poetry resembles the works of the Romantics, as such Romantic writers as William Blake, John Keats, William Wordsworth and P.B. Shelley had an immense impact on the Victorian poets. These two periods have a lot in common: skepticism, interest in everything mysterious, distrust of organized religion.

However, there are some characteristics, or features, of Victorian poetry which differentiates it from the Romantic era's poetry:

- i) One such characteristic, or feature, is the Victorian interest in Medieval legends, myths and fables over the classical legends and mythology embraced by the preceding Romantic poets.

- ii) Another is a more realistic and less idealized view of nature.
- iii) Common people and common language is emphasized in poetry. For Romantics, it was the country rustic but for the Victorians it is more often the common urban dweller.
- iv) One of the main defining characteristics of Victorian poetry is that it is pictorial. Detailed imagery is used to convey thoughts and emotions. Though, the Victorians took this a step further. They used sensory elements to describe abstract ideas such as the struggles between religion and science.
- v) Victorian poetry is characterized by religious skepticism, inherited from the Romantic Period, but contrarily also devotional poetry that proclaims a more mystical faith. Religion becomes more of a personal experience expressed through poetry.
- vi) Victorian poetry employs more humor and whimsy than the prior Romantic Period. Despite the whimsy, in the Victorian Era, poetry and literature take a more harsh and utilitarian view of nature and philosophy. However, unlike the Romantics, the Victorian poets were more likely to deny the existence of God through scientific means (“Dover Beach” by Matthew Arnold is the great Victorian example). Their poetry was more light-hearted and humorous, often whimsical. Themes were much more realistic expressing emotions such as isolation, despair and general pessimism.
- vii) Several factors that influenced Victorian poetry and literature were the conflicts produced because of scientific discoveries. Even though many Victorian poets struggled with a loss of faith, there was still a sense of high morality that they held close and revered. Through their writing, they tried to encourage readers toward more noble actions and attitudes.

viii. One of the most significant accomplishments of the Victorian Era is the appearance of female poets such as Elizabeth Browning, Christina Rossetti, and the Bronte sisters.

ix) Speaking about male poets, figures like Alfred Tennyson, Matthew Arnold and Robert Browning should be mentioned. Among the Victorians, Alfred Tennyson (1809-1892) enjoyed the greatest popularity. He wrote on a variety of topics, including religion and ethics. His poetry responded to all the issues and concerns of the Victorian society and reflected moods and attitudes of the Britons.

Matthew Arnold (1822-1888) has never been as popular as Tennyson. He did not feel a part of the time in which he lived, and in his nonfiction works (“Literature and Dogma”) sharply criticized the British society for immorality and lack of culture, idealizing ancient civilization.

Robert Browning (1812-1889), too, felt like a stranger in Victorian England. Together with his wife Elizabeth Barrett Browning, also a recognized poet, he lived in Italy for a long time, and even when he returned home, he did not write about England. His style of writing is easily recognizable. He put the freedom and spiritual emancipation of the individual above all and was interested in moral and spiritual conflicts.

x) Lyric poetry was a dominant genre of poetry emerging during the nineteenth century. The lyric is distinguished as one of the three broad group of poetry. The general principles that define lyric poetry are its conventions of being a shorter poem in which the narrator expresses personal feelings that are often directly addressed to the reader. The “Victorian Lyric” adopted was more “linguistically self-conscious and defensive” than the lyric of the Romantic era. Victorians often mixed up their genres, so the lyric became incorporated with other forms such as the dramatic monologue or “dramatic lyric”. Tennyson’s the “Lady of Shallot” is one of the most well known poems from the Victorian era.

xi) Victorian Poetry was a very crucial period in the history of poetry, as it linked Romanticism and Modernism of the twentieth century. Therefore, it is sometimes difficult to identify to which epoch this or that poet belongs, as it is not easy to categorize them all in these broad movements.

Matthew Arnold

Meditative and rhetorical, Arnold's poetry often wrestles with problems of psychological isolation. In "To Marguerite—Continued," for example, Arnold revises Donne's assertion that "No man is an island," suggesting that we "mortals" are indeed "in the sea of life enisled." Other well-known poems, such as "Dover Beach", link the problem of isolation with what Arnold saw as the dwindling faith of his time. Despite his own religious doubts, a source of great anxiety for him, in several essays Arnold sought to establish the essential truth of Christianity. His most influential essays, however, were those on literary topics. In "The Function of Criticism" (1865) and "The Study of Poetry" (1880) Arnold called for a new epic poetry: a poetry that would address the moral needs of his readers, "to animate and ennoble them." Arnold's arguments, for a renewed religious faith and an adoption of classical aesthetics and morals, are particularly representative of mainstream Victorian intellectual concerns. His approach—his gentlemanly and subtle style—to these issues, however, established criticism as an art form, and has influenced almost every major English critic since, including T. S. Eliot, Lionel Trilling, and Harold Bloom. Though perhaps less obvious, the tremendous influence of his poetry, which addresses the poet's innermost feelings with complete transparency, can easily be seen in writers as different from each other as W. B. Yeats, James Wright, Sylvia Plath, and Sharon Olds.

Matthew Arnold was among the major Victorian writers sharing in a revival of interest and respect in the second half of the twentieth century. Matthew Arnold is unique in that his reputation rests equally upon his poetry and his prose. Only a quarter of his productive life was given to writing poetry,

but many of the same values, attitudes, and feelings that are expressed in his poems achieve a fuller or more balanced formulation in his prose. This unity was obscured for earlier readers by the usual evaluations of his poetry as gnomic or thought-laden, or as melancholy or elegiac, and of his prose as urbane, didactic, and often satirically witty in its self-imposed task of enlightening the social consciousness of England.

Assessing his achievement as a whole, G. K. Chesterton said that Arnold was, “even in the age of Carlyle and Ruskin, perhaps the most serious man alive.” H. J. Muller declares that “if in an age of violence the attitudes he engenders cannot alone save civilization, it is worth saving chiefly because of such attitudes”—a view of Arnold’s continuing relevance which emphasizes his appeals to his contemporaries in the name of “culture” throughout his prose writings. It is even more striking, and would have pleased Arnold greatly, to find an intelligent and critical journalist telling newspaper readers in 1980 that if selecting three books for castaways, he would make his first choice *The Poetical Works of Matthew Arnold* (1950), because “Arnold’s longer poems may be an acquired taste, but once the nut has been cracked their power is extraordinary.” Arnold put his own poems in perspective in a letter to his mother on 5 June 1869: “It might be fairly urged that I have less poetical sentiment than Tennyson, and less intellectual vigour and abundance than Browning; yet, because I have perhaps more of a fusion of the two than either of them, and have more regularly applied that fusion to the main line of modern development, I am likely enough to have my turn, as they have had theirs.”

The term *modern* as used by Arnold about his own writing needs examining, especially since many readers have come to see him as the most modern of the Victorians. It is defined by Arnold in “On the Modern Element in Literature”, his first lecture as professor of poetry at Oxford in 1857. This lecture, the first to be delivered from that chair in English, marked Arnold’s transition from poet to social as well as literary critic. Stating that the great need of a modern age is an “intellectual deliverance”, Arnold found the characteristic features of such a deliverance to be a preoccupation with the

arts of peace, the growth of a tolerant spirit, the capacity for refined pursuits, the formation of taste, and above all, the intellectual maturity to “observe facts with a critical spirit” and “to judge by the rule of reason.”

Such an ideal Arnold saw as peculiarly needful if his own age was to become truly modern, truly humanized and civilized. The views he developed in his prose works on social, educational, and religious issues have been absorbed into the general consciousness. He could harshly satirize the religious cant which would have the “festering mass” of “half-sized, half-fed, half-clothed” children in London’s miserable East End “succour one another if only with a cup of cold water”; he could more gently satirize the suicide of a Puritan businessman obsessed with the two fears of falling into poverty and of being eternally lost. But he believed above all in the need for a vision of perfection and maintenance of faith in the possibility of a better society. The vision, as an eloquent conclusion to a call for practical reforms in education, suffuses the final paragraph of heightened prose in *A French Eton* (1864). The belief that sustained him and motivated his crusade on behalf of “culture” is soberly expressed in the late essay “A French Critic on Milton”: “Human progress consists in a continual increase in the number of those, who, ceasing to live by the animal life alone and to feel the pleasures of sense only, come to participate in the intellectual life also, and to find enjoyment in the things of the mind.”

When Arnold’s poetry is considered, a different meaning must be applied to the term *modern* than that applied to the ideas of the critic, reformer, and prophet who dedicated most of his life to broadening the intellectual horizons of his countrymen—of, indeed, the whole English-speaking world. In many of his poems can be seen the psychological and emotional conflicts, the uncertainty of purpose, above all the feeling of disunity within oneself or of the individual’s estrangement from society which is today called alienation and is thought of as a modern phenomenon. As Kenneth Allott said in 1954: “If a poet can ever teach us to understand what we feel, and how to live with our feelings, then Arnold is a contemporary.”

The recurring themes of man's lonely state and of a search for an inner self; the rejection in "The Scholar-Gipsy" of "this strange disease of modern life,/With its sick hurry, its divided aims"; the awareness, at the end of the early poem "Resignation", "In action's dizzying eddy whirled" of "something that infects the world" made an impact not only on the nineteenth century but also in the future centuries. Readers of the jet aircraft age may find wryly amusing the poem "Stanzas in Memory of the Author of 'Obermann'" (1849).

But the speed of the destabilizing process of change is, after all, relative. On the other hand, no reader can fail to respond to Arnold's well-known lines in "Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse" describing himself as "Wandering between two worlds, one dead,/The other powerless to be born." Romantic nostalgia for idealized older worlds, or for simpler states of being, is at the emotional core of many of his poems, with the insistent pressure of the present creating a conflict only to be resolved by a shift to prose and to the role of midwife, or at least prophet, of a better world in the future.

Chesterton's view of Arnold as, in spite of his fun with the Philistines, basically the most serious man of his times was supported by the publication in 1952 of the complete *Note-Books*. This "breviary of a humanist" contains quotations in six languages, copied from books over a period of thirty-six years, that caught Arnold's attention, passages which held profound meaning for him and invited meditation and reconsideration. Even an hour a day of serious as against mere desultory reading was, in Arnold's experience, immensely "fortifying". In a letter of 1884 to Charles Eliot Norton he characteristically blends observation and prediction: "You are quite right in saying that the influence of poetry and literature appears at this moment diminishing rather than increasing. The newspapers have a good deal to do with this. The *Times*, which has much improved again, is a world, and people who read it daily hardly feel the necessity for reading a book; yet reading a book—a good book—is a discipline such as no reading of even good newspapers can ever give. But literature has in itself such powers of attraction that I am not over anxious about it."

The long dispute over whether Marguerite, the French girl Arnold fell in love with in Switzerland, was real or imaginary was settled by the publication of the letters to Clough. In a letter of 29 September 1848 he will “go to Thun” and “linger one day at the Hotel Bellevue for the sake of the blue eyes of one of its inmates.” On 23 September 1849 he is in Thun “in a curious and not altogether comfortable state: however tomorrow I carry my aching head to the mountains and to my cousin the Bhunlis Alp.” Research has failed to provide further clues, but adding these to the names and places of physical details in the poems has allowed the majority view to prevail: the Marguerite of the Switzerland lyrics was indeed real, as was the anguish of the lover who could not surrender himself to passion. There is as much of relief as of desolation in the poem “Self-Dependence”. Standing at the prow of the ship bearing him back to England, “Weary of myself, and sick of asking/ What I am, and what I ought to be,” Arnold sends “a look of passionate desire” (the only one on record) to the stars, and asks that they “Calm me, ah, compose me to the end!” The answer comes as that to live “self-poised” as the stars do, there is only one prescription: “Resolve to be thyself; and know that he,/Who finds himself, loses his misery!”

Having survived exposure to the storms of passion in the Alps, Arnold still felt the need for a love and companionship compatible with the needs of ordinary human nature, and before long he was attracted by the charms of a more suitable English girl, the daughter of a judge. The conventional courtship which followed, and which produced some charming lyrics, was prolonged until Arnold could obtain a position with an income that would support a wife. He achieved this when Lord Lansdowne had him appointed inspector of schools in April 1851, and the marriage to Frances Lucy Wightman took place in June. Though his first volume of poetry, *The Strayed Reveller and Other Poems* (1849), and the second, *Empedocles on Etna and Other Poems* (1852), both published under the pseudonym “A.”, received limited attention and were soon withdrawn from circulation in spite of praise from a discerning few, Arnold continued writing poetry. His reputation was established with his third volume, *Poems: A New Edition* (1853), the first published under his name. It omitted “Empedocles on Etna” and the early poem “The New Sirens”, but

contained two new poems which have been widely known and liked ever since, “Sohrab and Rustum” and “The Scholar-Gipsy”. Most of Arnold’s best poems are in these volumes except “Dover Beach” which, though not published until 1867, has been convincingly assigned to 1851 by Kenneth Allott.

Arnold by 1852 had arrived at a point where he could say firmly, “Nothing can absolve us from the duty of doing all we can to keep alive our courage and activity.” A lightness of touch still appeared at times, as when he wrote from Fox How, the Arnold family home in the Lake District, while on holiday from the wearying routine of school inspecting and marking papers: “I for my part find here that I could willingly fish all day and read the newspapers all the evening and so live—but I am not pleased with the results in myself of even a day or two of such life.” The words *courage*, *duty*, and *activity* suggest the direction Matthew was to follow after 1853. Yet the early poem “The Voice” should be related to the late essay on Emerson in which Arnold recalls the effect of Newman’s eloquence, those “words and thoughts which were a religious music—subtle, sweet, mournful.”

The response to both sensuous and spiritual beauty which made Arnold a poet, and emerged at times throughout his prose, appears in the lines which tell of Arnold’s poetics, as revealed in the letters to Clough, show a gradual shift from a predominantly aesthetic to a predominantly moral emphasis.

Arnold finally faces up to the fact that his classical ideal embraces much more than the aesthetic values he has been insisting on with Clough. Modern poetry, to serve the age well, “can only subsist by its contents: by becoming a complete *magister vitae* as the poetry of the ancients did: by including, as theirs did, religion with poetry.” Poetry is something more than Keats’ “Beauty is Truth, Truth Beauty,” of which Arnold was later to say that it is *not* “all ye need to know,” though it is much. It is a source of moral therapy for the age and a surrogate for the weakening Christian faith. These views anticipate Arnold’s lectures *On Translating Homer* (1861), in which “nobility” is seen as a major characteristic of Homer, and “The Study of Poetry” (1880), which proclaims that “the strongest part of our religion today is its unconscious poetry.”

Arnold's perception of beauty and greatness in art has shifted from the aesthetic impact of a unity in the form of conception and the form of expression to the moral impact of a unity of style and substance which exhibits and influences character. Poetry must convey the emotional warmth and spiritual power that religion was losing in an era of sectarian strife on the one hand and agnostic indifference on the other: "If one loved what was beautiful and interesting in itself [the collocation of terms is noteworthy] *passionately* enough, one would produce what was excellent without troubling oneself with religious dogmas at all. As it is, we are *warm* only when dealing with the last," and because warmth is a blessing and frigidity a curse, Arnold would have "most others" stay "on the old religious road."

The names of Homer and Shakespeare here, like the frequent praise of Sophocles elsewhere, suggest that for Arnold the high calling of poetry for the age could only be realized in the classical forms of epic and drama. Clearly set forth in the 1853 preface, the preference is further refined in his first Oxford lecture when he says that "the great poets of the modern period of Greece are ... the dramatic poets." Indeed, Arnold tried at that time to offer his English readers an example of the kind of poetry he still wished to write, and felt ought to be written. In a letter to his sister Jane he admitted that he had not succeeded, and could not succeed. *Merope* (1858) might exhibit perfection of form, but "to attain or approach perfection in the region of thought and feeling, and to unite this with perfection of form, demands not merely effort and labour, but an actual tearing of oneself to pieces." Though he blames the age and his occupation for not letting him devote his whole life to poetry as Wordsworth could, he adds that Shelley and Byron could also do this, "and were besides driven by their demon to do so." Driven by no such demon, but by a need to control impulse by reason (and later anarchy by culture), Arnold produced poems reflecting conflicts that were a genuine part of his emotional and intellectual experience, but not the poem of his ideal that would both illuminate and transcend experience in the artistic perfection of classical form.

How much this ideal embraced was later to be seen in his praise of the Sophoclean power of "imaginative reason" and in his lectures *On the Study of*

Celtic Literature (1867). He credits the Celts not with “great poetical works” but with poetry having “an air of greatness”, for in poetry “emotion counts for so much”, but “reason, measure, sanity, also count for so much.” In a letter to his mother, referring to the poems of Jean Ingelow, he gives the simplest summary of his poetical creed: “It is a great deal to give one true feeling in poetry, and I think she seemed to be able to do that; but I do not at present very much care for poetry unless it can give me true *thought* as well. It is the alliance of these two that makes great poetry, the only poetry really worth very much.”

Arnold noted in the preface to the second edition of *Poems: A New Edition* (1854) the charge that he had neglected the lyric, “that region of the poetical field which is chiefly cultivated at present.” In his *On Translating Homer: Last Words* (1862) he was to make handsome amends. After asserting, and trying to illustrate by his own specimens, that English hexameters were best for translating Homer into English verse, he rejected the ballad as inadequate, saying of two lines from Macaulay’s *Lays of Ancient Rome* (1842) that they were “hard to read without a cry of pain.” He continues: “When there comes in poetry what I may call the *lyrical cry*, this transfigures everything, makes everything grand; the simplest form may be here even an advantage, because the flame of the emotion glows through and through it more easily.” In Wordsworth and Keats the “lyrical cry” may transform a simple stanza or even a passage from an “ampler form.” From this concession, Arnold’s flexibility and growth as a critic were to carry him on to the isolating of lines revealing “natural magic” in his essay on Maurice de Guérin, to the “Celtic note” in his lectures, and finally to his famous “touchstone” method of detecting supreme poetic quality in single lines and short passages. Such lines or passages (one thinks again of the *Note-Books*) Arnold found from his own experience were capable of setting up aesthetic, moral, and spiritual resonances which echo in the mind and soul, achieving through style and interpretative power something of the “grand” effects he found in epic and drama, and blending into his final definition of poetry as a “criticism of life” under the laws of “poetic truth” and “poetic beauty”.

His patterns were original at times and could be appropriate to theme and mood, as is the adapted stanza from Keats' odes to the lonely musings and loving natural descriptions in "The Scholar-Gipsy" and "Thyrsis". The conventional structure of four octosyllabic lines followed by a couplet is effective where the pressure of emotion, usually elegiac, is strong enough, as in the two poems "To Marguerite" and in "Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse." Exclamation marks and italics and the intrusive "Ah" are sometimes stumbling blocks for readers. Against such evidence that Arnold had no ear for euphony, much less music, one can place "The Forsaken Merman" and "Dover Beach", lyrics like "Longing" and "Requiescat", the ending of "Sohrab and Rustum", and the last section of "The Church of Brou".

Arnold's characteristic verse structures tend to depart from the traditional. Stanzas or verse paragraphs of varying length and of varying line length make him a forerunner of free verse practice, as in "A Summer Night" and "Dover Beach", in the romantically melancholic and melodiously rhymed "The Forsaken Merman", and in unrhymed poems such as "The Strayed Reveller" and "The Future". This last poem, and others of more conventional form such as "Human Life", "Self-Deception", and "Morality", all reflecting upon the human condition, help to explain the view of Arnold's poetry as thought-laden or "gnomic" or even, among hostile critics like Edith Sitwell and T. S. Eliot, as academic versifying. The blend of participation and detachment, an aloof and considering stance modified by an engaged sympathy, is characteristic of Arnold, and is often a source of that charm which, in a depressed moment.

19.5 MATTHEW ARNOLD'S LITERARY WORKS

Poetry

A Matthew Arnold Birthday Book (1883)

Alaric at Rome: A Prize Poem (1840)

Cromwell: A Prize Poem (1843)

Empedocles on Etna and Other Poems (1852)

Empedocles on Etna: A Dramatic Poem (1900)

Merope: A Tragedy (1858)
New Poems (1867)
Poems: A New Edition (1853)
Poems: Second Series (1855)
The Poems of Matthew Arnold (1965)
The Poetical Works of Matthew Arnold (1950)
The Strayed Reveller and Other Poems (1849)
The Works of Matthew Arnold (1903)

Prose

Essays, Letters, and Reviews by Matthew Arnold *Essays, Letters, and Reviews by Matthew Arnold* (1960)
Friendship's Garland (1883)
"Charles Augustin Sainte-Beuve," in *Encyclopedia Britannica*, ninth edition, IX: 162-165 (1886)
"Isaiah of Jerusalem" in the *Authorized English Version, with an Introduction, Corrections and Notes* (1883)
"Schools," in *The Reign of Queen Victoria* (1887)
A Bible-Reading for Schools: The Great Prophecy of Israel's Restoration (1872)
A French Eton; or, Middle Class Education and the State(1864)
Arnold as Dramatic Critic (1903)
Civilization in the United States: First and Last Impressions of America (1888)
Complete Prose Works (1960)
Culture and Anarchy (1883)
Culture and Anarchy: An Essay in Political and Social Criticism (1869)

Culture and the State (1965)
Discourses in America (1885)
Education Department (1886)
England and the Italian Question (1859)
England and the Italian Question, (1953)
Essays in Criticism (1865)
Essays in Criticism: Second Series (1888)
Essays in Criticism: Third Series (1910)
Five Uncollected Essays of Matthew Arnold (1953)
General Grant, with a Rejoinder by Mark Twain (1966)
General Grant: An Estimate (1887)
God and the Bible: A Review of Objections to "Literature and Dogma" (1875)
Heinrich Heine (1863)
Higher Schools and Universities in Germany (1874)
Irish Essays, and Others (1882)
Isaiah XLXVI; with the Shorter Prophecies Allied to It(1875)
Last Essays on Church and Religion (1877)
Letters of Matthew Arnold, 1848-1888 (1895)
Letters of an Old Playgoer (1919)
Letters, Speeches and Tracts on Irish Affairs by Edmund Burke (1881)
Literature and Dogma: An Essay towards a Better Apprehension of the Bible (1873)
Matthew Arnold's Letters: A Descriptive Checklist (1968)
Matthew Arnold's Notebooks (1902)
Mixed Essays (1879)

On Home Rule for Ireland: Two Letters to "The Times" (1891)
On Translating Homer: Last Words: A Lecture Given at Oxford (1862)
On Translating Homer: Three Lectures Given at Oxford (1861)
On the Modern Element in Literature (1869)
On the Study of Celtic Literature (1883)
Poems of Wordsworth (1879)
Poetry of Byron (1881)
Reports on Elementary Schools 1852-1882 (1889)
Schools and Universities on the Continent (1867)
St. Paul and Protestantism; with an Introduction on Puritanism and the Church of England (1883)
The Hundred Greatest Men: Portraits of the One Hundred Greatest Men of History (1879)
The Letters of Matthew Arnold to Arthur Hugh Clough (1932)
The Note-Books of Matthew Arnold (1952)
The Popular Education of France, with Notices of That of Holland and Switzerland (1861)
The Six Chief Lives from Johnson's "Lives of the Poets," with Macaulay's "Life of Johnson," (1878)
The Study of Poetry (1880)
Thoughts on Education Chosen From the Writings of Matthew Arnold (1912)
Unpublished Letters of Matthew Arnold (1923)

19.6 INTRODUCTION TO THE POEM "BACCHANALIA"

"Bacchanalia" was published in Matthew Arnold's collection *New Poems* in 1867. "Bacchanalia" is in two stanzas. The first stanza tells how some wild youths disturb the serenity of a peaceful field, while the second stanza relates this interruption to the emergence of modernism.

19.7 TEXT OF “BACCHANALIA

I

The evening comes, the fields are still.

The tinkle of the thirsty rill,

Unheard all day, ascends again;

Deserted is the half-mown plain,

Silent the swaths! the ringing wain,

The mower’s cry, the dog’s alarms,

All housed within the sleeping farms!

The business of the day is done,

The last-left haymaker is gone.

And from the thyme upon the height,

And from the elder-blossom white

And pale dog-roses in the hedge,

And from the mint-plant in the sedge,

In puffs of balm the night-air blows

The perfume which the day forgoes.

And on the pure horizon far,

See, pulsing with the first-born star,

The liquid sky above the hill!

The evening comes, the fields are still.

Loitering and leaping,

With saunter, with bounds—

Flickering and circling

In files and in rounds—

Gaily their pine-staff green

Tossing in air,
Loose o'er their shoulders white
Showering their hair—
See! the wild Maenads
Break from the wood,
Youth and Iacchus
Maddening their blood.
See! through the quiet land
Rioting they pass—
Fling the fresh heaps about,
Trample the grass.
Tear from the rifled hedge
Garlands, their prize;
Fill with their sports the field,
Fill with their cries.

Shepherd, what ails thee, then?
Shepherd, why mute?
Forth with thy joyous song!
Forth with thy flute!
Tempt not the revel blithe?
Lure not their cries?
Glow not their shoulders smooth?
Melt not their eyes?
Is not, on cheeks like those,
Lovely the flush?
—*Ah, so the quiet was!*
So was the hush!

II

The epoch ends, the world is still.
The age has talk'd and work'd its fill—
The famous orators have shone,
The famous poets sung and gone,
The famous men of war have fought,
The famous speculators thought,
The famous players, sculptors, wrought,
The famous painters fill'd their wall,
The famous critics judged it all.
The combatants are parted now—
Uphung the spear, unbent the bow,
The puissant crown'd, the weak laid low.
And in the after-silence sweet,
Now strifes are hush'd, our ears doth meet,
Ascending pure, the bell-like fame
Of this or that down-trodden name,
Delicate spirits, push'd away
In the hot press of the noon-day.
And o'er the plain, where the dead age
Did its now silent warfare wage—
O'er that wide plain, now wrapt in gloom,
Where many a splendour finds its tomb,
Many spent fames and fallen might—
The one or two immortal lights
Rise slowly up into the sky
To shine there everlastingly,

Like stars over the bounding hill.
The epoch ends, the world is still.

Thundering and bursting
In torrents, in waves—
Carolling and shouting
Over tombs, amid graves—
See! on the cumber'd plain
Clearing a stage,
Scattering the past about,
Comes the new age.
Bards make new poems,
Thinkers new schools,
Statesmen new systems,
Critics new rules.
All things begin again;
Life is their prize;
Earth with their deeds they fill,
Fill with their cries.

Poet, what ails thee, then?
Say, why so mute?
Forth with thy praising voice!
Forth with thy flute!
Loiterer! why sittest thou
Sunk in thy dream?
Tempt not the bright new age?
Shines not its stream?
Look, ah, what genius,
Art, science, wit!

Soldiers like Caesar,
 Statesmen like Pitt!
 Sculptors like Phidias,
 Raphaels in shoals,
 Poets like Shakespeare—
 Beautiful souls!
 See, on their glowing cheeks
 Heavenly the flush!
—Ah, so the silence was!
So was the hush!
 The world but feels the present's spell,
 The poet feels the past as well;
 Whatever men have done, might do,
 Whatever thought, might think it too.

19.8. GLOSSARY

- Ail— trouble or afflict (someone) in mind or body
 Ascend— go up or climb; rise or move up
 Bacchanalia—a Roman festival of Bacchus celebrated with dancing, song, and revelry
 Bacchus— Bacchus was the Roman god of agriculture, wine and fertility
 Bacchus— The Bacchus is a white wine grape created by viticulturalist Peter Morio at the Geilweilerh of Institute for Grape Breeding in the Palatinate in 1933.
 Balm— ointment
 Blithe— happy or carefree
 Bound— walk or run with leaping strides; leap; jump; spring; bounce
 Carol— sing or say (something) happily

- Caesar— Julius Caesar—A Roman general and dictator in the first century b.c. In military campaigns to secure Roman rule over the province of Gaul, present-day France, he gained much prestige.
- Combatant— fighter
- Cultic— cult. [kuhlt] noun—a particular system of religious worship, especially with reference to its rites and ceremonies
- Cumber— hamper; hidden
- Dog-rose— *Rosa canina*, commonly known as the dog rose, is a variable climbing, wild rose species native to Europe, northwest Africa, and western Asia.
- Doth— archaic third person singular present of do
- Epoch— a particular period of time in history or a person's life; era; age; period; time
- Flicker— shine unsteadily; vary rapidly in brightness; glimmer; glint
- Fling— throw; toss
- Gaily— in a cheerful or light-hearted way; merrily; cheerfully
- Haymaker— a person who is involved in making hay, especially one who tosses and spreads it to dry after mowing
- Hedge— a fence or boundary formed by closely growing bushes or shrubs
- Hush— silence
- Iacchus— In ancient Greek religion and mythology, Iacchus (also Iacchos, Iakchos) (Greek: <ακχος) was a minor deity, of some cultic importance, particularly at Athens and Eleusis in connection with the Eleusinian mysteries, but without any significant mythology
- Maddening— extremely annoying
- Maenads— (in ancient Greece) a female follower of Bacchus, traditionally associated with divine possession and frenzied rites
- Might— the power, authority, or resources wielded

Mint-plant—	Mentha
Mown—verb	<i>mow</i> —cut; scythe; shear; trim
Pine-staff—	pine tree an evergreen tree that grows in cooler areas of the world
Puff—	a short, explosive burst of breath or wind; gust; blast
Puissant—	having great power or influence
Revel—	celebrate
Revelry—	festivities; celebrations
Rill—	a small stream
Rifled—	make spiral grooves in (a gun or its barrel or bore) to make a bullet spin and thereby have greater accuracy over a long distance; hit or kick (a ball) hard and straight
Saunter—	walk in slow; relaxed manner
Sedge—	a grass-like plant with triangular stems and inconspicuous flowers, growing typically in wet ground. Sedges are widely distributed throughout temperate and cold regions.
Shoal—	a large number of fish swimming together
Spear—	a weapon with a pointed tip, typically of steel, and a long shaft, used for thrusting or throwing
Splendour—	magnificent and splendid appearance; grandeur
Strife—	conflict
Swath—	a broad strip or area of something
Thyme—	It is an aromatic perennial evergreen herb with culinary, medicinal, and ornamental uses.
Tinkle—	ring; jingle
Torrent—	flood; deluge; overflow; tide
Toss—	hurl; cast; fling

- Trample— tread on and crush
- Uphung— hung up: hung—verb *hang*—suspend or be suspended from above with the lower part dangling free
- Wain— a wagon or cart
- Wrapt— archaic or poetic past participle of wrap
- Wrought— (of metals) beaten out or shaped by hammering; made or fashioned in the specified Way

19.9 SUMMARY OF THE POEM “BACCHANALIA”

The poem is split into two stanzas. The first stanza begins by describing a calm, tranquil evening out amongst some fields. All is quiet beneath the stars until several drunken youths suddenly rush out to the fields, ruining the tranquility with their cries and hollers, trampling the grass in their excitement and amusement. The speaker confronts a hypothetical shepherd, wondering why he is not excited by their presence. The final two lines of one offers that shepherd’s reply: “Ah, so the quiet was! / So was the hush!”

The second stanza of the poem is organized in a similar way. It describes the world as quiet, having just passed through an era. All its poets, artists, actors, and critics have created their work and gone, leaving the world changed behind them. That old age has passed on, leaving only a few immortal traces behind, shining above the sky. Suddenly, the new age rushes in much like the youths did in the first part. This new age brings new rules, new systems, new schools, and new poems, making the once-still world over-excitably. The speaker confronts a hypothetical poet (as he did to the shepherd), asking why he is not excited about this new age.

The poet gives a similar reply as the shepherd did, one that prizes “silence” and “hush.” In the poem’s final lines, the speaker notes that the world is usually only concerned with its present, while the poet always feels the past alive as well.

19.10 PARAPHRASES

Stanza I

Section 1.

The evening comes, the fields are still.

The tinkle of the thirsty rill,

Unheard all day, ascends again;

Deserted is the half-mown plain,

Silent the swaths! the ringing wain,

The mower's cry, the dog's alarms,

All housed within the sleeping farms!

The business of the day is done,

The last-left haymaker is gone.

And from the thyme upon the height,

And from the elder-blossom white

And pale dog-roses in the hedge,

And from the mint-plant in the sedge,

In puffs of balm the night-air blows

The perfume which the day forgoes.

And on the pure horizon far,

See, pulsing with the first-born star,

The liquid sky above the hill!

The evening comes, the fields are still.

The poem opens with lines “The evening comes, the fields are still” which suggests silence as during this hour of the day everybody finishes her/his work and the people retreat in their homes to have supper and sound sleep. As the fields are still that is motionless which suggests no movement as nobody is there and therefore there is complete silence. In that complete noise free environment, the jingle, that is sounds produced by the water of the river one can hear very clearly which is “unheard all day” as it fades away or get mixed

with other sounds of the day. The “tinkle” sounds of the rill rises again. Moreover, Arnold describes the rill as thirsty, an oxymoron. This paradox represents the paradox of the age. The life is progressing because of the industrial as well as scientific revolution but the people are still unhappy. They have regressed in their ways of life as they have become morally corrupt.

The farmers have deserted the half-mown fields. The whole wide area is silent. The sounds of the ringing wagon, the mower’s cry and dogs’ bark—all are housed within sleeping farms, that is all are silent.

The business of this dying day is done. The haymaker who is involved in making hay, especially one who tosses and spreads it to dry after mowing, the one who is last to leave has also gone.

From the evergreen herb thyme which grown on the mountain, from the elder-blossom white flowers, from the mint-plant which is surrounded by the flowers, the ‘night-air’, the air fills the night with perfume with which the day was deprived. And on the “pure horizon”—which is the poet’s way of stating the perfect distance—one can clearly see the “first-born star”, that is Venus. In the twilight, only the Venus can be seen which makes horizon pulsing—full of life with the twinkling light which Venus drives from the Sun. The sky seems in a liquid state when it changes its colour from blue to dark blue and then dark, which is the property of water, the changing colour when chemical is added in it. The stanza ends with the refrain “The evening comes, the fields are still”.

The above section of stanza I is written in couplets with regular rhyming schemes. The poet has constantly used alliteration as well as assonance. As the literary device “anaphora” is dominant in the whole poem, so in this stanza too for example, the repetition of the word ‘And’ in the lines:

And from the thyme upon the height,
And from the elder-blossom white
And pale dog-roses in the hedge,
And from the mint-plant in the sedge,

The stanza is full of auditory, visual (pictorial) and olfactory imagery. The stanza is full with illustrations of coinage of compounds like “thirsty rill”, “half-mown plain”, “The last-left haymaker”, etc., a characteristic of John Keats’ poetry. The stanza is replete with enthralling pictorial imagery, a specific feature of Victorian poetry.

Section 2.

Loitering and leaping,
With saunter, with bounds—
Flickering and circling
In files and in rounds—
Gaily their pine-staff green
Tossing in air,
Loose o’er their shoulders white
Showering their hair—
See! the wild Maenads
Break from the wood,
Youth and Iacchus
Maddening their blood
See! through the quiet land
Rioting they pass—
Fling the fresh heaps about,
Trample the grass.
Tear from the rifled hedge
Garlands, their prize;
Fill with their sports the field,
Fill with their cries.
Shepherd, what ails thee, then?
Shepherd, why mute?

Forth with thy joyous song!
Forth with thy flute!
Tempt not the revel blithe?
Lure not their cries?
Glow not their shoulders smooth?
Melt not their eyes?
Is not, on cheeks like those,
Lovely the flush?
—Ah, so the quiet was!
So was the hush!

Hanging around and jumping, walking in relaxed manner and bouncing, shining unsteadily and circling in files and rounds, they are tossing their carried green stuff may be their caps in the air. Their hair is loosed over their white shoulders. Like Maenads frenzied in their own ecstasy, they make their ways through the forests. The poet is comparing the young men with the Greek minor deity Iacchus as these youths seems mysterious to the poet. They are madly happy in their own happiness. The poet has used two similes here when he compares the young men two Greek mythological characters Maenads and Iacchus.

See they are passing and with their noisy walk they are rioting, that is violate the quiet land. Throwing the fresh heaps and crushing the grass, they are tearing the rifled hedge garlands and make the field their sport field and fill it with their shouting. The young men are the representative of the young generation.

The poet then asked the shepherd the reason of his silence. What pains him? “Shepherd, what ails thee, then? Shepherd, why mute?” He asks the shepherd to sing his happy song and play his flute and join the young men’s happiness. He asks the shepherd doesn’t he get tempted by the young men’s blithe? Doesn’t he get lured by their cries? Aren’t their shoulders smooth? Aren’t they full of youth and energy? Aren’t their eyes seems melting with their shine? Aren’t their cheeks

are red, full of blood? So why are you silent? Why are you hushed? Partial end rhymes and full end rhymes are used.

The rhyming scheme goes like abacdedfghg; abcbdefe; ababcdcdefef, a coda in the form of quatrain. The section is full of alliteration and assonance.

Stanza II

Section 1.

The epoch ends, the world is still.
The age has talk'd and work'd its fill—
The famous orators have shone,
The famous poets sung and gone,
The famous men of war have fought,
The famous speculators thought,
The famous players, sculptors, wrought,
The famous painters fill'd their wall,
The famous critics judged it all.
The combatants are parted now—
Uphung the spear, unbent the bow,
The puissant crown'd, the weak laid low.
And in the after-silence sweet,
Now strifes are hush'd, our ears doth meet,
Ascending pure, the bell-like fame
Of this or that down-trodden name,
Delicate spirits, push'd away
In the hot press of the noon-day.
And o'er the plain, where the dead age
Did its now silent warfare wage—
O'er that wide plain, now wrapt in gloom,

Where many a splendour finds its tomb,
Many spent fames and fallen might—
The one or two immortal lights
Rise slowly up into the sky
To shine there everlastingly,
Like stars over the bounding hill.
The epoch ends, the world is still.

This section stanza II opens with reference to past generation and past era. He says that the era ends, therefore, now is a thing of the past. The world is motionless. The previous has talked their thoughts and toiled to its fill. The famous orators have shone in their speeches. The celebrated poets have sung their songs and now dead. The legendary warriors and fighters have fought the war. The renowned entrepreneurs have thought their strategies for business. The eminent players have played their game and the illustrious sculptors have given their well-wrought pieces of art. The famed painters have filled the walls with their paintings. And above all the prominent critics too have stated their judgment of the art. The fighters have finished their fighting and now are drifted apart. The spear is suspended and the bow is unbent. The victorious is crowned and the defeated are designated low position. There is a silence after the combat. The poet calls this “after-silence sweet” which is again a paradox. After-silence is pregnant with confusion and disillusionment but it is sweet as the fight is over. Again the combat result is dual: somebody’s victory and somebody’s defeat. The conflicts are silenced, however, people’s ears can listen clearly the bell ringing in the celebration of somebody’s rise and the discussion about the down-trodden and delicate who is “push’d away” who is pushed into the hot noon day to toil. Over this plain of the earth where the dead age now resting is silent and they are covered in their gloomy graves. Many bright legends have found their crypts. Many have lived their fame and strength which is now fallen/ dead. Among so many legends only one or two deeds become immortal in the memories of people. The section ends with refrain “The epoch ends, the world is still” to emphasize the whole argument

that the past time and past generation have gone. The world is still there but it is not the same world, it is changed, changed as a result of acts of past generation. The section is in couplets. There is a repetition of word “The” ‘anaphora’ making each of the after word specific to the past.

Section 2

Thundering and bursting
In torrents, in waves—
Carolling and shouting
Over tombs, amid graves—
See! on the cumber’d plain
Clearing a stage,
Scattering the past about,
Comes the new age.
Bards make new poems,
Thinkers new schools,
Statesmen new systems,
Critics new rules.
All things begin again;
Life is their prize;
Earth with their deeds they fill,
Fill with their cries.
Poet, what ails thee, then?
Say, why so mute?
Forth with thy praising voice!
Forth with thy flute!
Loiterer! why sittest thou
Sunk in thy dream?
Tempt not the bright new age?

Shines not its stream?
Look, ah, what genius,
Art, science, wit!
Soldiers like Caesar,
Statesmen like Pitt!
Sculptors like Phidias,
Raphaels in shoals,
Poets like Shakespeare—
Beautiful souls!
See, on their glowing cheeks
Heavenly the flush!
—Ah, so the silence was!
So was the hush!

The world but feels the present's spell,
The poet feels the past as well;
Whatever men have done, might do,
Whatever thought, might think it too.

With thunder and with force, with the speed of fast-moving stream of water and wave, singing and shouting over the graves of dead past generation, in the middle of the sepulchers, making their place on the hampered ground, scattering all the past, here comes the new age, new time and new people. The stillness of the world is disturbed and the new generation gives a motion to the still world. This new time, this new era and this new generation is going to give bards who are going to give new songs, new rhythms; this new time is going to give new thinkers who are going to defy the past philosophy and beliefs; the statesmen who are going to establish political and social structures different from the past ones; critics will frame new rules of judgment. The same things and systems will again start but with different frame and shape.

This new generation is going to make their marks on the planet earth with their deeds and cries.

The speaker then asks the poet. This is a direct reference to himself as the speaker is poet Matthew Arnold. He asks himself then what pains him? Why he is mute? He should come with his eulogy to praise the present generation. He asks the dawdler why he is sitting? Doesn't the splendour of the new age tempt him to have a walk around? Look this new age is genius. Look at its art, science and smartness. See there is mark of the past on the present. It has soldiers like Caesar, Statesman like Pitt and Sculptors like Phidias. This new generation has painters like Raphael in shoals, has poets like Shakespeare. Their cheeks are blooming with confidence.

The poet concludes with a sigh referring to the continuous silence and hush. He says that poet is hushed because as compare to the world who is spell bound with present generation's hustle and bustle, the poet can feel the effect of past on the present. He concludes that whatever is present today will become a thing of the past and the past will continue to have influence over the present.

19.11 CRITICAL APPRECIATION OF "BACCHANALIA"/ THEME OF THE POEM "BACCHANALIA"/TITLE OF THE POEM "BACCHANALIA"

"Bacchanalia" by Matthew Arnold, like his several other poems, offers a criticism of modernism. The poem is divided into two parts, both proposing a dichotomy of mutually exclusive experiences. The first stanza of the poem presents the description of stillness and the second describes frenetic and orgiastic excess. These two stanzas seem to be cyclical in nature. It is obvious that sooner or later the young people will leave the field, and the new age will end as did the previous one. In this poem also the poet has presented time as a tragic force. As the poem begins, the speaker describes a calm and tranquil evening. He is out amongst the fields. Everything under the stars is quiet. Suddenly, some drunken youths, the Bacchanalia, rush out to the fields. The young men begin to ruin the calm with their shouts and holler. They trample the grass in their excitement and joy. At this

point in the poem, the speaker confronts a hypothetical shepherd. The speaker wonders why the shepherd is not happy with the presence of the drunken youths. In the final two lines of the first stanza, the shepherd answers with sadness that it was so quiet and so hush. It is obvious that the shepherd is hurt too. The second stanza of the poem is also structured like the first stanza. At the beginning there is the description of the world as quiet. It has just passed through an era. All the poets of the era, artists, actors, and critics have done their works and departed. They have left the changed world behind them. The old age has passed on. Now there are only a few immortal traces behind shining above the sky. Suddenly, there is the new age. It is must like the young men had done in the first stanza of the poem. There are new rules, new systems, new schools, and new poems. Now the once-still world is over-excitabile. Now the speaker confronts a hypothetical poet, just like the shepherd he had confronted in the first stanza of the poem, and asks why the poet is not excited about the new age. In the concluding two lines the poet answers that he prizes silence and hush. The final lines describe that the world is only concerned with its present, while the poet always feels that past is also alive. The poet seems to be informing the reader that the true escape can be achieved only from a romantic sensibility. It permits the poet to feel the past when he tries to understand the present. By suggesting that the poet understands both past and present, the poet means to say that such insight allows the poet to contemplate eternally. A poet must try to find out what is good and what is bad. He cannot ignore the new age because it will be a folly. The poet must remember the past and then try to understand the present. The descriptions in the poem keep on veering between stillness and tumult. However, the poet seems to convey that the poet is ironically troubled by his special insight. Matthew Arnold has written several poems through which he seems to try to describe how the world and life might be better, although the ideas of the poet are always troubled by this understanding. There are obvious mythological allusions which aid Matthew Arnold develop his theme in this poem. The “Bacchanalias” used to be festivals dedicated to the god of wine, Bacchus, in Greek history and mythology. The

drunken youth in this present represent the group of revelers often found in the Greek mythology. Arnold seems to be pointing out that such youths are self-indulgent, blind, and they disrupt beauty. The poet does not approve of their actions because they destroy the stillness left by the past. The “Bacchanalia” is a metaphor that Matthew Arnold uses for the people who engender the modern world. They ignore what is beautiful about the world they are changing. Such people of the new age are often blinded by their modern ideas and they destroy several important things without understanding but they are doing. Hence, “Bacchanalia” is the representation of Victorian England which is tossing between faith and unfaith; hope and despair; progress and regress; and tradition and modernity. Even the title of the poem is suggestive of the idea and subject discussed in the poem. The poem is sentimental in tone.

19.12 POETIC TECHNIQUE OF MATTHEW ARNOLD IN THE POEM “BACCHANALIA”

As the title suggests, Matthew Arnold poem is in the form of a bacchanal, named after the Greek god Bacchus or Dionysus. A Bacchanalia is a drunken celebration, typically at night. The poem consists of two stanzas and a coda in the form of a quatrain. Further, each stanza consists of two sections, an opening section of rhyming couplets and a closing section of free verse that equates with the Bacchanalia, not in the evocation of drunkenness but in the riotous energy of the star-laden universe that contextualizes all human activity. The opening section of each stanza also contains a triplet 3-5 in stanza I and 5-7 in stanza II. In breaking away from the rigid form of rhyming couplets, these triplets anticipate abrupt transition to the free verse which is quite anarchic and subversive, in that stars diminish the achievements of even the greatest artists. The poem contains Greek as well as Roman references typical quality of Victorian poetry. The poem is sentimental tone, hence contains alliteration, assonance, anaphora and rhymes which give musical quality to the poem. The poet has made use of compound words.

19.13 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

1. The poem “Bacchanalia” is written by_____
 - a. T.S. Eliot
 - b. William Wordsworth
 - c. Matthew Arnold
 - d. None of the above

2. The poem “Bacchanalia” was published in the collection_____
 - a. *New Poems*
 - b. *The Study of Poetry*
 - c. *Function of Criticism*
 - d. None of the above

3. The poem “Bacchanalia” was published in the year_____
 - a. 1867
 - b. 1888
 - c. 1987
 - d. 1866

4. The poem “Bacchanalia” is the representation of _____world.
 - a. Romantic
 - b. Renaissance
 - c. Classic
 - d. Victorian

5. “Loitering and leaping,
With saunter, with bounds—
Flickering and circling
In files and in rounds—”
These lines are taken from the poem _____

- a. “Dover Beach”
 - b. “Bacchanalia”
 - c. “The Scholar-Gypsy”
 - d. None of the above
6. Loitering and leaping,
With saunter, with bounds—
Flickering and circling
In files and in rounds—
These lines are in _____
- a. Triplet
 - b. Quatrain
 - c. Couplet
 - d. Sestet
7. “Shepherd, what ails thee, then?
Shepherd, why mute?
Forth with thy joyous song!
Forth with thy flute!”
- The repetition of the word ‘Shepherd’ and ‘Forth’ at the starting of the lines are the example of _____
- a. Anaphora
 - b. Onomatopoeia
 - c. Hyperbole
 - d. None of the above

19.13.1 ANSWER KEY

1 (c); 2 (a); 3 (a); 4 (d); 5 (b); 6 (b); 7 (a)

19.14 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS:

- a) Explain the poetic technique used by Matthew Arnold in his poem “Bacchanalia”.

Ans. Refer to 1.11 and 1.12

- b) Discuss Matthew Arnold as a Victorian Poet.

Ans. Refer to section 1.4 and 1.12

- c. Discuss Matthew Arnold as a poet.

- d. Analyse the theme of past and present in the poem “Bacchanalia”.

- e. Write the critical appreciation of the poem “Bacchanalia”.

Ans. 1.11 and 1.12

- f. Comment on the title of the poem “Bacchanalia”.

- g. Comment on the Greek mythology and Roman references used in the poem “Bacchanalia”.

- h. Explore the poem “Bacchanalia” as a criticism of modernism.

- i) Critically evaluate the poem “Bacchanalia” as a representation of Victorian England.

19.15 LET US SUM UP

The poem “Bacchanalia” is written by Victorian poet Matthew Arnold. The poem is a commentary on the past and present and offers a criticism of the present generation who fail to see the gifts of past and promises of future. In the poem, in order to illustrate his argument the poet has used Greek as well as Roman references. The poem is representation of Victorian era tossing between faith and unfaith; tradition and modernity; progress and regress. The poem is the reflection of the perception of the poet about the Victorian period and life.

19.16 SUGGESTED READING

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2. “Bacchanalia.” Wikipedia.org. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bacchanalia>

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5. “*Poetry Analysis 154: “Bacchanalia” by Matthew Arnold.*” *YouTube*. *Uploaded on 17 May 2015*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vEehfWIctkE>
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10. “*What are characteristics of Victorian poetry?*”. *Quora.com*. <https://www.quora.com/What-are-characteristics-of-Victorian-poetry>
Acknowledgement:
11. Paul Matthew St. Pierre is a retired Professor in English at Simon Fraser University.

M.A. ENGLISH : SEMESTER II

COURSE CODE : ENG 212

LESSON No. 20

POETRY-II

G.M. HOPKINS

UNIT-VI

STRUCTURE

- 20.1 Introduction
- 20.2 Objectives
- 20.3 G.M. Hopkins (1844-1889) : Life and Work
- 20.4 Major Works
- 20.5 Hopkins and Nature
- 20.6 Multiple Choice Questions
 - 20.6.1 Answer Key
- 20.7 Examination Oriented Questions
- 20.8 Suggested Reading

20.1 INTRODUCTION

Gerard Manley Hopkins is considered to be one of the greatest Poets of the Victorian era . His style was so radically different from that of his contemporaries that his best poems were not accepted for publication during his life time & his achievement was not fully recognised until after Worldwar I.

20.2 OBJECTIVES

The objective of this lesson is to discuss the life and major works of G.M. Hopkins. The lesson also discuss in detail the major influences on Hopkins as a poet and how for him ‘nature’ become a saviour in his quest for truth and

God which he expresses so well through his poetry. At the end of this lesson the distance learners would be able to answer the multiple choice question as a lesson and exercise.

20.3 G.M. HOPKINS (1844 - 1889) LIFE AND WORK

Gerard Manley Hopkins is unique among major English poets in being virtually unknown until forty years after his death. His poetry was regarded as inaccessible and modern long after his death and he was in many ways a characteristic Victorian. Gerard was born on 28th July 1844 at Stratford (Essex). The eldest of sisters and five brothers, the Hopkin's family was prosperous and cultivated, and on both sides had connection with the fine arts. Hopkin's great uncles and uncles on his mothers side were professional line engravers and painters. His father, Manley Hopkins was clearly something of a dilettante but achieved a fair measure of success in his remarkably diverse interests. He ran his own marine insurance firm in the city; was consul - General for Hawaii in London for forty years ; and published a variety of books, including three volumes of verse. The Hawaiian connection must have brought an unexpectedly exotic element into the Hopkins home. Gerard's mother, Catherine Hopkins was the daughter of a successful London doctor. She greatly valued her sons poems and lived to see them published in 1918.

Gerard was the most artistic of a gifted family. His education at Highgate school had the traditional grounding in the classics. At Highgate school Hopkins won the poetry prize with *The Escorial*. In 1863 he arrived at Balliol college, oxford and continued to write poetry as well as having busy and companionable social life. He came under the influence of the Oxford Movement and Newman, and in 1866 was received into the Roman catholic church. In 1868 he resolved to become a Jesuit and symbolically burned his poems though he sent some copies to his friend Robert Bridges for safekeeping. The burning itself was clearly a symbolic act, a sacrifice much more important as evidence of his state of mind and of his intentions for the future. Telling Bridges that he had burnt his poems he wrote :

“I saw they would interfere with my state and vocation. Having decided that the two vocations were incompatible he decided to write no more and in the following years he received lectures on scholastic philosophy, logic and ethics with some mathematics and mechanics.”

In 1873, he was a professor of Rhetoric at Manches House. For next three years he studied theology at St. Beuno's college. In 1878 he taught and did miscellaneous parish work at Mount St. Mary's college. From the year 1878 to 1884 he did some parish work and also taught Latin and Greek at Stonyhurst college, Lancashire. 1884-1889 were spent in Ireland as professor of Greek and Latin literature at University College, Dublin. But here he felt utterly isolated, deserted by God and convinced that his creative powers which might have saved him were dead. Many factors clearly played their part in bringing about Hopkins' feeling of desolation in Dublin : bad health, the burden of examining, his sense of being an exile. The political situation undoubtedly exacerbated the last of these. As an ultra- patriotic Englishman, he detested Irish nationalism.

In early May 1889, he contracted typhoid fever and after a month's illness died on 8th June. Gerard Manley Hopkins was the most original of poets and his passion embraces his joy in creation, but also plunges into the depths of despair in the 'terrible sonnets'. His poetry was not published in collected form until 1918 nearly thirty years after his death, in an edition by his friend the poet Robert Bridges.

The earliest surviving poem 'The Escorial' is a remarkable effort for a boy of fifteen and though it inevitably has echoes from earlier poets, it is more attractive and original than a number of prize winning poems from Oxford or Cambridge during the sixties. 'A Vision of the Mermaids' is less visionary than its title would suggest : it contains accurate pen sketches of fantastic little sea-creatures introduced to Englishman by such means as the Marine vivarium opened in Regents's Park London in 1853. Among other examples of non-religious verse are the two sonnets 'To Oxford' and 'The Beginning of the End'

And finally in this secular category we have 'The Nightingale'. The religious poems begin in Anglo catholic manner with 'Barnfloor and Winepress'. But the finest of these early poem is 'The Habit of Perfection'.

20.4 MAJOR WORKS

"The Wreck of the Deutschland," "God's Grandeur", the Windhover, "Pied Beauty", "Binsey Poplars," "Felix Randal" and the sonnets all give voice to the poet's personality, spirituality and poetic vision.

The Wreck of Deutschland :

The Wreck of Deutschland was composed at St. Beuno's College North Wales during his study of theology between December 1875 and the following April or May. This was Hopkin's first and greatest nature poem. We know, from his letter to R.W. Dixon of 5th October 1878, how he came to write it ;

*"When in the winter of 1875 the
Deutschland was Wrecked in
the mouth of the Thames and
five Fransican nuns, exiled
from Germany by the Falck
laws, aboard of her were
drowned. I was affected by the
account and happening to say
so to my rector he said that he
wished someone would write
a poem on the subject-----"*

The poem is at the same time clearly autobiographical. It is not only deeply personal religious poem, but a great technical achievement, full of the vitality of experiment.

God's Grandeur

It was written at St. Beuno's Wales on 23rd February 1877, the revised in March and again later that year. The main idea of the poem is The world is charged with God's Grandeur stated in the very first line. As the poem moves further it contrasts the devitalising and smearing effect produced by man, on the face of the earth with the ever springing freshness of the life on nature.

The Windhover

Hopkins wrote this sonnet in the year 1877 when Hopkins' early one spring morning in a subdued frame of mind, went out from St. Beuno's College and caught the flight of the Windhover, the sonnet which sprang from his blend of excitement and sober musing about the future was destined to become out of all the lyrics since the middle of the nineteenth century, the one that has probably attracted maximum reflection the most thought and commentary. The poem's opening lines crowd in this suggestion about the buds appearance, the circumstances under which Hopkins caught the bird and the metaphorical role the creature will play in the sonnet. This sonnet has a parallel drawn between Christ and the bird.

Pied Beauty

This sonnet was written in the summer of 1877 at St. Bueno's. Although on the surface this miniature of scaled-down 'curtail sonnet seems basically a nature poem', it embodies theological belief which has been important to many catholic and Protestant philosophers. From the glorification of God as revealed in dappled things to the final injunction to the reader, the movement of this poem takes place between the two mottos of St. Ignatius : "To the greater glory of God always". It can be assumed that Hopkins has treated this poem as an exercise in the Jesuit manner.

Hurrahing in Harvest

It was written at St. Bueno's in September 1877. This sonnet marks a sudden and welcome change in the seasons, along with a reawakening of

his own animation. It's opening statement 'summer ends now' is part of its excitement. The sonnet displays much more vigour than most of the others written that same year. Here the energy in the nature infects the poet himself. The buoyancy of the scene gives springiness to the poet's steps and to his feelings. Everywhere he looks he picks up evidences of Christ's presence until he seems to be in dialogue with Him. The poem is not just enthusiastic in its mood but ecstatic.

Binsey Poplars

"Binsey Poplars" was written at Oxford in March 1879. It opens with memories of the Oxford environs he had known as a student, and nostalgic regret that its beauties were being gradually extinguished. It is a protest against destruction of wild life and natural beauty caused by expanding industry and communication. Hopkins wrote the poem in the hope that it might awaken the extinct feelings of people for nature.

Felix Randal

The events recalled in this sonnet pertain to Hopkin's stay at Liverpool. He wrote this sonnet in the year 1880. Hopkins had been appointed at Liverpool to large Jesuit Church of St. Francis Xavier. The poem is priestly meditation on the death of Hopkins parishioner Felix Randal. It is a mourning elegy on a blacksmith who has just died. More powerfully than any other of his poems, it brings together priest and poet.

Hopkins shares with the more sensitive of the Victorians many of that age's virtues. He contends for the preservation of wilderness, the environment then being seared with trade around him as England grew smokily rich. The artistic naturalist alternates and co-exists with the priest throughout his poems in a balanced polarity. His sonnets often lead us from an Octave of delight in nature to its corollary of reverence for the Maker.

20.5 HOPKINS AND NATURE

For Hopkins, 'Man' is always caught up in a state of anguish as the World is prone to Sin. He yearns for God, seeking solace. In this search he

comes to Nature and finds the sensuous and the sublime in it. Nature, stands in between man and God and acts as a close link between the two. He encounters God in the beauty of Nature but the sensuous aspects of nature come in direct conflict with his preoccupying quest for God's grace. In the early nature poetry, there is a mingling of the sensuous element with the moral and the religious. In the poetry he wrote during the Oxford years, there is a clear check on the sensuous element by spiritualizing it. But later, as a Jesuit, coming under the influence of The Spiritual Exercises and the philosophy of Duns scotus, he was able to develop his sacramental vision of nature. Nature continues to enchant him as the sacrament of God. Though his early poems are experimental in nature, they show signs of his quest. Nature enchanted him with her beauty of colours and sounds.

The earliest nature poem he wrote is "The Escorial" written for a school poetry competition. Hopkins turning of observation of nature into poetry is shown in "A Windy Day in Summer". He has an eye for the minute details and observes the way the wind plays upon 'elm heads', 'labouring willows', 'chestnut fans', 'sapphire pools' and 'clouds'. "A Vision of the Mermaids" is an imaginative poem in heroic couplets in which the poet romanticises a vision of the mermaid at sunset. It is the best among his earlier works full of Keatsean sensuousness.

He examines the beauty of spring season in "Spring and Death". Death is personified by the poet whom he meets in a hollow lush and damp. Nothing is permanent in nature. Death and decay are shown to operate as natural processes. Though impressed by sensuous elements in nature, he does not forget its transitoriness. In the fragments of "Pilate", nature plays an active role in its revolt against the crime of Pilate. Nature to Hopkins is a benign life force that revolts against the most heinous crime done to Christ by Pilate. The whole of nature has turned gloomy and oppressive and Pilate is exasperated by the 'stinging show' and the 'afflictive heat' of the Sun with his crime the blue skies are almost black and he feels oppressed by the shearing rays. It was not easy for Hopkins to part from

nature's abundant riches. The transformation of the ordinary to the Divine through the mediation of nature's gifts occur in the poem, "Barnfloor and Winepress" The sterility of nature becomes a symbol in the "New Reading". Salvation and Suffering are posited through the images of nature. There is fruitlessness in the crown of thorns of Jesus and the rejuvenation is indicated by Christ's multiplication of loaves and fish to feed the five thousand in the desert. Nature, thus, is the sacrament of God. Nature amazed Hopkins though he took up to writing more religious and philosophical poems while at Oxford, he could not cut himself off from intense love of nature and its sensuous beauty. He hungered for self-expression and was lured by the woods and pastures of Oxford.

In the fragment of Richard, Hopkins himself observes the beauty of nature around Oxford lying on the meadows of the Cumnor hills. It is typically a pastoral poem. A shepherd companion named Sylvester joins the poet in observing the meadows and the flowers growing all around. The description is vivid and minute. Hopkins' love for the observation of nature continues in the fragments of "I Hear a Noise of Water Drawn Away" and also in the fragments of "When Eyes that cast about the Heights of Heaven" and "The Summer, Malison". The sound of the woodland stream is 'double musical' in "I Hear a Noise of Waters Drawn Away". In "The Summer Malison" the poet observes the barrenness of life and nature in summer.

Although God is present in nature and man in a sacramental way, His presence must be perceived and proclaimed by man. In "The Wreck of the Deutschland" nature, God and man are meaningfully brought together. He encounters God in the beauty of nature; in the stars and the sunset and acknowledges it by giving glory to God.

I Kiss my hand
To the stars, lovely as under
Starlight, Wafting him out of it; and
Glow, glory in thunder

Most of the poems written after “The Wreck of the Deutschland” express joyfully the inscape of things and reveal God in nature. He perceives God in nature and man. From this emanates an outpouring of the beauty of the word of God. The poet enjoys a natural act of God in the “Moonrise”. As he wakes up in the morning, he finds the moon like the fringe of a fingernail held to a candle. The poet enjoys the wonder, of a moonrise, a natural act of God.

Woodlark presents pure sweetness and joy in natural beauty. The bird is personified by the poet. While admiring the music of the little bird the poet is struck by the beauty of nature around in the blue wheat-acre ‘Penmaen Pool depicts natural beauty and the peace and joy it offers to man who is close to nature. Rowing around the pool offers rest and pleasure, away from counter court or school. Hopkins turns the everyday often neglected and overlooked occurrences into a ‘beauty and a joy forever’. Thus the pool reflects all the beauties of the world making new and different inscapes in its water. Nature itself showers honour in “The silver Jubilee” upon the Bishop as the velvet vales rejoiced and peeled with welcome silver jubilee chime.

In “Gods Grandeur” the natural world glorifies God constantly. But it is only man, the apex of God’s creation, that can render Him glory consciously. Despite the insensitive destruction of the beauty of nature, ‘nature is never spent’ as there is constant renewal and growth in it. The poet believes in the renewal of life just like the way sunset and darkness of the night brings in the day break every morning. Man abuses the life giving purity of God’s gift of nature and brings about degradation upon the earth. This idea is contained in “The sea and the skylark”. The beauty of nature is depicted in the sea and the song of the skylark on the other hand. Hopkins was encaptured by the singing of the skylark.

“The Caged Skylark”, “Hurrahing in Harvest”, and “The Windhover” recount man’s reward if he would accept God’s grace in understanding the world. It is the proper relationship between nature, God and man that

establishes a perfect harmony “The Caged sky lark” is a reflection of man’s pursuit of material wealth. Man is contrasted with the free skylark and the sea. The bird has its natural life in its nest in the wilds of nature.

The man who views nature in its relationship to man and God, finds great joy in the experience of the sacramental presence of God in nature. This is the central theme of “Hurrahing in Harvest”. The harvest of nature is compared to the harvest of the good crop. The poet in his enthusiasm takes roles of the wild beauty of the sheaves of wheat and the fluffy looking clouds blown together as summer ends. The beauty of this harvest season brings joy to man. Man realises his greatness as life’s pride and cared for-crown.

Hopkins’ keen observation of nature is apparent in ‘The Windhover’ wherein he reflects on the magnificent brute beauty of the bird in its flight with deep Christo centric overtones. The poem is sensual piece of poetry. In “The May Magnificent” the whole of nature rejoices in May as it blooms spring flowers and Mary too rejoices at nature’s motherhood. The sacramental concept of nature becomes deep rooted in Hopkins theological and philosophical vision as he is disturbed when nature is destroyed by man as depicted in “Binsey Poplars”. It is a cry of the poet against the wilful destruction of the aspens in a nearby wood. The poet’s love of nature has become part and parcel of his life. It is his deep conviction that nature raises man closer to God. Hopkins’ concern with man’s insensitivity to the destruction of natural inscapes is highlighted in the poem. The natural artistic bent in him makes him utter strong protests against the destruction of nature’s landscapes. The priest poet with his sacramental concept of nature is pricked at the loss of the individuality of things as he laments :

My aspens dear, whose airy cages quelled,
Quelled or quenched in leaves the leaping Sun,
All filled, filled, are all felled.

In “Spring an Fall” Hopkins depicts the transitoriness of nature’s beauty in autumn in the background of human morality. The poet ponders over the

fall which destroys the beautiful leaves of spring. "Inversnaid is a pure nature poem depicting the beauty of a brook. Hopkins was fascinated by the beauty of the Scottish highlands, although he had only a glimpse of it in 1881. He visited Inversnard and was deeply impressed by the solemn beauty of the Lake Loch Lomond. The Sonnet "Ribblesdale" presents the callousness of human beings in relation of nature and destroys its beauty. Industrial growth in Lancashire had rendered river virtually polluted. The "Sweet Earth" cannot voice, its complaint to Heaven for the destruction of its sweet landscape by man. The very spirit of earth pleads against man's cruelty to nature. Earth can only seek God's providence to protect nature from extinction. Things in nature continue to glorify God and offer their unexpressed silent praise to Him.

In "Leaden Echo And the Golden Echo" Hopkins says beauty whether in nature or in man, is transitory and can be meaningful only in God, the author of all beauty, Contemplating flowers, trees, streams and landscapes, he had an ecstatic experience of the hidden energy (instress) moulding these things into pattern, shapes and colours (inscapes), which was the very energy and beauty of God. Everything in nature thus spoke of God and was the sacramental signs of his invisible presence.

Hopkins' love for the natural beauty of the world was deep rooted in him. Most of his journals are full of recordings of the natural beauty he observed all around. He records every colour and form with its impact made on him. The perception of earthly beauty goes hand in hand with religious experience.

"Binsey Poplars" recalls the loss of the inscape of the rural scene when the poplars were felled. The natural scene lost its wholeness and oneness as its inscape was destroyed. The destruction of the inscape in nature is the result of only 'ten or twelve strokes' and the natural beauty was vanished forever.

20.6 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

1. G.M. Hopkins was born on _____
(a) 20 July 1824 (b) 28 July 1842
(c) 28 July 1944 (d) 28 July 1844
2. Which sonnet was composed by G.M. Hopkins at St. Beuno's College North Wales?
(a) The wreck of the Deutschland
(b) The Nightingale (c) Barn floor and Winepress
(d) The Habit of Perfection
3. Which is the earliest nature poem written by G.M. Hopkins
(a) The Escorial (b) A Windy Day in Summer
(c) Labouring Willows (d) Chestnut Fan
4. In which poem Hopkin expresses the transitory nature of beauty and the interrelation between beauty and God.
(a) The Escorial (b) The Nightingale
(c) Leaden Echo and the Golden Echo
(d) Died Beauty

20.6.1 Answer Key

1. 28 July 1844
2. The Wreck of the Deutschland
3. The Escorial
4. Leaden Echo And the Golden Echo

20.7 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

- Q.1 Discuss the poetic style of G.H. Hopkins.
- Q.2 Why is Hopkins considered as the precursor of the modernist poetry.
- Q.3 Critically analyse the sonnets of Hopkins prescribed in your syllabus.

20.8 SUGGESTED READING

1. Reader's Guide to Gerard Manley Hopkins by Norman Mackenzie.
2. Religious Quest in Gerard Manley Hopkins by A.J. Aesthetic Sebastian
3. Gerard Manley Hopkins : A Life by Eleanor Ruggles.

M.A. ENGLISH : SEMESTER II

COURSE CODE : ENG 212

LESSON No. 21

POETRY-II

CHRISTINA ROSSETTI

UNIT-VI

STRUCTURE

21.1 Introduction

21.2 Objectives

21.3 Introduction to the Age

21.4 Brief life sketch of the Christina Rossetti

21.5 Interpretation of the poem

21.6 Self Assessment Questions

21.7 Exam Oriented Questions

21.8 Suggested Reading

21.1 INTRODUCTION

Christina Rossetti is known for her ballets and her mystic religious lyrics. Her Poetry is marked by symbolism and intense feeling.

21.2 OBJECTIVES

In this lesson we shall discuss “Goblin Market” a poem by Christina Rossetti. After reading this learners you will be able to

- a) Acquaint the learners with the Pre-Raphaelite Movement
- b) Analysis of the poem

Pre-Raphaelite Movement

The term *Pre-Raphaelite*, which refers to both art and literature, itself originated in relation to the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, an influential group of mid-nineteenth-century avante garde painters associated with Ruskin who had great effect upon British, American, and European art. The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood (PRB) was founded in 1849 by William Holman Hunt (1827-1910), D.G. Rossetti, John Everett Millais (1829-1896), William Michael Rossetti, James Collinson, Thomas Woolner, and F. G. Stephens to revitalize the arts. Even though William and Michael's sister, Christina, never was an official member of the Brotherhood, she was a crucial member of the inner circle.

Those poets who had some connection with these artists and whose work presumably shares the characteristics of their art include Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Christina Rossetti, George Meredith, William Morris, and Algernon Charles Swinburne. The group's intention was to reform art by rejecting what it considered the mechanistic approach first adopted by *Mannerist* artists who succeeded *Raphael* and *Michelangelo*.

The group continued to accept the concepts of *history painting* and *mimesis*, imitation of nature, as central to the purpose of art. The Pre-Raphaelites defined themselves as a reform movement, created a distinct name for their form of art, and published a periodical, *The Germ*, to promote their ideas. The group's debates were recorded in the *Pre-Raphaelite Journal*.

The Second Stage of the Movement : Aesthetic Pre-Raphaelitism

The second form of Pre-Raphaelitism, which grows out of the first under the direction of D.G. Rossetti, is Aesthetic Pre-Raphaelitism, and it in turn produced the Arts and Crafts Movement, modern functional design, and the Aesthetes and Decadents. Rossetti and his follower Edward Burne-Jones (1833-1898) emphasized themes of eroticized medievalism

(or medievalized eroticism) and pictorial techniques that produced moody atmosphere. This form of Pre-Raphaelitism has most relevance to poetry; for although the earlier combination of a realistic style with elaborate symbolism appears in a few poems, particularly those of the Rossettis, this second stage finally had the most influence upon literature. All the poets associated with Pre-Raphaelitism draw upon the poetic continuum that descends from Spenser through Keats and Tennyson, one that emphasizes lush vowel sounds, sensuous description, and subjective psychological states.

Christina Rossetti

Christina Rossetti was born in London, belongs to Italian Parents and who had four children. Her father Gabriel Rossetti was a poet and her brother Dante Gabriel Rossetti also became poet and painter. Her mother Frances Polidori was also the sister of Lord Byron's friend and physician, John William Polidori.

Rossetti was educated at home by her mother and father, who had focused her to study religious works, classics, fairy tales and novels. Rossetti delighted in the works of *Keats*, *Scott*, *Ann Radcliffe* and *Matthew Lewis*. The influence of the work of *Dante Alighieri*, Petrarch and other Italian writers filled the home and would have a deep impact on Rossetti's later writing. In 1850 under the pseudonym Ellen Alleyne, she has contributed seven poems to the pre-Raphaelite journal *The Germ*, which had been founded by her brother William Michael.

Rossetti is best known for her ballads and mystic religious lyrics. Her poetry is the sign of symbolism and intense feeling. In 1862 her best known work *Goblin Market and Other Poems* was published, which established her as a significant voice in Victorian poetry. *The Prince's Progress and Other Poems*, appeared in 1866 followed by *Sing-Song*, a collection of verse for children, in 1872 (with illustrations by Arthur Hughes).

By the 1880s, it was detected that she was suffering from a disease, a thyroid disorder, made Rossetti an invalid, and ended her attempts to work as a governess. While the illness restricted her social life, she continued to write poems. Among her later works are *A Pageant and Other Poems* (1881), and the *Face of the Deep* (1892). Rossetti also wrote religious prose works, such as *Seek and Find* (1879), *Called To Be Saints* (1881) and *The Face of the Deep* (1892). In 1891, it has been detected that she was suffering from cancer and she died in London on December 29, 1894. Rossetti's brother, William Michael, edited her collected works in 1904, but the *Complete Poems* were not published before 1979.

Christina Rossetti is reputed Victorian poet who has been compared to *Emily Dickinson* but the similarity is more in the choice of spiritual topics than in poetic approach, Rossetti's poetry being one of intense feelings, her technique refined within the forms established in her time.

Works

Poetry

Goblin Market, and Other Poems (1862)

Prince's Progress and Other Poems (1866)

Sing-Song: A Nursery-Rhyme Book (1872)

A Pageant and Other Poems (1881)

The Face of the Deep (1892)

Verses (1893)

New Poems (1896)

The Poetical Works of Christina Georgina Rossetti. With Memoir and Notes & Comments. (1904)

Selected Poems (1970)

Complete Poems (1979)

Complete Poems of Christina Rossetti: A Variorum Edition (1986)

Prose

Commonplace and Other Short Stories (1870)

Seek and Find (1879)

Called to be Saints: The Minor Festivals (1881)

Time Flies: A Reading Diary (1888)

Selected Prose of Christina Rossetti (1998)

Called to be Saints: The Minor Festivals (1881)

Time Flies: A Reading Diary (1888)

Selected Prose of Christina Rossetti (1998)

Letters

Family Letters (1908)

The Family Letters of Christina Georgina Rossetti (1969)

Letters of Christina Rossetti: 1843-1873 (1997)

Letters of Christina Rossetti: 1874-1881 (1999)

21.3 INTRODUCTION TO THE POEM

“Goblin Market” seems to take place in some kind of fantasy parallel universe with several important differences from our own world. First of all, there are goblins, and they have a traveling fruit market. Second, there are no men. Laura and Lizzie live by themselves, and even at the end of the poem, we learn that they have become “wives/ With children of their own” (lines 544-545), but we never see or hear of their husbands.

There is no first-person narrator in “Goblin Market” like in many other poems. There’s no “I.” Instead, there’s an omniscient third-person narrator like you’d find in most novels or short stories. A third-person narrator usually gives the impression of being more distant from the story than a first-person narrator would because a third-person narrator isn’t a character and doesn’t participate in the plot. The narrator of “Goblin Market”

is no exception. She seems to describe the “Goblin Market” objectively, at least at first. She lists all the goblin fruits for sale and doesn’t make any judgments about whether they’re good or not. The speaker leaves it to Laura and Lizzie to judge for the reader. The meter and rhyme scheme are irregular in “Goblin Market.” The poem generally follows an ABAB rhyme scheme, but not always. In fact, sometimes there’s a long gap between a word and its rhyme, and sometimes there are many lines in a row with the same rhyming syllable at the end (like lines 134-136).

EXPLANATION OF THE POEM

Lines 1-4

EXPLANATION - The first two lines gives the description of the “goblin market” which is open for business all the time both at “morning and evening.” The “maids,” or unmarried women, are hearing the “cries” of the goblin fruit sellers, who are inviting the buyers to buy the fruits.

Lines 5-16

EXPLANATION- In these lines sellers are listing all those sort of fruits which they have, and they have a few unusual kinds of fruit listed, like “Quinces “Unpecked cherries “Bloom-down-cheeked peaches “Mulberries” “Crab-apples and”Dewberries”. “Quinces” are a fruit from the eastern Mediterranean that look kind of like pears, but are too sour to eat unless they’re cooked. “Unpecked cherries” are just cherries that birds haven’t “pecked” at. They’re fresh and perfect.”Bloom-down-cheeked peaches” are peaches that are fresh and covered in peach fuzz. “Mulberries” are a kind of fruit native to warm and sub-tropical places. “Crab-apples” are just a kind of small, tart apple. “Dewberries” are like small blackberries and all these fruits ripen at the summer season. Not only do the goblins have fruit from all different climates at their market, they have fruit that usually ripen in different seasons. “Apples,” for example are usually ripe in the fall, while strawberries are ready in the early summer. But all of these fruits are ready at the same time, “in summer weather.”

Lines 17-24

EXPLANATION- The “morning and evening” mentioned in the first line of the poem are brought up again here the goblin men mention the passing of “morns,” or mornings,” and beautiful “eves.” They’re saying, “time flies, so come buy our fruit.” Then the goblin men launch into another list of fruits at their market like “Pomegranates” “Dates” “Bullaces,” “greengages,” and “Damsons” “Bilberries”.

Lines 25-31

EXPLANATION- The variety of fruits are there in the Goblin Market and the sellers are assuring the “maids” (or anyone who is still listening) that their fruit is sweet and “sound,” or healthy come and taste it. But the goblin fruit sellers aren’t taking questions about their overwhelming assortment of fruit they’re just repeating the command to “come buy.”

Lines 32-39

EXPLANATION- Every evening, Laura and Lizzie sit together next to a stream or a brook (“among the brookside rushes”), enjoying the “cooling weather” after the heat of the day. But something embarrasses them: Laura “bows her head” when she hears them and Lizzie “blushes.” It’s not clear whether Laura “bows her head” *in order* “to hear” the goblin men more clearly, or whether hearing them embarrasses her, so she bows her head *when* she hears them. The line could be read either way. Both of the girls “clasp” each other closely and “caution” each other. It’s not clear what they’re cautioning each other about, yet. They both have “tingling cheeks” as they hear the goblin men calling. It is also mentioned that their “finger tips” are “tingling” in that because their fingers are “itching” to grab some fruit.

Lines 40-47

EXPLANATION- Laura asks Lizzie to lie closer to her, and then “pricks” up her head. But even as she picks up, she warns Lizzie that they shouldn’t even look at the goblins, and never to buy the fruits from

them. The goblins are time and again calling the buyers to buy the fruit. Here these fruits give an illusion to the fruit of the Garden of Eden where Adam and Eve were tempted by the Satan.

Lines 48-63

EXPLANATION- Lizzie warns Laura that there is no need to look at goblin men, and suggests her to covers eyes tightly. She covered her eyes which seems to her odd one as she could never peek without her permission. She must really be deeply tempted to look at the goblins. But defying the suggestions of her sister she keeps looking and gives Lizzie a whispered description of what she sees. The “little men” are heading down the valley, each of them carrying some kind of container for the fruit. One of them is even carrying a heavy “golden dish.” Laura is amazed by the sight of the goblin men and their fruit. She remarks on how “luscious” the grapes look, and thinks about how “warm the wind” must be where the grapes are grown to get them so fat and juicy.

Lines 64-80

EXPLANATION- Lizzie doesn't want to hear about the “luscious” grapes or anything else. She refuses to listen over and over again. She warns Laura that the goblin's “gifts” are “evil.” Then Lizzie sticks her fingers in her ears so that she won't be able to hear her sister's descriptions or the goblins' calls, and runs away with her eyes shut. Don't try this at home, you'll probably run into something. Meanwhile, Laura stays by the side of the stream to watch the procession of the goblins. She's described as “curious” and “wondering.” She just wants to see more of them. Before, she described the goblins as “little men,” but now the description gets pretty wacky. According to Laura, they all have body parts like different animals. And some of those animals come from places far from England. The “wombat” is a marsupial from Australia. “Obtuse” is an odd way of describing a wombat. A “ratel” is an animal from South Africa that looks like a badger. None of them is the same. Even their voices sound like

different animals, but at least it sounds pleasant. Laura even thinks that their “dove”-like voice sounds “full of loves.”

Lines 81-86

EXPLANATION- Laura is stretching her neck to see the goblin men better, and the poet compares her to a swan leaning out of the rushes in a stream. Then firstly she is compared to a lily that leans over a “beck” or a brook. Secondly she’s compared to a delicate kind of tree branch on a “moonlit” night. Finally, she’s compared to a ship that’s just leaving dock. The ship starts to move forward when the anchor is pulled up and all the lines are in. The stanza ends with the words, “when its last restraint is gone.” This phrase refers to the ship that Laura is being compared to. It literally means that the anchor is up and the ship is untied and ready to go. But this line could also suggest that Laura’s guard is down – she’s unrestrained. Anything could happen.

Lines 87-90

EXPLANATION- The “goblin men” turn around and come back up the valley. May be they sense that there’s a potential sale to be made here. So they were again crying and inviting the buyers to buy their items.

Lines 91-96

EXPLANATION- When they get back to where Laura is, the goblins stop and “leer,” or glance sideways, at each other. They’re described as “brothers,” but don’t assume that they’re related by blood. The goblins sneakily “signal” to each other. They’re described as “brothers,” again. This time as “sly brothers.” The repetition underlines the fact that they’re all members of one group, while Laura is isolated and alone. Even her own sister, Lizzie, isn’t around.

Lines 97-104

EXPLANATION- All of them has different, pre-arranged tasks and are signaling each other to the action. It seems like they’ve done

this before. The uniqueness of the individual goblins is emphasized again: like in lines 71-76, lines 97-102 begin with “One” – “*one*” goblin did this, and “*one*” did that. They all have different jobs. One of them “rears,” or holds up his “plate,” probably to show off the fruit on it for Laura. Another goblin starts to “weave a crown” for her out of branches of nuts. Line 101 is in parentheses – it’s as though the poet is telling us, just by the way, that the kind of nuts the goblins are using are really uncommon. This seems important, but like a lot of the details in the poem, the meaning isn’t clear. Another goblin hefts up a heavy golden dish full of fruit to offer her. They’re all still “crying” in unison, “come buy! Come buy!” But Laura was unable to decide that what she would do because she has never seen such moments before.

Lines 105-106

EXPLANATION- Laura would love to reach for the fruit, but she doesn’t “stir” from where she is because she’s strapped for cash. The repeated “buts” in these two lines help to emphasize the contrast between what Laura desires, and what she can actually have.

Lines 107-114

EXPLANATION- A couple of the goblins that were described before step up and invite Laura to “taste” their fruits, at the very least. The one with a “tail” has a voice that sounds as sweet as the fruits look. We’re starting to wonder what kind of a “tail” it is – forked, perhaps, like a demon’s? The goblins all sound like the animals they resemble. There’s even one that sounds like a parrot, but he says “Pretty Goblin!” instead of “Pretty Polly,” or, as we usually say, “Polly wanna cracker!”

Lines 115-122

EXPLANATION- Laura doesn’t want there to be any misunderstanding, so she blurts out that she doesn’t have any money, so taking any fruit would

be “to purloin,” or to steal. She says that she has neither “copper” (i.e., pennies) nor “silver” (i.e., more valuable coins) to pay for the fruit. Instead of just saying, “I don’t have any gold, either,” she says that the only gold she has is “on the furze,” which is a kind of evergreen shrub that has gold-colored flowers. She politely calls the goblins “Good Folk.” “Folk” is capitalized, which could be a reference to old British myths that describe elfish, magical people as “Fair Folk” or “Good Folk.”

Lines 123-128

EXPLANATION- The goblins point out that Laura has plenty of “gold” on her head. Her blond hair, apparently, counts as gold money at the goblin market. So the goblins ask Laura to give them “a golden curl” in exchange for some fruit. Laura cuts a “precious golden lock,” but cries while doing it. Just as her hair is “precious” and “golden” like a gold coin, her tear is compared to a “rare” “pearl.” So Laura’s various body parts are being compared to different precious minerals and gemstones. After this agreement Laura starts sucking on the goblin “fruit globes.”

Lines 129-133

EXPLANATION- The goblin fruit is tasty. Laura thinks that the fruit is “sweeter than honey” and “stronger than wine”. The fruit juice is clearer than water. Laura surely doesn’t know – she’s never tasted anything like this before. The poet then asks how the taste of the fruit could ever “cloy,” or get old. But just by asking the question, the poet suggests that the fruit could indeed “cloy” after a while.

Lines 134-136

EXPLANATION- Laura keeps “sucking” on the fruit the goblins give her. It’s so tasty that she can’t stop. The word “sucked” is repeated three times, possibly to emphasize that Laura just can’t bring herself to stop. The fruit she’s “sucking” comes from an “unknown orchard”. Laura just keeps “sucking” until she’s physically exhausted. Her “lips were sore.”

The repetition of her “sucking” on the fruit is emphasized by the rhyme in these lines. The rhyme scheme doesn’t have a set pattern, and then suddenly three lines in a row all have rhyming end words (“more,” “bore,” “sore”).

Lines 137-140

EXPLANATION- Once Laura’s done with the “sucking”, she tosses the “rinds” and fruit cores aside, pausing to pick up a single “kernel stone” (i.e., a seed or pit) Laura is so dazed that she can’t tell whether it’s “night or day” as she heads home by herself.

Lines 141-146

EXPLANATION- When Laura gets home, Lizzie meets her at the front gate to scold her for hanging out with the goblins. Lizzie reminds her that “twilight” is a bad time for “maidens,” or unmarried young women. Just as the goblin’s cries were only heard by the “maids” in line 2, this line seems to suggest that “twilight” is especially dangerous for “maidens.”

Lines 147-152

EXPLANATION- Lizzie then reminds Laura about what happened to a girl named “Jeanie.” Apparently Jeanie listened to the goblins’ calls in the “moonlight” and took their fruit as “gifts.” Jeanie ate all the “choice” or perfect fruit that they gave her and wore the “flowers” they had picked from the “bowers,” or shady corners of a garden. It’s interesting that she uses the word “bowers” to describe the place where those “flowers” had been “plucked,” because “bowers” can also mean a woman’s private bedroom. Having “flowers” “plucked” out of a woman’s private bedroom sounds an awful lot like Jeanie lost her virginity during this exchange with the goblins.

Lines 153-162

EXPLANATION- Lizzie continues with Jeanie’s story. Although she ate the goblins’ fruits in the “moonlight” (line 148), she started to “pine

away” during the “moonlight”. After her fruit binge, Jeanie starts to get sick and “pine away.” She looks everywhere for the goblins and their crazy-good fruit, but can’t find them, so she wastes away and age’s prematurely. Then she “fell,” or died, at the time of the first snow. The word “fell” has other connotations, too. A “fallen woman” during the Victorian period is one who has lost her sexual purity. Lizzie reminds Laura that even the grass won’t grow on Jeanie’s grave, even she tried planting flowers on the grave, but they won’t bloom. Lizzie wraps up her lecture by repeating that Laura shouldn’t “loiter” after dark near the goblin market unless she wants to end up like Jeanie.

Lines 163-169

EXPLANATION- Laura tells Lizzie not to worry. Laura tells her sister that she (Laura) ate lots of fruit and is still hungry for more, but not to worry. She says that “tomorrow night” she’ll go and buy more. It’s like she’s telling her sister not to worry, because she can stop anytime she wants to.

Lines 170-183

EXPLANATION- Laura starts going on and on about the fruit she tasted. She promises to bring some back for Lizzie. She lists all the awesome “plums,” “cherries,” “figs” et cetera that she has eaten. She can’t seem to stop raving about them, especially about the “velvet nap,” or peach fuzz, on the peaches, and the “pellucid,” or translucent grapes. Laura wonders what kind of totally awesome place could grow such delicious fruit.

Lines 184-191

EXPLANATION- Lizzie and Laura lie down to go to bed together. The poet compares the two of them to lots of different things as they cuddle up together. The girls are like “two pigeons” that are sharing a nest as they curl up in their canopy (“curtained”) bed. But the poet can’t seem to decide on one analog. They’re not just like pigeons, they’re also just like two flowers coming off of one “stem.” Another comparison: they’re like

two flakes of snow. Finally, the two girls are compared to scepters made out of “ivory” with “gold” on the “tips.” This is the strangest comparison yet. The girls are “ivory” because their skin is very fair and white, and the “gold” on the “tips” is their “golden” hair. But why compare two young women to scepters or “wands” for “awful kings” Both the flower and the snow comparisons suggest that the girls are both equally pure and innocent. The long list of comparisons emphasizes that the two girls look almost identical, like two peas in a pod. But there’s some irony here – *we* know that the two girls aren’t the same anymore. Laura has tasted the goblin fruit, and Lizzie hasn’t.

Lines 192-198

EXPLANATION- As the girls sleep, everything is silent around them. All of nature seems to want them to sleep well – “the wind” even sings them a “lullaby.” “Owls” and “bats” don’t fly too near, for fear of disturbing the girls’ sleep. They sleep all cuddled up, “cheek to cheek” in their bed.

Lines 199-214

EXPLANATION- The next morning, the girls wake up together and start going about their usual morning chores. They’re as busy as bees, and just “as sweet.” Laura and Lizzie apparently live by themselves in a country cottage. They have to bring in the honey from the beehives, milk the cows, clean the house, make “cakes,” churn the cream into butter, whip the cream, feed the chickens, and finally, sit and sew. The long list of chores suggests good, wholesome work. In other words, Laura and Lizzie are busy with domestic, household tasks, most of which involve preparing good, wholesome food. Not like those dangerous goblin fruits. Once the major morning chores are done, they sit and sew together, and chat “as modest maidens should.” This is another way of saying that they’re not gossiping about boys – they’re being “modest” and “maidenly.” Lizzie doesn’t have anything to hide because she’s done nothing wrong, so she chats away “with an open heart.” But Laura’s absent minded

because she's still daydreaming about the goblin fruits. Lizzie is "warbling," or singing to herself like a bird, just because she's happy and it's a beautiful day out, but Laura can't stop wishing for nightfall so she can get some more of that sweet, sweet goblin fruit.

Lines 215-218

EXPLANATION- In the evening, when Laura and Lizzie head down to the brook to fill their "pitchers" with water. Lizzie is calm, or "placid," as usual, but Laura's all hot and bothered, like "a leaping flame."

Lines 219-227

EXPLANATION- After they've gathered the water they need, Lizzie pauses to pick some flowers ("flags" are a kind of flower). Lizzie also takes the time to notice the beautiful sunset which makes the distant "craggs," or cliffs, glow. Then Lizzie reminds Laura that it's time to go in. They're the last "maidens" out, and it's not good for young women to loiter by the brook after sunset. Even the "squirrels" "beasts and birds" have all gone in for the night. Laura's not interested in the sunset, the flowers, or the "beasts and birds." She can't see the details Lizzie appreciates anymore. Laura "loiters" along the stream, making up excuses for staying. She says the "bank" of the brook is too "steep" to climb back up with the pitcher of water.

Lines 228-34

EXPLANATION- Laura tells Lizzie decided to stay out, because the weather was neither too hot nor cold. Meanwhile, she's straining to hear the "customary cry" of the goblins hawking their fruit as they come through the valley. She's heard it every night since forever, but for some reason she can't hear it tonight, with its "iterated," or repeated "jingle."

Lines 235-241

EXPLANATION- Laura is straining to hear, and craning her neck for a glimpse of the goblins, but can't see a single one, let alone the

hordes that always used to come through the valley. It's not clear why Laura can't hear the goblins— apparently, once you've eaten the fruit, you can't hear or see the goblins again.

Lines 242-252

EXPLANATION-Lizzie tries to coax Laura to come back to the house, because she heard the goblins were coming. Lizzie begs Laura to come home – the stars are out, and it's getting really dark. Besides, what if it starts raining? They'd get totally soaked. And then what if they got lost in the dark? Better to go home now, right?

Lines 253-59

EXPLANATION- Laura freaks out when Lizzie tells her that she can hear the goblins. It's still not clear why Laura can't hear the goblins anymore, and it's probably supposed to stay a mystery. Lines 257-258 are phrased as questions, so if you're wondering what's going on, don't worry: you're supposed to.

Lines 260-268

EXPLANATION- Laura's so depressed when she finds out that she's been cut off from that delicious, drug-like goblin fruit that she gets all weak—her “tree of life” gets droopy. Laura doesn't say anything to Lizzie about what's upsetting her, she just “trudges” home and goes straight to bed and sulks, like any angst teenager might do. But after Lizzie's asleep, Laura sits up in bed – she's jonahing pretty hard for that goblin fruit. The “desire” she feels for the goblin fruit is described in almost erotic terms – her “passionate yearning” and “balked” (i.e., unsatisfied) “desire.” Laura cries and cries, and doesn't sleep.

Lines 269-280

EXPLANATION-Time passes. It's not clear how much time – it's just “day after day, night after night.” Laura still yearns for the goblin fruit,

and still can't even hear the goblin men as they pass. Laura can't hear the goblin men, and everything is "silent" around her, and she's "silent" herself, in that she hasn't told Lizzie what the problem is. Even though she "kept watch," Laura can't hear or see the goblin men. By the time of the next full moon (i.e., "when the moon waxed bright"), Laura's hair suddenly goes gray. Apparently, eating the goblin fruit somehow tied Laura's life to the moon, so that by the time the moon wanes away, Laura will die.

Lines 281-85

EXPLANATION- Finally, Laura remembered that she had saved a "kernel stone," or seed, from the goblin fruit she'd eaten. She tries planting it in a nice, warm spot in their garden. After all, she figures, if she can't find her dealer, she might as well try to grow her own. But even though she waters it "with tears," it doesn't take root. Laura's not much of a gardener if she thinks that salty tears are enough to start a plant from seed.

Lines 286-292

EXPLANATION- These lines literally describe the seed, which "never saw the sun," but they could also describe Laura herself, who is wasting away. Laura can't stop dreaming about the fruit, but it's like a "traveler" who sees mirages of water in a "desert." None of it is real, but her dreams make her withdrawal symptoms even worse.

Lines 293-298

EXPLANATION- Laura stops doing her chores around the house. The poet lists all the chores that she's *not* doing, the way that she listed in detail the chores that she and Lizzie used to do together back in Stanza 9. Now Laura just sits by the chimney "listlessly" and mopes. She also stops eating which was not a good sign.

Lines 299-311

EXPLANATION- Lizzie hates to see Laura wasting away, and not be able to do something. It's also driving her bonkers that Laura won't tell

her what's wrong Lizzie can tell that something is wrong, of course, but "not to share" her sister's pain is hard for her. She can still hear the goblin men, even though Laura can't. They're still out there, shouting "come buy, come buy," every "morning and evening." Lizzie wants to go buy her sister some fruit, but is afraid of "pay[ing] too dear." It's not made totally clear, but it seems like Lizzie's probably more worried about the figurative cost to her health.

Lines 312-319

EXPLANATION- Lizzie can't forget what happened to Jeanie, the other young woman who tried eating the goblin fruit and ended up dead. She thinks that Jeanie would have been married by now, but she couldn't wait for the "joys brides hope to have," and ate the goblin fruit and died "in her gay prime." The "joys brides hope to have" probably refer to sex. Jeanie died in the winter, around the time of the first "glazing rime," which is a kind of hard, dense frost, and around the time of the "first snow-fall."

Lines 320-328

EXPLANATION- Finally, Laura seems so close to death and Lizzie can't afford to wait any longer. She's no longer concerned with the right and wrong, or "better and worse,". She's going to go buy some fruit to save her sister. So she grabs some loose change, puts it in her "purse," says goodbye to her sister, and heads out to the brook. "For the first time," Lizzie doesn't shut her eyes and plug up her ears – she actually looks at the goblins.

Lines 329-334

EXPLANATION- The goblins are delighted to see a new customer. They see Lizzie looking at them near the brook, and come running over. Lines 331-334 are a list of "-ing" words describing all the various ways the goblins have of moving and making noise. Like the list of goblin fruits, and descriptions of individual goblins, the level of detail presented in list

form is almost overwhelming.

Lines 335-347

EXPLANATION- This stanza just continues the overwhelming detail describing the individual goblins. It's a huge group, but each of them is different, and Rossetti seems determined to describe every single one. The goblins are "full of airs and graces," in other words; they're very polite and graceful. But some of them are making "wry or sarcastic faces at Lizzie (or at each other). Others are making "demure or modest faces. Again, there's a list of all the different animals the goblins resemble: cats, rats, ratsels (a South African mammal that looks like a badger), wombats (a marsupial from Australia), snails, parrots, magpies, pigeons, fishes etc.

Lines 348-352

EXPLANATION- The goblins actually start to touch Lizzie physically – they "kiss" and "hug" and "caress" and "squeeze." They hold out dishes and "panniers" (baskets) of fruit to her.

Lines 353-362

EXPLANATION- The goblins tell Lizzie to admire their fruit. Just like with Laura, the goblins list all their various kinds of fruit, inviting Lizzie to taste this or that. They have red or yellow apples ("russet or dun"), cherries, peaches, citrons (a kind of citrus fruit from Asia), dates, grapes, pears, plums, pomegranates, and figs. That's a lot of choices. The goblins invite Lizzie to "pluck them and suck them".

Lines 363-367

EXPLANATION- Lizzie keeps reminding her happened to Jeanie, so she tells the goblins that she wants to buy some fruit, and tosses them her "silver penny." It's interesting that Lizzie uses a coin to buy the fruit, while Laura traded a lock of her "golden hair." Lizzie holds out her apron for them to fill with fruit to go.

Lines 368-382

EXPLANATION- The goblin market doesn't work as a to-go operation, though. They tell Lizzie to have a seat and eat her fruit with them. After all, they tell her, it's still early, and the stars are out. And besides, they say, the fruits don't travel well – “half their flavour” would be lost and they'd get all dry and gross if she tried to take the fruit home.

Lines 383-389

EXPLANATION- Lizzie isn't convinced: she tells them she wants the fruit to go, or not at all – if they're not interested in sending her away with any, she wants her penny back. After all, Laura is waiting at home for her, by herself. She doesn't want to waste time sitting out by the brook with the goblins. She says she's not interested in “parleying,” or negotiating, any more about it.

Lines 390-397

EXPLANATION- The goblins start getting mad – they're not excited about giving take-out goblin fruit. They scratch their heads (“pates”), trying to decide how to deal with this troublesome girl. They're not smiling or “purring” anymore, but are “demurring,” or delaying. The goblins start insulting Lizzie, saying she's too “proud” and “cross-grained,” or stubborn, to sit and eat with them. They start getting louder and are obviously up to no good.

Lines 398-407

EXPLANATION- The goblins start “lashing their tails” like whips, and “hustle,” or shove Lizzie around, and “elbow” her in the ribs.” They're getting pretty violent. Again, the poet gives us a list of –ing words that describe the various ways the goblins harass and physically assault Lizzie. They even tear at her dress, dirty her “stocking,” or tights, and yank her hair. Then things get violent: some of them grab her hands while others try to force the fruit into her mouth.

Lines 408-421

EXPLANATION- Lizzie stands firm against the goblins' violent assault. This stanza is a long list of similes describing Lizzie as she stands alone against the goblins. She's compared first to a "lily," standing alone against a "flood" of water. Then she's compared to a "stone" that sticks up by itself in the "tides" of the ocean. (Notice that the stone is "blue-veined," like a person's skin.) Next, she's compared to a "beacon," or signal light, which shoots up "golden fire" as a sign to sailors in the "hoary," or ancient, ocean. Like the "blue-veined stone," the simile that compares Lizzie to a "beacon" reminds us of her physical body – the "golden fire" is her golden blonde hair. Then Lizzie is compared to an "orange-tree" that is surrounded by buzzing, stinging insects. The "orange-tree" is "fruit-crowned," and second, because the insects are trying to pollinate the tree. As if the pollination simile weren't enough, the final simile describes Lizzie as a city under siege –not just any city, of course, but a "virgin town." The attacking "fleet" of enemy ships wants to yank down her "standard," or flag.

Lines 422-432

EXPLANATION- Next, the poet quotes the old saying that you can lead a horse to water, but you can't make it drink. The same is true of Lizzie: the goblins have her surrounded and keep trying to force-feed her fruit, but she keeps her mouth shut and refuses it. Even though the goblins "cuffed" and hit her, she still stands firm. Here's another of Rossetti's long lists describing the goblins and what they're doing to Lizzie. Lizzie doesn't make a peep, because she's afraid that if she opens her lips at all, even to say "Ouch" the goblins will be able to "cram" some fruit into her mouth.

Lines 433-436

EXPLANATION- Lizzie is laughing from the deep core of her heart, because if she opens her mouth to laugh at them, they'll get fruit in her mouth. The goblins aren't getting any fruit into Lizzie's mouth, but they're sure getting the juice all over her. The fruit juice is pooling in her "dimples"

and is getting smeared all over her face and neck. At this point, Lizzie is a sticky mess, like a five-year-old after a pie-eating contest.

Lines 437-446

EXPLANATION- Finally, the goblins give up because Lizzie's "resistance" is too much for them. At least they have the politeness to return her penny before they go. The goblins scatter. Some of them "dive into the brook," and others wriggle "into the ground" like worms. Some of them disappear on the "gale," or wind. As they leave, they kick their fruit away.

Lines 447-454

EXPLANATION- Lizzie is aching all over after being attacked by the goblins. She is so out of it from being beaten up that she doesn't know whether it's "night or day." This is kind of like Laura's initial reaction to eating the goblin fruit, way back at line 139. Lizzie runs up the "bank" of the brook and back across the heath, through "copse," or wooded area, and "dingle," or open meadow. She didn't have to give up her penny, so it's still "jingling" in her "purse." That sound is "music to her ear," but the poem doesn't tell us why it's so important to Lizzie that she got her penny back. Maybe the penny symbolized something else?

Lines 455-463

EXPLANATION- Lizzie keeps on running towards her home and thinking that the goblins might chase after her, either with a "gibe," or verbal insult, or with "something worse" (more physical assault, maybe). But nothing chases her – she's by herself. And we're told that she isn't really motivated by fear of the goblins anymore. She's running because of her "kind heart." She's worried about her sister, and is so pleased with herself that even though she's "out of breath," she's still laughing on the inside.

Lines 464-474

EXPLANATION- As soon as Lizzie enters the gate of their garden, she calls out to Laura. Lizzie invites her sister to come and lick up all the

goblin fruit juice off of her. Of course, the way that she puts it (“hug me, kiss me, suck my juices”) is almost ludicrously erotic. So go ahead and laugh. Lizzie tells Laura that her little adventure with the goblin men was all for Laura’s sake.

Lines 475-484

EXPLANATION- Laura sees her sister and jumps up. She’s afraid that Lizzie has gone and eaten the goblin fruits, too, so she throws her hands in the air in despair. Laura is terrified that Lizzie has eaten the “fruit forbidden,” and that she’ll waste away, too. She doesn’t want to drag Lizzie down with her.

Lines 485-492

EXPLANATION- Laura hugs Lizzie, and kisses her again and again. Of course, since Lizzie is drenched in goblin fruit juice, Laura gets some in her mouth. Laura hasn’t been able to cry for days, but upon seeing the sacrifice her sister was willing to make for her, she starts to cry again. Crying “refreshes” her. Laura is actually “shaking” with a combination of “aguish,” or feverish, “fear and pain.” She just can’t stop kissing her heroic sister. Of course, she’s kissing her with a “hungry mouth,” so there seems to be an element of greed here, as well as gratitude and affection.

Lines 493-499

EXPLANATION- The goblin fruit juice doesn’t taste good to Laura, it actually burns her lips. It tastes like “wormwood,” or bitter poison to her. Laura “writhes” or squirms, in pain and it’s seeming that she’s “possessed” with an evil spirit. She jumps around, crying out, tearing at her dress, and generally freaking out.

Lines 500-506

EXPLANATION- Again poet is using similes to describe Laura. First, we’re told that her hair is “stream[ing]” behind her like the flame

held by a racer (imagine someone running while carrying the Olympic torch). Then we're told that her hair is like the mane of a horse that's running. Or maybe it's like an eagle flying "toward the sun." Or, maybe her hair flying free like something that has been caged for a long time and is enjoying its freedom. Finally, her hair is compared to a "flag" held up by a soldier in an advancing army.

Lines 507-512

EXPLANATION- A fire spreads through her body from goblin fruit juice on Lizzie's skin, and overpowers the "lesser flame" that was burning in her heart. She "gorged," or feasted, on unspeakable bitterness. The poet pulls back here and addresses Laura directly, as "fool," and shakes her finger at her for making bad decisions. And eating goblin fruit, clearly, is a bad decision, it's "soul-consuming care."

Lines 513-523

EXPLANATION- Laura loses consciousness as her body battles for life. Here's another string of similes! Laura faints just like a "watch-tower" of a town that collapses in an earthquake. Or, she's like the "mast" of a ship that gets struck by "lightning." She's also like a tree that gets "uprooted" and "spun about" by a strong wind or tornado. Laura is also compared to a "waterspout" that falls into the sea. So, she collapses. She's unconscious, and beyond both "pleasure" and "anguish." The stanza ends with a question: is she alive or dead?

Lines 524-529

EXPLANATION- The first line of this stanza answers the question at the end of the previous one: it's not life *or* death, its life *out of* death. Lizzie stays up all night to take care of Laura. She takes her pulse and gives her water to drink. Lizzie cries over her and fans her with "leaves."

Lines 530-542

EXPLANATION- Just as the new day starts, Laura wakes up as though she were waking up “from a dream.” She’s as fresh and new as the “lilies” that are opening down by the stream. Laura’s able to laugh in the “innocent old way,” as she used to before she ate the goblin fruits. She hugs Lizzie a lot to thank her, of course. Even her hair is blonde again, instead of gray, and her eyes are bright again.

Lines 543-547

EXPLANATION- Both Laura and Lizzie are “wives” and have their own children. Like all mothers, they worry about their kids.

Lines 548-559

EXPLANATION- Laura tells their kids all about her own youth, and how she visited the “haunted glen” where the goblins were. She tells them the whole story. She says that the goblin fruit was so tasty, but was “poison in the blood.” Laura tells the kids about Lizzie’s heroism – how she risked her own life to save Laura.

Lines 560-567

EXPLANATION- As Laura repeats the story to her children, she tells them that the moral is that sisters should stick together, because “there is no friend like a sister/ In calm or stormy weather.” Sisters save each other and “strengthen” each other. The poem ends with Laura’s moral to her children.

21.6 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

Objective Type Questions

1. The rhyme scheme in Rossetti’s poem is
 - a) Cinquain

- b) Irregular
 - c) Monorhyme
 - d) Couplet
 - e) Enclosed rhyme
2. Lines 82-86 serve to
- a) Describe Laura's surroundings.
 - b) Provide vivid imagery to describe Laura's physical traits.
 - c) Illustrate Laura's willpower to the goblin men's here
 - d) Personify various animals and inanimate objects by comparing Laura to them
3. Rossetti employs all of the following devices except
- a) Anachronism
 - b) Asyndeton
 - c) Anaphora
 - d) Simile
 - e) Dialogue
4. Morning and evening/ _____ heard the goblins cry:
- a) Maids
 - b) Girls
 - c) Boys
 - d) Butlers
5. We must not look at goblin men,/We must not buy their _____
- a) Clothes
 - b) Candy

- c) Fruits
 - d) lies
6. Laura stretched out her gleaming neck/Like a rush-imbedded

- a) Swan
 - b) Bird
 - c) Nightingale
 - d) Mouse
7. She clipped a precious golden lock,/She dropped a tear more rare than
_____.
- a) Pearl
 - b) Gold
 - c) Diamonds
 - d) Rubies
8. Do you not remember _____/How she met them in the moonlight
- a) Sarah
 - b) Lizzie
 - c) Jeanie
 - d) Laura

21.7 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

1. Christina Rossetti's "Goblin Market": Feminist Poem or Religious Allegory?
2. *The seductiveness of death in Christina Rossetti's 'The Goblin Market'*

21.8 SUGGESTED READING

1. Crump, R.W. *Christina Rossetti: The Complete Poems*. New York: Penguin Books, 2005.
2. Woolf, Virginia. *The Common Reader: Second Series*. London: The Hogarth Press, 1932. Bell, Mackenzie.
3. *Christina Rossetti: A Biographical and Critical Study*. Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1898.

M.A. ENGLISH : SEMESTER II

COURSE CODE : ENG 212

LESSON No. 22

POETRY-II

CHRISTINA ROSSETTI

UNIT-VI

STRUCTURE

- 22.1 Introduction
- 22.2 Objectives
- 22.3 Study different themes in Rossetti's Poem
- 22.4 Pre-Raphaelite Influence
- 22.5 Self -Assessment Questions
- 22.6 Multiple Choice Questions
 - 22.6.1 Answer Key
- 22.7 Examination Oriented Questions
- 22.8 Suggested Reading

22.1 INTRODUCTION

The Pre-Raphaelite Movement was primarily centered around the visual arts, Christina Rossetti's is Poetry belongs to the literary branch of the Pre-Raphaelite aesthetics.

22.2 OBJECTIVES

In this lesson we shall analyze Rossetti's writings from different perspectives. After reading this unit you will be able:

- a) Explain different themes in Christina Rossetti's poetry.
- b) Analyse how Rossetti is the Pre- Raphaelite poetess

22.3 STUDY DIFFERENT THEMES IN ROSSETTI'S POEM

It is difficult to find out a satisfying thematic interpretation from Christina Rossetti's "Goblin Market," but some obvious themes might be "that one should be careful of temptation," or "that little girls should not talk to strange men." One might even go on to the end of the poem and decide the theme is "that sisters should love one another." These are rather trite ideas, however, and while the poem definitely supports them (and they are easily defended with quotations from the text), a more careful look at "Goblin Market" reveals that the poem is fairly complex, and able to support a more revolutionary reading than the ones put forth above. In this poem Rossetti attempts to deal with certain problems which she recognized within the canon of English literature, and specifically with the problem of how to construct a female hero.

Female protagonists exist, of course, like Elizabeth in Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, but they have no outlet for heroic action because they are constrained by the gender-roles into which a male-dominated society has placed them. Elizabeth must spend a good deal of her energy waiting for Darcy to take action; she herself is hobbled by the cords of decorum. So there are no significant female heroes in English literature up to the time of Rossetti.

In "Goblin Market," Rossetti makes an effort to project a female hero or a heroine, but she fails to solve the problem completely. Throughout the poem Lizzie remains pure; this is nothing new. The role of the unstained virgin has existed longer than the English language. Spenser's Florimell provides an early example. What is unique about Lizzie is that she actively pursues temptation with the intention of conquering it. When she find out that Laura's condition is going to be deplorable Lizzie left no stone unturned to save her sister's life. When the Goblins refuse to sell her the fruit and attack Lizzie, she forbears temptation and keeps her mouth closed:

Lizzie uttered not a word;
Would not open lip from lip

Lest they should cram a mouthful in.

Eventually, she manages to save her sister by running home and asking
Laura to

“Hug me, kiss me, suck my juices /
Squeezed from goblin fruits for you,”
“For your sake I have braved the glen /
And had to do with goblin merchant men”

It is obvious that the above statement is perplexed and ambiguous for the readers to find out the definite conclusion that whether the residual juices or her sister's love cured her.

So what we are left with is this: a woman performed a heroic, self-sacrificing action (certainly related to Christ's sacrifice of himself) to save her sister. However, it seems apparent that there are problems with the framework for feminine heroism constructed by Rossetti. It remains a passive kind of heroism. Lizzie does not attack the goblin men, demanding the antidote for their fruit, or weave a spell of benign magic over her sister. She is forced to offer herself to goblin abuse (physical, sexual goblin abuse) to perform a positive action. It is possible to account for the passive nature of Lizzie's act by putting it into the context of Rossetti's Christian beliefs, but that does not seem enough. The ambiguities at the end of “Goblin Market” and the almost out of place, strangely irrelevant feel of the last few lines (caused by their sanitized, formulaic tone at the end of a poem so rich in erotic and violent detail) indicate that Rossetti herself had not reached a satisfactory conclusion on the subject of female heroism.

22.4 THE PRE-RAPHAELITE INFLUENCE IN “GOBLIN MARKET”

Christina Rossetti, a devout Christian, followed her brother into the Pre-Raphaelite brotherhood movement in artwork, a movement that expressed love of the natural world, demanded a dedication to the exact and precise

replication of natural world, encouraged a deeper meaning in the work through the use of symbolic colors and lighting, and often included a spiritual significance through the addition of mythical or religious subjects. Christina Rossetti's "Goblin Market" is very much a product of this artistic thinking and many of the qualities that can be found in the analysis of a Pre-Raphaelite painting can be found in this literary tribute.

"Goblin Market", like the Pre-Raphaelite paintings Rossetti admired, is thickly intertwined with nature, represented in the form of fruits and the personification of Mother Nature. The most constant representation of nature in this poem is the goblins' fruits, but the roles those fruits play shifts dramatically. Initially, the fruits are a source of wonder and awe – "sweet to tongue and sound to eye" (30).

The fruits are later revealed to be some sort of addictive, drug-like substance when Laura confesses "I ate and ate my fill/ but my mouth waters still" (165-6) and fixates on consuming more fruit, unmindful that she is neglecting all other aspects of her life. Clearly, a shift has occurred since the first stanza. Fruit, while delicious, is not an addictive substance. This implies that the fruit is not from nature, but has been manipulated and contaminated by the evil goblins who seek to drive maidens into despair.

The goblins' evil spell has worn off and their foul fruits tastes like what they really are – a disgusting imposter of the gifts of Mother Nature. The goblins were able to pervert the gifts of nature for their purposes and infest them with the "wormwood" taste of repercussion and regret. Mother Nature, the all-encompassing beauty of the natural world that the Pre-Raphaelite artists worshipped, would never produce this thing of evil. Many times, Mother Nature is indirectly referenced in "Goblin Market" as a force working for the good of the sisters, not against them. For instance, after Laura returns home from her goblin feast and lays down to bed with her sister, the "moon and stars gaz'd in at them, wind sang to them lullaby" (192-3). Not even the bats or owls made a sound that might wake the sisters, for

Mother Nature was extending her efforts to keep the two young women asleep, so that they might not wander at night.

Through vivid descriptive detail, “Goblin Market” creates an explicit hyper-realistic natural setting, in accordance with the Pre-Raphaelite artwork highlighting devotion to the accurate depiction of nature. Many times in the poem, Rossetti incorporates sensational imagery, perhaps best seen collectively in Laura’s description of the fruits after indulging in the goblin’s offerings to her dutiful sister, Lizzie:

“You cannot think what figs
My teeth have met in,
What melons icy-cold
Piled on a dish of gold
Too huge for me to hold,
What peaches with a velvet nap,
Pellucid grapes without one seed...”(173-179).

Within six brief lines of poetry, Rossetti has appealed to three senses in multiple ways: the taste of ripe figs, the sight of golden dishes and grapes as clear as purified water, the touch of icy-cold melons, the weight of their ripeness, and the light brush of the soft skin of a peach. These descriptive factors represent the sensationalism and melodrama of the hyper-realistic nature of the Pre-Raphaelite movement. Christina Rossetti engages the reader’s senses like an artist, creating, with words, a painting of nature’s bounty through details that reflect the intricacies of the hyper-realism embraced by the Pre-Raphaelite movement.

The presence of goblins in “Goblin Market” serves as a connection to the supernatural, allowing Rossetti to provide a mythical moral to her intended audience young women in danger of losing their virtue. The goblin itself is a mythical creature, an ugly imp associated with evil. These goblins are mysterious beings, somehow managing to grow ripe

abundances of fruits all seasons of the year. They are described in a curious manner: “One had a cat’s face/ One whisked a tail/ One tramp’d at a rat’s pace/ One crawl’d like a snail” (71-74). The goblins’ strange faces and mysterious abilities evoke curiosity. While they are certainly not beautiful, from a distance the goblins do not appear threatening only strange. Young Laura is intrigued by the strange goblins. She shows interest in what she knows to be evil, despite her feeble desire to be as her sister- to be impervious to their call. These goblins are a symbol of the lustful men eager to steal young maidens’ virginity. Their fruits are symbols of the pleasure the maidens might experience by recklessly giving themselves over to a man in a night of passion, supported by the fact that to receive them a maiden (and only a maiden) must pay with “a golden curl” (125), a symbol of virginity. The indulgence in these pleasures leaves the women broken, pining for the feast they once experienced, but never able to taste the fruits again. The kernel stone Laura takes from a piece of fruit after indulging is symbolic for her womb. Lost in despair and craving the goblins’ fruit, she remembers this seed and attempts to plant it. Symbolically, she is trying to nurture a child in her womb, that she might have the joy of motherhood if she can longer experience the pleasure of sex. However, the seed never grew, Laura was not pregnant. Everything she could have hoped for – a child, an honorable husband, even the chance at having the pleasure again, has been taken by these goblins. They care so little for her that they have no qualms with ripping her future from her and sending her to her early grave, husbandless, childless, and virtue-less like Jeanie before her. This sends a rather straightforward message to the young women Rossetti was trying to reach: be wary of your vices, do not be tempted by the joys of passion, and do not listen to the sweet words of lecherous men, but keep strong in your innocence and purity.

This poem also incorporates supernaturalism through stereotypical characters that have a religious significance. Because they are human, Laura and Lizzie might not immediately seem as though their characters

can qualify as supernatural or spiritual. Yet, on closer inspection, Lizzie and Laura are directly associated to religious subjects from the Christian religion, which is unsurprising considering Rossetti's militant devotion to the Christian faith. In Lizzie, the sister who was virtuous and true and only approached the goblins so that she might save her sister, we see something of a Christ figure. Her self-sacrificing nature, her inhuman kindness and purity, paired with her wisdom and ultimate defeat over evil (though not before much pain and torment) make her the Christ-like example for women of this time. Laura, then, may not represent any one biblical character, but any of them who have fallen short of the expectations of God. She is the spirit of human weakness, the erotomaniac woman unable to overcome her "sweet-tooth" (115) for the fruits of goblin men, symbolizing the pleasure of sex, and was brought to her knees for indulging in it. After realizing that she could never again enjoy the ungodly fruits, "her tree of life droop'd from the root"(260), her hair turned gray, and she was tormented "and gnashed her teeth"(267)- an allusion to the Christian Hell. On all accounts, Laura was damned and dying. Only after drinking the juices of the goblin men off the face of her Christ-like sister, symbolic for the practice of Communion, did "swift fire spread through her veins" (507) and she received "life out of death"(524), or rebirth. These lines solidify Lizzie as the Christ-figure and Laura as the representation of the sheep that has gone astray –not inherently evil, only weak minded. Laura's salvation through her sister is empowering to women of this period, as it advocates that women can help each other without the help of men, that a woman can take the position of Christ in saving other women from their own flaws. "For there is no friend like a sister" (562) Laura says, "To fetch one if one goes astray, to strengthen whilst one stands" (565, 567).

"Goblin Market", a poem masterfully written to provide sincere warning to women tempted by sexual desire, is the written accompaniment to the virtues of the Pre-Raphaelite movement. Christina Rossetti readily

supported the movement to reinforce the exact representation of the natural world and communication on a spiritual level in artwork. She observed the marvelous, painstakingly detailed paintings, all rich with symbolic meaning and many including mythical and spiritual subjects, and from those observations crafted a poem that embodied the motives and qualities of the Pre-Raphaelite movement as powerfully as the paintings themselves. “Goblin Market” is centered on a love and reverence of the natural world, includes hyper-realistic descriptions, uses color and light as a symbolic devices, and includes supernatural beings and religious allusions to bestow the work with a spiritual moral, resulting in a poem that will forever be a perfect tribute to the Pre-Raphaelite movement.

22.5 SELF- ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

Write true or false in each of the following :

1. The poem Goblin Market was published in 1859
2. At last, the goblins give up and Lizzie runs home, hoping that Laura will eat and drink the juice from her body
3. The character of Laura closely parallels the figure of the She-Wolf which represents excessive desire:
4. Laura is able to resist their coaxing and runs home, but Lizzi succumbs.
5. The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood (PRB) was a group of painters, poets, and novelists.
6. There is first person narrator in the Goblin Market.
7. The language of the poem is very complex and difficult to understand.

22.6 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

1. Which of these authors was a friend of the Rossetti family?
Emily Dickenson

- Dante Alighieri
Charles Dickens
Lewis Carroll
2. What was Christina Rossetti's pen name?
Silence Do good
Henry Wade
Geoffrey Crayon
Ellen Alleyne
3. What was the name of the original Pre-Raphaelite journal?
The Rambler
The Germ
The Guardian
Athenaeum
4. Which author did Gabriel Rossetti primarily study?
William Shakespeare
Vergil
Dante Alighieri
Petrarch
5. What caused Christina Rossetti's death?
Old age
Tuberculosis
Graves' disease
Breast cancer
6. What is the relationship between Lizzie and Laura in "Goblin Market"?
Acquaintances
Cousins
Sisters
Mother and daughter

7. What was the subject of Christina Rossetti's first poem?
 Her older brother
 A school girl
 The death of the family pet
 Her father
8. Fill in the blanks: "We must not _____ goblin men"
 Steal from
 Buy from
 Encourage the
 Speak to
9. What are the goblin men selling?
 Exotic spices
 Beautiful silks
 Golden dishes
 Delicious fruit

22.6.1 Answer Key

- | | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Dante Alighieri | 2. Ellen Alleyne |
| 3. The Germ | 4. Dante Alighieri |
| 5. Breast cancer | 6. Sisters |
| 7. The death of the family pet | 8. Buy from |
| 9. Delicious fruit | |

22.7 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

The Dualities and Complexities of Moral Value Judgments in "Goblin Market"

Discuss symbolism in *The Goblin Market*?

22.8 SUGGESTED READING

Rossetti, Christina. Sing Song. Edinburgh: R&R Clark, 1892.

“Rossetti, Christina - Introduction.” Nineteenth-Century Literary Criticism. Ed. James E. Person, Jr. Vol. 50.

“Christina Rossetti: Illness and Ideology.” Victorian Poetry 45.4 (2007): 415-428.
