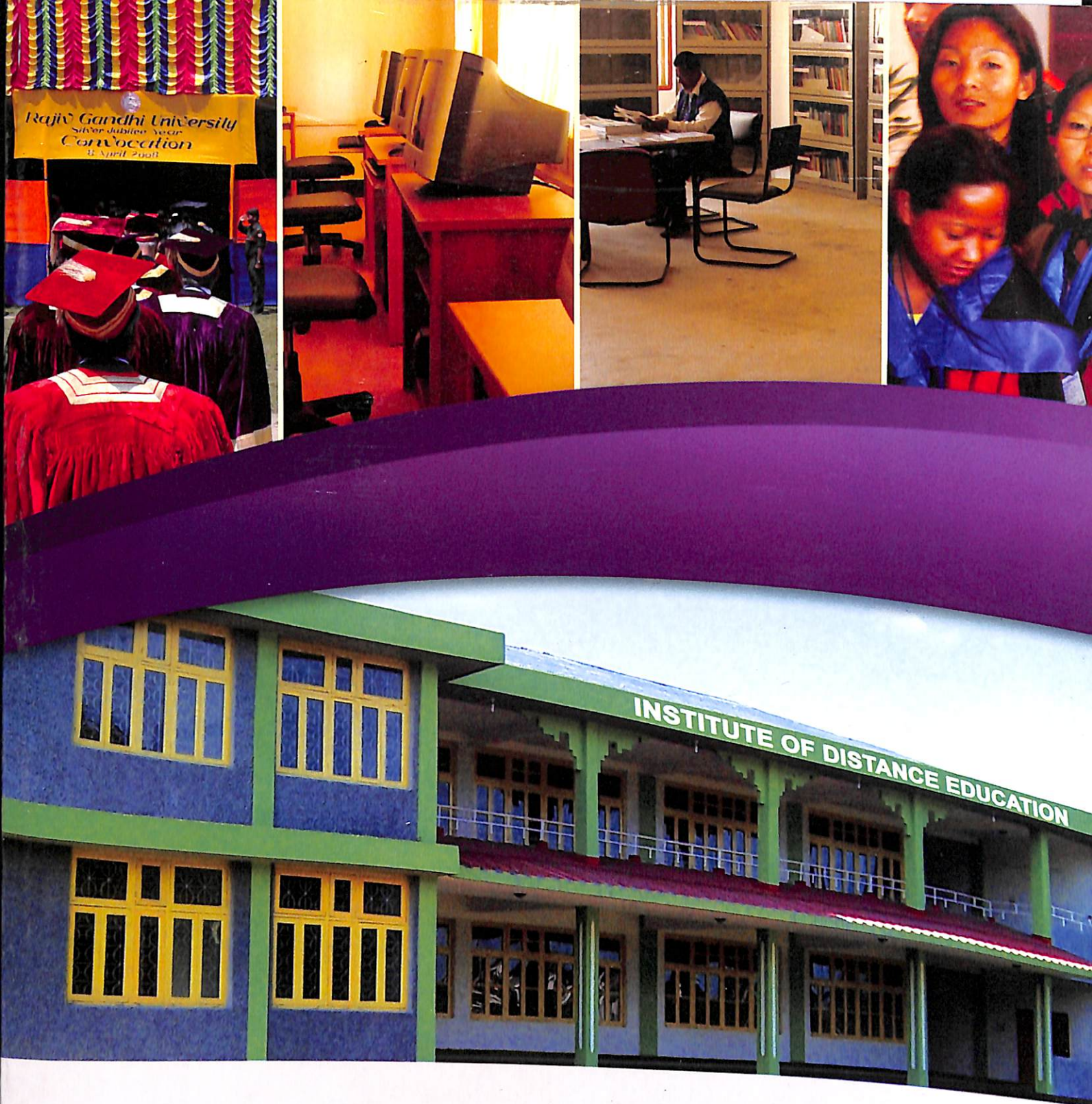

M.A. (English)

FIRST YEAR

MAE-403

INSTITUTE OF DISTANCE EDUCATION
IDE
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ENGLISH POETRY FROM THE FOURTEENTH TO THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

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MA [English]

First Year

MAE-403

RAJIV GANDHI UNIVERSITY
Arunachal Pradesh, INDIA - 791 112

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About the University

Rajiv Gandhi University (formerly Arunachal University) is a premier institution for higher education in the state of Arunachal Pradesh and has completed twenty-five years of its existence. Late Smt. Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of India, laid the foundation stone of the university on 4th February, 1984 at Rono Hills, where the present campus is located.

Ever since its inception, the university has been trying to achieve excellence and fulfill the objectives as envisaged in the University Act. The university received academic recognition under Section 2(f) from the University Grants Commission on 28th March, 1985 and started functioning from 1st April, 1985. It got financial recognition under section 12-B of the UGC on 25th March, 1994. Since then Rajiv Gandhi University, (then Arunachal University) has carved a niche for itself in the educational scenario of the country following its selection as a University with potential for excellence by a high-level expert committee of the University Grants Commission from among universities in India.

The University was converted into a Central University with effect from 9th April, 2007 as per notification of the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India.

The University is located atop Rono Hills on a picturesque tableland of 302 acres overlooking the river Dikrong. It is 6.5 km from the National Highway 52-A and 25 km from Itanagar, the State capital. The campus is linked with the National Highway by the Dikrong bridge.

The teaching and research programmes of the University are designed with a view to play a positive role in the socio-economic and cultural development of the State. The University offers Undergraduate, Post-graduate, M.Phil and Ph.D. programmes. The Department of Education also offers the B.Ed. programme.

There are fifteen colleges affiliated to the University. The University has been extending educational facilities to students from the neighbouring states, particularly Assam. The strength of students in different departments of the University and in affiliated colleges has been steadily increasing.

The faculty members have been actively engaged in research activities with financial support from UGC and other funding agencies. Since inception, a number of proposals on research projects have been sanctioned by various funding agencies to the University. Various departments have organized numerous seminars, workshops and conferences. Many faculty members have participated in national and international conferences and seminars held within the country and abroad. Eminent scholars and distinguished personalities have visited the University and delivered lectures on various disciplines.

The academic year 2000-2001 was a year of consolidation for the University. The switch over from the annual to the semester system took off smoothly and the performance of the students registered a marked improvement. Various syllabi designed by Boards of Post-graduate Studies (BPGS) have been implemented. VSAT facility installed by the ERNET India, New Delhi under the UGC-Infonet program, provides Internet access.

In spite of infrastructural constraints, the University has been maintaining its academic excellence. The University has strictly adhered to the academic calendar, conducted the examinations and declared the results on time. The students from the University have found placements not only in State and Central Government Services, but also in various institutions, industries and organizations. Many students have emerged successful in the National Eligibility Test (NET).

Since inception, the University has made significant progress in teaching, research, innovations in curriculum development and developing infrastructure.

About IDE

The formal system of higher education in our country is facing the problems of access, limitation of seats, lack of facilities and infrastructure. Academicians from various disciplines opine that it is learning which is more important and not the channel of education. The education through distance mode is an alternative mode of imparting instruction to overcome the problems of access, infrastructure and socio-economic barriers. This will meet the demand for qualitative higher education of millions of people who cannot get admission in the regular system and wish to pursue their education. It also helps interested employed and unemployed men and women to continue with their higher education. Distance education is a distinct approach to impart education to learners who remained away in the space and/or time from the teachers and teaching institutions on account of economic, social and other considerations. Our main aim is to provide higher education opportunities to those who are unable to join regular academic and vocational education programmes in the affiliated colleges of the University and make higher education reach to the doorsteps in rural and geographically remote areas of Arunachal Pradesh in particular and North-eastern part of India in general. In 2008, the Centre for Distance Education has been renamed as "Institute of Distance Education (IDE)."

Continuing the endeavor to expand the learning opportunities for distant learners, IDE has introduced Post Graduate Courses in 5 subjects (Education, English, Hindi, History and Political Science) from the Academic Session 2013-14.

The Institute of Distance Education is housed in the Physical Sciences Faculty Building (first floor) next to the University Library. The University campus is 6 kms from NERIST point on National Highway 52A. The University buses ply to NERIST point regularly.

Outstanding Features of Institute of Distance Education:

(i) At Par with Regular Mode

Eligibility requirements, curricular content, mode of examination and the award of degrees are on par with the colleges affiliated to the Rajiv Gandhi University and the Department(s) of the University.

(ii) Self-Instructional Study Material (SISM)

The students are provided SISM prepared by the Institute and approved by Distance Education Council (DEC), New Delhi. This will be provided at the time of admission at the IDE or its Study Centres. SISM is provided only in English except Hindi subject.

(iii) Contact and Counselling Programme (CCP)

The course curriculum of every programme involves counselling in the form of personal contact programme of duration of approximately 7-15 days. The CCP shall not be compulsory for BA. However for professional courses and MA the attendance in CCP will be mandatory.

(iv) Field Training and Project

For professional course(s) there shall be provision of field training and project writing in the concerned subject.

(v) Medium of Instruction and Examination

The medium of instruction and examination will be English for all the subjects except for those subjects where the learners will need to write in the respective languages.

(vi) Subject/Counselling Coordinators

For developing study material, the IDE appoints subject coordinators from within and outside the University. In order to run the PCCP effectively Counselling Coordinators are engaged from the Departments of the University, The Counselling-Coordinators do necessary coordination for involving resource persons in contact and counselling programme and assignment evaluation. The learners can also contact them for clarifying their difficulties in then respective subjects.

SYLLABI-BOOK MAPPING TABLE

English Poetry from the Fourteenth to the Twentieth Century

Syllabi	Mapping in Book
UNIT I Explanations from the starred texts.	**Unit 1:** Passages for Explanation with Reference to Context **(Pages 3-22)**
UNIT II Geoffrey Chaucer : The Prologue to the Canterbury Tales Shakespeare : Sonnet no. 60, 73	**Unit 2:** Chaucer and Shakespeare **(Pages 23-45)**
UNIT III John Donne : The Good Morrow, The Sunne Rising John Milton : Paradise Lost, Book I Thomas Gray : Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard Alexander Pope : Rape of the Lock	**Unit 3:** Renaissance and Metaphysical Poets **(Pages 47-143)**
UNIT IV William Wordsworth : Ode to Intimations of Immortality S. T. Coleridge : Kubla Khan P B Shelley : Ode to the West Wind John Keats : Ode to a Nightingale	**Unit 4:** Romantic Poets **(Pages 145-182)**
UNIT V Alfred Lord Tennyson : Ulysses Robert Browning : The Last Ride Together Matthew Arnold : Dover Beach W B Yeats : Byzantium T. S. Eliot : The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock	**Unit 5:** Victorian and Modern Poets **(Pages 183-232)**

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INTRODUCTION

NOTES

Percy Byssche Shelley once said, 'Poetry lifts the veil from the hidden beauty of the world, and makes familiar objects be as if they were not familiar.' Poetry is an expression of the poet's soul like all art is a representation of the artist's soul. Poetry can be transcendental, topical, lyrical, romantic, serious, religious, or even morbid in nature. It can have as many shades as there are souls on this earth. Poetry is one of the most inspiring art forms. It is literature in its purest form, and is written in verse or meter. Poetry mostly involves the use of poetic devices such as metaphors, similes, alliteration, couplet, stanza, blank verse, etc. It uses language in an aesthetic manner. Poets observe what is happening around them and use their imagination to express their feelings and emotions in their poetry. Every age has its poetical genius. While the Medieval Age had great poets like Chaucer and Gower, the Renaissance had Shakespeare and Milton to boast of. On the other end of the poetic spectrum, we find poets who had metaphysical concerns like John Donne, Andrew Marvell, etc. The romantic poets such as Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats and others brought forth the love for nature. The modern age represented by poets such as Eliot highlighted the emptiness of the modern man. What is common among all these poets is that they all represented and registered the noblest ideas of their age in their poetry.

This book — *English Poetry from the Fourteenth to the Twentieth Century* — has been designed keeping in mind the self-instruction mode (SIM) format and follows a simple pattern, wherein each unit of the book begins with the **Introduction** followed by the **Unit Objectives** for the topic. The content is then presented in a simple and easy-to-understand manner, and is interspersed with **Check Your Progress** questions to reinforce the student's understanding of the topic. A list of **Questions and Exercises** is also provided at the end of each unit. The **Summary**, **Key Terms** and **Activity** further act as useful tools for students and are meant for effective recapitulation of the text.

This book is divided into five units:

Unit 1: Contains passages for explanation from selected poems.

Unit 2: Explains the poetry of Chaucer and Shakespeare.

Unit 3: Describes the poetry of the Renaissance and Metaphysical poets.

Unit 4: Describes the poetry of the Romantics.

Unit 5: Gives examples of the Victorian and Modern poets.

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UNIT 1 PASSAGES FOR EXPLANATION WITH REFERENCE TO CONTEXT

Structure

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The initial writings in English, which were in Old English, made their appearance in the early Middle Ages. The most ancient work that is known to have survived on Old English is the *Hymn* of Cædmon. The oral culture is known to have been extremely popular in the ancient English culture with maximum literary works being written with a motive of being enacted on stage. Epic poems, therefore gained great popularity with several such poems that included *Beowulf*, surviving to the present day. They exist in the rich corpus of Anglo-Saxon literature which bear much resemblance to the present day's Icelandic, Norwegian, North Frisian and the Northumbrian, and Scots English dialects of modern English. The earliest dramatic representation in England was in Latin. It was performed by priests who used it as a means of conveying the truth of religion to the illiterate masses.

This unit will give a detailed study of the important passages from different poems. These have been written by great poets such as John Milton, Alexander Pope, William Wordsworth, P.B. Shelley, Alfred Lord Tennyson and T.S.Eliot.

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1.1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

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

- Explain the characteristics of the seventeenth century
- List the characteristics of the age of sensibility
- Interpret the use of mock-heroic verse in *Rape of the Lock*
- List the poets of the nineteenth century
- Recognize the two main literary figures of the twentieth century

1.2 SEVENTEENTH CENTURY POETRY

One wonders whether the character of poetry, irrespective of the century it belonged to, was dependant on the non-literary developments. The practice of innovative and influential poets mainly determined the poetry of the seventeenth century. Great poets shape the literature of their century, as the two great poets of seventeenth century England, namely, William Shakespeare and John Milton.

The seventeenth century falls into the Early Modern period of Europe and that period was characterized by the following:

- Dutch golden age
- The Baroque cultural movement
- The French *Grand Siècle* dominated by Louis XIV
- The scientific revolution
- The general crisis

The general crisis in this period was characterized in Europe by the following:

- Thirty years' war
- The Great Turkish War
- The end of the Dutch Revolt
- The disintegration of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth
- The English Civil War

During the general crisis, the European politics was dominated by Louis XIV of France. Louis XIV expanded the borders of France to include the following:

- Rousillon
- Artois
- Dunkirk
- Franche-Comté
- Strasbourg
- Alsace
- Lorraine

By the end of the seventeenth century, Europeans were aware of the following subjects:

- Logarithms
- Electricity
- Telescope
- Microscope
- Calculus
- Universal gravitation

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- Newton's Laws of Motion
- Air pressure
- Calculating machines

The scientists who initiated the Scientific Revolution in these times were as follows:

- Isaac Newton
- Gottfried Leibniz
- Galileo Galilei
- René Descartes
- Pierre Fermat
- Robert Hooke
- Robert Boyle
- Antonie van Leeuwenhoek
- William Gilbert

1.2.1 John Donne

John Donne was one of the most prominent literary figures of the early seventeenth century. His works stand on two distinct accomplishments:

1. The witty, sensual love poetry of his early career
2. The serious, devout religious writing of his later career

He began to write serious religious literature when he became the Dean of St. Paul's. Donne's poetry was so influential that it was considered as the basis of the metaphysical school of poetry. It was characterized later by many writers such as Richard Crashaw, Abraham Cowley and George Herbert. Donne was quite influential as an Anglican divine as well. His highly personal accounts of seeking God and an authentic faith address, the universal difficulty of living a spiritual and a worldly life as well as hardships of the Anglican Church of the seventeenth century.

Ben Johnson was one of the major critics of John Donne. Donne always had friendly relations with Jonson. They both read and critiqued each other's work. Jonson thought that Donne was witty but he decried his earthy subject matter and his innovations in a poetic meter.

Donne's lack of reserve and stylistic experimentation was appreciated by many nineteenth century writers such as Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Robert Browning and Thomas DeQuincey. Donne celebrated his works by infusing them with life and filling them with primeval emotion. Donne's status in English literature was assured in the twentieth century when major critics namely, T. S. Eliot, Lionel Trilling and Cleanth Brooks, acknowledged Donne's ability to write about human experience in poetry. Donne has never been universally appreciated.

According to some critics, Donne writes in distinct personas without any regard for consistency. His earlier poems were those of a witty courtier seeking favour and patronage while his later poems were concerned with theology and personal salvation. While his earliest essays were strongly anti-Catholic, some of his later verse seemed to show Catholic sympathies. Such inconsistencies have led to charges that Donne was insincere and self-serving and that his writings did not reflect his personal beliefs but his attempts to rise in English society. A strongest statement of this position came up in John Carey's 1981 biography of Donne. It was a highly influential and frequently cited volume. According to Carey, apostasy and ambition were the two major driving forces of Donne's career. He described Donne as violent man; whose poetry was powerful only to the extent that it reflected the poet's personal aspirations.

Donne's image as a forceful poet with a masculine drive to dominate has been a frequent theme of Donne criticism since Carey's biography. Donne's views have permitted alternate contemporary views of his attitude towards women, specifically with respect to Donne's feelings for his wife, Anne More Donne. Donne's melancholy and his spiritual anxiety have been interpreted by critics as a reflection of his deep concern about creating a Christian community and having a right relationship with God.

1.2.2 John Milton

Although John Milton's poetry represents only about one-fifth of his total literary production, the prose works are more obscure, largely because he wrote in genres that no longer appeal to a large audience. Milton's prose is usually read today for what it reveals about his biography and his thought. His most prominent theme was liberty—religious, domestic and civil.

However, his prose works were not as popular as his poetry because he opted to write in genres that were not very appealing to a large audience. Milton's prose provided detailed information on his life and thoughts.

The themes he wrote on included religious, domestic and civil liberty. He wrote five anti-prelatical tracts, four tracts that justified divorce and five pamphlets in defense of the English Puritan cause.

1.2.3 Selected Passages from *Paradise Lost*

(i)

Of Mans First Disobedience, and the Fruit
Of that Forbidden Tree, whose mortal tast
Brought Death into the World, and all our woe,
With loss of EDEN, till one greater Man
Restore us, and regain the blissful Seat,
Sing Heav'nly Muse, that on the secret top
Of OREB, or of SINAI, didst inspire
That Shepherd, who first taught the chosen Seed,
In the Beginning how the Heav'ns and Earth
Rose out of CHAOS:

Explanation: These are the beginning lines of the poem, *Paradise Lost*, by John Milton. In these lines, he is talking about Man's first disobedience. Man here refers to Adam and the first disobedience refers to not obeying God's command when He forbade Adam and Eve from eating the fruit of the Tree of Life. The mortal taste of this fruit brought death into the world, besides bringing great miseries and woes to mankind. He says in the fourth line that 'one greater man' restored to mankind the blissful seat. This 'greater man' was Jesus, the Son of God. Milton here is referring to the supreme sacrifice that Jesus made by shedding His precious blood by dying on the Cross of Calvary for the sins of mankind. This sacrifice helped mankind regain its lost seat in heaven.

In the next lines, Milton is invoking his heavenly muse. He calls for her help in writing this epic. This muse is the same as Urania, traditionally the muse of astronomy. However, several theories have it that Milton could be invoking the holy spirit in helping him write this epic.

In asking the heavenly muse, Milton asks her to sing as she is the same muse who inspired the shepherd Moses on top of Mt. Horeb or Sinai. It was that shepherd, Moses, who first taught God's ways to the chosen seed. The chosen seed here refers to the people of Israel. The people of Israel have been referred to as the chosen people all through the Bible. It was Moses who taught the Israelites about how the heaven and the earth were created out of what was chaos.

(ii)

A Dungeon horrible, on all sides round
As one great Furnace flam'd, yet from those flames
No light, but rather darkness visible
Serv'd onely to discover sights of woe,
Regions of sorrow, doleful shades, where peace [65]
And rest can never dwell, hope never comes
That comes to all; but torture without end
Still urges, and a fiery Deluge, fed
With ever-burning Sulphur unconsum'd:
Such place Eternal Justice had prepar'd [70]
For those rebellious, here thir Prison ordain'd
In utter darkness, and thir portion set
As far remov'd from God and light of Heav'n
As from the Center thrice to th' utmost Pole.

Explanation: Milton in the given lines is describing hell. He describes hell as being a dungeon that has been covered by flames. It had flames and only flames all around it, yet those flames gave out no light. They only had the power to burn but did not give out any light, due to which the dungeon remained dark. There were only sights of cries and groans. They are places of immense sorrow and grief where peace and rest never come. It is endless torture which remains unconsumed by ever-burning sulphur. This is the kind of place that God has prepared for those who are rebellious and do not obey God's word and command. It is into this prison that he will throw such people. The place is filled with utter darkness with their portion set. This place is thrice as far removed from God and the light of heaven as the distance between centre of the earth and the utmost pole.

Check Your Progress

1. Who dominated European politics during the general crisis in the seventeenth century?
2. Name one of the major critics of John Donne.
3. What is the first disobedience that is talked about in *Paradise Lost*?
4. Who are the people of Israel referred to in *Paradise Lost*?

1.3 EIGHTEENTH CENTURY POETRY

During the Age of Sensibility, literature reflected the worldview of the Age of Enlightenment (or Age of Reason) – an approach to religion, society, economy and politics that was rational and scientific. An approach that promoted a secular view of the world and a general sense of progress. The prominent philosophers of this Age were inspired by the works of Descartes, Locke and Bacon of the previous century.

These philosophers opted to act on universally valid principles that governed nature, humanity and society. They not only questioned spiritual and scientific authority but also intolerance, censorship, dogmatism and economic and social restraints. For them, the rational instrument of progress was the state. Rationalism and skepticism were the characteristics of this Age. This led to deism and later on brought about romanticism.

Towards the end of the eighteenth century, *The Castle of Otranto*, a novel by Horace Walpole created the Gothic fiction genre, which was a combination of horror and romance. Anne Radcliffe was the pioneering gothic novelist who introduced the gothic villain, who later developed into the Byronic hero. *The Mysteries of Udolpho* which she wrote in 1794 is one of her most popular works. In fact, it is often cited as the best example of the Gothic novel. *Vathek* 1786 by William Beckford, and *The Monk* 1796 by Matthew Lewis, were among the early works in the genres of gothic and horror literature.

European literature of the eighteenth century refers to poetry, drama and novels written in the Continent during that age. In the eighteenth century, the modern novel developed as a literary genre. In fact many early English novelists belonged to this period such as Daniel Defoe (with *Robinson Crusoe in 1719*). Subgenres of the novel during the 18th century were the:

- Epistolary novel
- Sentimental novel
- Histories
- Gothic novel
- Libertine novel

Eighteenth-century Europe started in the Age of Enlightenment and slowly and steadily transformed into Romanticism. In the field of visual arts, it was the period of Neoclassicism.

1.3.1 John Dryden

John Dryden (1631–1700) was an English poet, literary critic, dramatist and leader in Restoration comedy. He was the writer of several plays *of which Marriage A-la-Mode* (1672), was a comedy and *All for Love* (1678), a tragedy.

He was a King's scholar who studied the classics at Westminster. He wrote the elegy, *Lachrymæ Musarum* in 1649, as his contribution to the collection of tributes to honour Henry, Lord Hastings. In 1650, he entered Trinity College, Cambridge. In 1654, he lost his father and also graduated. While in London in 1657 Dryden began working with the civil service and also started to earnestly write plays of heroic tragedy and satires of varying success. His first important work was *Heroic Stanzas* (1658), on the death of Oliver Cromwell. He also wrote for a bookseller. Once Charles II came back to power, he celebrated the King's divine right with, his poem *Astræa Redux* (1660) followed by *To His Sacred Majesty, a Panegyrick on his Coronation* (1661). His works found favour with those in power.

On 1 December 1663, Dryden was wedded to Lady Elizabeth, daughter of the Earl of Berkshire. They had three sons. His first play *The Wild Gallant* was first staged in 1662. *The Rival Ladies* (1663) showed Spanish influences. Attached to it is one of his famous prefaces where he describes his principles of dramatic criticism. His first successful play, written in heroic couplets was *The Indian Emperor* (1665). The same year of the Great Fire in London, *Annus Mirabilis* (1666) celebrates the English Navy's victory over the Dutch. Dryden had retired to the country to escape the threat of plague but he continued to write. *The Maiden Queen* composed in blank verse, rhyming couplets and prose and *The Assignation, or Love in a Nunnery* were produced in 1667. *An Essay of Dramatic Poesy* (1668) was written two years after the Restoration when the theatres were thrown open again. In 1668 Dryden signed a contract with the King's Theatre Company and produced three plays in a year. His efforts were rewarded by the Archbishop of Canterbury in the form of an M.A. That same year, he became Poet Laureate and later the Royal Historiographer. This ensured a regular and steady income for him.

The play *Marriage A-la-Mode* (1672) was followed by his unsuccessful work on the theme of Paradise Lost, *The State of Innocence*, staged in 1674. After 1676, he began to use blank verse, and he produced his best play, *All for Love* in 1678. It is his most popular work based on Antony and Cleopatra. He was master of comparative criticism. He used prose and dialogue for debate, and wit and satire to illustrate disparities between the church and state. A year later Dryden was beaten by thugs, an attack that had been ordered by the Earl of Rochester when Dryden was suspected of collaboration on *An Essay upon Satire*, which vilified various prominent figures, of which the real author was never realized.

His other works included:

- Shaftesbury (a political satire)
- Absalom and Achitophel (an allegorical poem)
- Religio Laici (a didactic poem supporting Anglicanism)
- *Threnodia Angustalis* (an ode to Charles II)
- *The Hind and the Panther* (1687) (a work marking his final conversion to Roman Catholicism)

Following the Revolution of 1688 his Laureateship was lost when William III occupied the throne. He refused to take an oath of allegiance and he lost favour in court due to his politics and religion. His plays and poetic translations from Latin and Greek became his only source of income. The tragic-comedy *Don Sebastian* (1690) was comparable to *All for Love*. Another tragic-comedy *Love Triumphant* (1694) came to be his last play. Included in his ensuing critical essays was *A Discourse concerning the Original and Progress of Satire*. Dryden would also take on the massive task of translating the works of Virgil to prose.

1.3.2 Alexander Pope

The Rape of the Lock is considered the best example of mock-heroic verse in the English language. Written in heroic couplets, the poem was probably composed during the late summer of 1711 and first published in the May edition of *Lintot's Miscellany* in 1712. There were 334 lines in the poem originally, in two cantos. Two years later,

a more elaborate version appeared and it was extended to 794 lines in five cantos. After a final revision it was included in Pope's Works (1717). Inspired by an actual event, *The Rape of the Lock* recounts the circumstances surrounding the theft of a lock of a young woman's hair by an impassioned male admirer, which led to a conflict between the families in question. The poem was aimed at restoring harmonious relations between the two separated families. It was called a heroic-comical poem and treated a trivial issue in a completely epic style. This resulted in a lot of humour. It employs the elevated heroic language that Dryden, his literary forebear, had mastered when he translated Virgil incorporating amusing parodies of passages from Milton's *Paradise Lost*, *Aeneid* (by Virgil) and *Iliad* (by Homer). *The Rape of the Lock* established Pope as a master of metrics and satire.

The original version of *The Rape of the Lock* accomplished its task—as the estranged families were brought together—and was promptly accepted gaining positive feedback from the public and the critics alike. Joseph Addison, who prefered first version which he felt was perfect. He had discouraged Pope from revising it. However, after adding the 'machinery' and other material, the poem soon became Pope's most brilliant work. It brought him fame and wealth as it was reprinted seven times by 1723. It remained popular throughout the eighteenth century. Samuel Johnson called it 'the most attractive of ludicrous compositions' where 'New things are made familiar and familiar things are made new.' Even though there was a decline in the appreciation of Pope's poetry in the nineteenth century, it was still enjoyed by Victorian readers and critics. James Russell Lowell praised its wit, fancy and invention. According to Leslie Stephen Pope's poem 'is allowed, even by his bitterest critics, to be a masterpiece of delicate fancy.'

1.3.3 Selected Passages from *Rape of the Lock*

Sol thro' white Curtains shot a tim'rous Ray,
And op'd those Eyes that must eclipse the Day;
Now Lapdogs give themselves the rowzing Shake,
And sleepless Lovers, just at Twelve, awake:
Thrice rung the Bell, the Slipper knock'd the Ground,
And the press'd Watch return'd a silver Sound.
Belinda still her downy Pillow prest,
Her Guardian Sylph prolong'd the balmy Rest.
'Twas he had summon'd to her silent Bed
The Morning-Dream that hover'd o'er her Head.
A Youth more glitt'ring than a Birth-night Beau,
(That ev'n in Slumber caus'd her Cheek to glow)
Seem'd to her Ear his winning Lips to lay,
And thus in Whispers said, or seem'd to say.
(Canto 1)

Explanation: Following his invocation of the muse, the poet says that the sun through the white curtain has shot a ray. It has initiated the happenings of a day in a rich household. Lapdogs are seen shaking them out of sleep, bells begin to ring, and though it is already noon, Belinda is still sleeping. She is dreaming, and we learn that it is 'her guardian Sylph', Ariel, who is responsible for sending this dream. The dream is about a handsome young man, informing that these are 'unnumber'd spirits' protecting her. These spirits are an army of supernatural creatures who once were known to be living on earth as human women. The young man explains that they are the ones who invisibly guard the chastity of women. The credit for this although is generally by mistake given to 'Honour' instead of their divine stewardship. Out of these creatures, one specific group—the Sylphs that live in the air—serve as Belinda's personal guardians; they are devoted, lover-like to any woman that 'rejects mankind', and they understand and reward the vanities of a beautiful and playful woman, such as Belinda. Ariel, the chief of all Belinda's puckish protectors, gives her a warning in this dream that 'some dread event' will happen to her that day. He can tell her nothing more besides this and concludes by saying that she should be 'beware of Man'! It is now that Belinda wakes up, when her lapdog, Shock, licks her. When a billet-doux, or love-letter, is delivered to her, she forgets all about the dream. She then goes to her dressing table and goes through an elaborate ritual of dressing. Here, her own image in the mirror is described as a 'heavenly image', a 'goddess'. The Sylphs, invisible, assist their charge as she gets ready for the activities of the day.

ACTIVITY

Find out the major characteristics of the Age of Sensibility.

1.4 NINETEENTH CENTURY POETRY

The nineteenth century was marked by the accession to the British throne by Queen Victoria in1837. Poetry at the beginning of this period had been refreshed as well as sometimes muddied by two generations of Romantic innovation. The legacy which the Romantics handed down to the Victorians did not prove to be Wordsworth's simplicity or his autobiographical self-examination in quietly probing blank verse, nor was it in any conspicuous degree Shelley's mythopoeic excitement or Byron's alternation of dashing histrionics and a verse satire both colloquial and formal. Instead, Keats rich and the languid movement of his nightingale ode were taken over, as were eighteenth century Gothic sensationalism and the desire to get behind the eighteenth century to Elizabethan and Jacobean models. The best known poem of George Darley (1795-1846), 'It is not beauty I demand,' was mistaken for a genuine seventeenth century poem by F.T. Palgrave, editor of The Golden Treasury, and it is indeed suggestive of a Cavalier lyric in its imagery and movement:

It is not beauty I demand,
A crystal brow, the moon's despair,
Nor the snow's daughter, a white hand,
Nor mermaid's yellow pride of hair,
Tell me not of your starry eyes,
Your lips that seem on roses fed,

Check Your Progress

5. When did Daniel Defoe write *Robinson Crusoe*?
6. When was *The Rape of the Lock* composed?
7. Who is Belinda's guardian Sylph?
8. What do Belinda's puckish protectors warn her about?

NOTES

Your breasts where Cupid trembling lies,
Nor sleeps for kissing of his bed

It is a little overdone, like so many nineteenth century imitations of the Elizabethan and Jacobean, but it indicates an era habituated to seventeenth century cadences. Darley was incapable of sustaining a theme or even of successfully sustaining a manner, and his longer elegiac, and Tennyson's ability to modulate epic into elegy, revealed in *The Lotos-Eaters* (first published in 1832) and *Morte D'Arthur* is particularly striking. *The Lotos-Eaters* begins with a heroic line: '*Courage!' he said and pointed toward the land'*. Within a few lines, the tone is entirely different. Indeed, the theme of this poem is symbolic of a central aspect of Tennyson's genius; the heroic adventurers coming on the languid island and succumbing to a mood of sad-sweet dream represent, as it were, the fate of heroic themes when they enter Tennyson's poetic world.

All round the Coast the languid air did swoon,
Breathing like one that hath a weary dream.
Full-faced above the valley stood the moon;
And like a downward smoke, the slender stream
Along the cliff to fall and pause and fall did seem.

The use of natural images to achieve a dream landscape is again characteristic of Tennyson's genius. The details are often well observed:

A land of streams! some, like a downward smoke,
Slow-dropping veils of thinnest lawn, did go;
And some thro' wavering lights and shadows broke,
Rolling a slumbrous sheet of foam below.
They saw the gleaming river seaward Bow
From the inner land: far off, three mountain-tops,
Three Silent pinnacles of aged snow,
Stood sunset-flush'd:....

There are Keatsian echoes ('Give us long rest or death, dark death, or dreamful ease'), but Tennyson's use of adjectives is more abandoned. He relies on the adjective to a larger extent than Keats does, using it to draw away attention from the central core of a noun's meaning and resolve all into a mood, a sense of elegy. His tuning of Malory's stern story of Arthur's death into the muted melancholy of *Morte D'Arthur* is a technical achievement of a high order, even if the modulation of action into dream at last begins to pall by sheer excess. The heroic theme of *Ulysses*, one of Tennyson's most controlled and perfectly wrought dramatic monologues, which presents the voice of the aged Ulysses is similarly presented in a context of musical sadness:

Some work of noble note may yet be done,
Not unbecoming men that strove with Gods,
The lights begin to twinkle from the rocks.
The long day wanes: the slow moon climbs: the deep
Moans round with many voices...

Check Your Progress

9. Who wrote *The Lotos-Eaters*?
10. Name Tennyson's most controlled and perfectly wrought dramatic monologue.

1.4.1 Selected Passages from *Ode: Intimations of Immortality*

NOTES

(i)

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

Context

The above lines were written by William Wordsworth in 1802 and published as an epigraph of the poem *Ode to the Intimations of Immortality* in 1807. Wordsworth bought a completely new approach to the writing of English poetry.

Explanation

Wordsworth's objections to highly stylized poetic diction, his attitude to nature, his choice of simple incidents and humble people as subjects of his poetry are some of his achievements. Poetry for him was primarily the record of a certain kind of state of mind and the value of poetry for him lay in the value of that state of mind that the poet recorded. As a poet, Wordsworth was a man of unusual emotional vitality.

In these lines, the speaker expresses his connection to nature. Nature has the power to stir him. He has always been influenced by nature, even when he was a baby: 'So was it when my life began; / So is it now I am a man.' He says that this closeness will continue till he grows old. He prefers death over discontinuance to this connectivity to nature. He says children are above men as they are in closer proximity to nature and God. He wishes to remain in touch with this aspect of his childhood. 'Child is father of the Man'— This line is often quoted as it is able to convey a complicated idea in a few words.

1.4.2 Selected Passages from *Ode to the West Wind*

(iv) P.B. SHELLEY

A heavy weight of hours has chained and bowed
One too like thee: tameless, and swift, and proud.
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!
Drive my dead thoughts over the universe
Like withered leaves to quicken a new birth!
And, by the incantation of this verse,
Scatter, as from an unextinguished hearth
Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind!
Be through my lips to unawakened earth
The trumpet of a prophecy! O, Wind,
If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?

Context

The above lines are from Shelley's poem *Ode to the West Wind*. In Shelley's words, 'This poem was written in a wood that skirts the Arno, near Florence, on a day when that tempestuous wind, whose temperature is at once mild and animating, was collecting the vapours which pour down the autumnal rains. They began, as I foresaw, at sunset with a violent tempest of hail and rain, attended by the magnificent thunder and lightening peculiar to the Cisalpine regions.

The Ode is charged with speed, force and energy like the tempestuous wind itself. The powerful movement of the verse is carried on by the use of a series of images thrown up in rapid succession. The movement is not just confined to the elemental forces of nature; it is also to be seen in the emotions roused in the poet's mind by his contemplation of the wind. The movement slows down in Section 3 and then gains rapidity in line with the poet's impetuous spirit, as he drives to the close.

There is, in this poem, a blend of natural and spiritual forces. The West Wind is a force of Nature, but it also symbolizes the free spirit of man, untamed and proud. Shelley's great passion for the regeneration of mankind and rebirth of a new world finds a fitting symbol in the West Wind, which destroys and preserves, sweeps away the old and obsolete ideas and fosters fresh and new ones.

Explanation

The concluding lines are magnificent expressions of hope and exultation, 'tameless, swift and proud'. As Shelley's spirit is like the spirit of the West Wind, he cannot despair. The imagery, in earlier sections of the poem confined to earth, air, and water, now aspires to the fourth element of fire. Certainly first person pronouns and adjectives are frequent here but they are more positively linked to the second person pronouns and adjectives of the larger forces to which the poem addresses itself. One can observe the juxtapositions of 'me thy' in line 57 and 'thou me' in line 62. Stanza 4 had articulated the self as essentially singular: 'a leaf, 'a cloud', 'a wave', which led to painful doubt ('I fall- I bleed') and to a despair which allowed the once 'tameless and proud' mind to imagine itself as powerfully chained and bowed'. By contrast, in stanza 5, the recovery of freedom and pride is sought through a redefinition of the self in plural terms ('my thoughts', 'my words') as one component in a mass movement. The Wild West Wind inspires Shelley to write poetry and this poetry, in turn, serves as an inspiring message to humanity. This message would fire human hearts kindling the desire for progress and a better world. Thus, the poem closes on a note of ardent hope.

1.4.3 Selected Passages from *Ulysses*

Text

This is my son, mine own Telemachus,
to whom I leave the sceptre and the isle,—
Well-loved of me, discerning to fulfill
This labor, by slow prudence to make mild
A rugged people, and thro' soft degrees
Subdue them to the useful and the good.
Most blameless is he, centred in the sphere
Of common duties, decent not to fail
In offices of tenderness, and pay
Meet adoration to my household gods,
When I am gone. He works his work, I mine.

Interpretation

The above lines have been taken from 'Ulysses' written by Alfred Lord Tennyson. The above stanza is spoken in praise of Ulysses' son Telemachus. Ulysses bequeaths his kingdom and royal powers to his son. He has great affection for his son and expects him to hold the same for his subjects. He wants him to make them know as to what is good for them. He assigns him duties and responsibilities, and himself takes up the pursuit of knowledge.

1.5 TWENTIETH CENTURY POETRY

Twentieth century English literary history underwent a change in poetic essence and experience. This was significant as it dismissed the view of poetry represented by Palgrave's Golden Treasury (first published in 1864 and used as a school textbook in Britain as well into the 1930s) in favour of the view which looked upon poetry as intellectual, logical and analytical. This dramatic change, which was looked upon as an Anglo-American achievement, was largely, the work of two leaders. These were T.S. Eliot (1888—1965), who took up residence in England before the First World War and afterwards exchanged his American citizenship for a British one, and Ezra Pound, the literary heavyweight in England in 1912, who had stimulated so many poets and critics into new activity. However, this was backed mostly by theoretical ammunition supplied by T.E. Hulme. Before his death in the war in 1917, Hulme had contributed to the New Age and other periodicals a number of essays in which he declared war not only on what he considered to be the Romantic view of life and of art but also on 'the Weltans chauung . . of all philosophy since the Renaissance'. Hulme wanted discipline, precision, 'the exact curve of the thing,' 'dry hardness,' and classicism. 'I object even to the best of the romantics,' he wrote in his essay *Romanticism and Classicism*. 'I object still more to the receptive attitude. I object to the sloppiness which does not consider that a

poem is a poem unless it is moaning or whining about something or other.' Hulme produced a collocation of classicism; the 'religious' attitude, abstract or geometrical art, belief in original sin, hard, clear, and precise images, the medieval viewpoint, discipline, and authoritarianism in politics on the good side of the ledger against romanticism, humanism, naturalistic art, belief in man's unlimited potentialities, the emotional and soft, the Renaissance attitude, self-expression, and democracy on the bad side.

Few of those in the new movement accepted the complete balance sheet as Hulme prepared it (Eliot came nearest to doing so), but many were influenced by his insistence on hardness and clarity and his war on self-expression as a literary ideal.

Thomas Stearns Eliot was a poet, dramatist and literary critic who won the Nobel Prize for his outstanding work in the field of literature. Some of his famous works include the poems *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock, The Waste Land, Four Quarters* and the plays *Murder in the Cathedral* and *The Cocktail Party*. Although Eliot is famous for his poems yet he acquired acclaim in the field of literary criticism as well through his popular essays like *Tradition and the Individual Talent*.

1.5.1 Selected Passages from *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*

S'io credesse che mia risposta fosse
A persona che mai tornasse al mondo,
Questa fiamma staria senza piu scosse.
Ma perciocche giammai di questo fondo
Non torno vivo alcun, s'i'odo il vero,
Senza tema d'infamia ti rispondo.

The epigraph is taken from Dante's *Inferno*, Canto XXVII, lines 61–66. Its English rendering goes thus: 'if I believed my answer might be heard by anyone who could return to the world, this flame would leap no more. But since no one ever, returned alive from these depths, as far as I know, then I answer without fear of infamy.' It emphasizes the lack of communication from which Prufrock also suffers. In the Inferno, the flame of Guido is asked to identify him, and he replies in the words of the epigraph.

First Paragraph

'LET us go then..... make our visit.'

'You and I' refer to the speaker and 'you' describes the lady, as the title indicates, but the epigraph hints at a scene out of the world. The poem begins with the evening tea-time. The speaker sees the evening with the aspect of etherization, and the metaphor of etherization hints towards the desire for inactivity to the point of enforced release from pain. In a strange manner, the speaker describes the restaurants made of fine wood fragments as 'sawdust restaurants.' The way looks as miserable as a tedious argument striking of a treacherous purpose, and leads to an 'over-whelming question'. In the words of George Williamson, 'The streets suggest the character of the question at their end as well as the nature of the urge which takes this route.' There is an abrupt break after the mention of the question, which suggests an emotional block on the part of the speaker. After repressing the real urge, the speaker deflects the attention by pointing out towards another object or purpose of going in, i.e., 'our visit'.

Second Paragraph

' In the room.... and fell asleep.'

The speak and the lady will have to pay visit to the room, where women come and go and gossip about Michelangelo or to a man of violent personality, an artist of epic grandeur and a typical figure of the great creative period of the Renaissance. The slum of the town is associated with the insignificant conversation of women. The speaker can personify the image of the fog as cat, hinting towards 'desire which end in inertia.' The cat-image also suggests the greater desire of inactivity. The stanza describes the yellow smoke, which is like the gathering fog that stole its way from the window panes to the corners of the room, and the evening slipped in. The twilight world now changed in the dark world. The image of the fog-cat continues in this stanza. The fog or smoke, slipping by the row of houses ('terrace'), leapt up suddenly, and seeing that it was a pleasant October night, sleepily lapped the house. The speaker or Prufrock cannot think of nature except in terms of a cat rubbing its back and muzzle upon the window panes, licking the dirty drain water, allowing the chimney soot to settle on its body, and finally falling asleep. On the one hand, Prufrock finds an escape from human company by thinking of the fog or smoke while on the other hand he discovers, to his discontent, that the world he wishes to escape into is the world of stealthy behaviour.

Third Paragraph

'And indeed there will be....of a toast and tea.'

In this stanza, Prufrock decides to postpone taking interest in natural scenery, such as that of the yellow fog or smoke. It is clear that Prufrock prepares a mask for the world in order to lay a plot of momentous effect or to make small talk over tea. His thoughts then turn to the members (women) of the salon party. It is now time for Prufrock to kill his natural self and create a concocted one. It is the time for toast and tea and dishes. Morsels are lifted and dropped on the plate, indicating that the party is now in full swing. The phrase 'drop a question on your plate' indicates the hesitation of Prufrock in entering in a conversation with the people in the drawing-room (for that is the scene) or even with his companion. The 'over-whelming question' of the first paragraph has returned to the speaker with a renewed tension and anxiety. Prufrock hopes to find time for the two, him and his lady love, before the toast begins. Before the actual event begins, there will be time for a number of indecisions, dreams and revision of previous decisions.

Fourth Paragraph

'In the room the women come .... a minute will reverse.'

Inside the room women keep on talking of Michelangelo, the great sculptor. The time motif returns in this stanza. Prufrock is now taken into fear of the mocking and hostile eyes of the world that will keenly note all defects and failings. This section increases the tension of the speaker by raising the question of daring. Prufrock's 'terrified self-consciousness' is exposed in these lines. He is thinking of turning back from the room and going down the stairs, with all his weakness of the unromantic middle-age. He is afraid of his baldness. Here one notices the mock-heroic touch in the speaker's 'collar mounting firmly' and the 'assertion' of his simple pin. He is also conscious of his morning coat and necktie. The suggestion here seems to be that even his dress does not allow him to introduce himself to the women in the room. Like his baldness the thinness of this arms and legs makes Prufrock a misfit in the company. His fear has now mounted to the image of daring to 'disturb the universe.' He cannot do so. The wavering nature of

Prufrock is obvious here. In a minute he might make some important decisions and revised ideas that will be reversed in the next minute.

NOTES

Fifth Paragraph

'For I have known them already....So how should I presume?'

In this stanza, Prufrock tries to explain as to why he dare not disturb the universe. He asserts that the present company of women does not at all enthuse him as he is already familiar with them. He is quite familiar not only with the women present there but also with what they do at different periods of the day. Prufrock is disgusted with his tired and trivial life. He knows about the voices gradually dying out with a highly vocal music from a distant room. In other words, he is within sound and 'within the range of the other senses'. He has known all this without doing what he now considers; so how should he presume to disturb the accepted order?

Sixth Paragraph

'And I have known the eyes already...And how should I presume?'

He has already known the inimical eyes. Now the eyes fix him, give him his place in the accepted order, with a formulated phrase. –'Sprawling' and 'wriggling' describe the image of an insect. When Prufrock has been classified like an insect, how can he deny his classification and break with his past? These lines also recall to our minds the austerities practiced by a hermit. It is not unlikely that the speaker, who has met failure in life, should have turned to the austere practice for his consolation. Sprawling means crawling and wriggling means struggling. The speaker cannot change his days and ways. So how can Prufrock declare his love to his beloved?

Seventh Paragraph

'And I have known the arms already...And should I then presume?'

Prufrock has known the arms already, the arms that are ornamented, white coloured and bare, but that are covered with light brown hair in the evening. He is distracted for a moment by the erotic symbol contained in 'downed with light brown hair' and 'perfume from a dress.' The 'arms' and the 'perfume' together create an aromatic atmosphere. 'Digress' suggests 'giving up his intention to speak out about his love'. 'Lie along a table or wrap about a shawl' seems to suggest the places where the arms may be found lying.

Eighth Paragraph

'And how should I begin?...here beside you and me?'

The insistent problem with the speaker is that of communication or 'beginning'. For a moment Prufrock gathers all his powers to 'begin'. However, he soon digresses in fancying what he might say or might not say. These lines emphasize the loneliness and depression of the speaker. These lines indicate the kind of creature Prufrock should have been–'a pair of ragged claws' in 'silent seas' and not Prufrock in a drawing room. 'A pair of ragged claws' means 'a kind of sea species with rough claws' and scuttling means moving quickly. The scene is once more the drawing room where the afternoon, the evening, sleeps peacefully, or it pretends to sleep stretching on the floor beside the speaker and his companion.

NOTES

Ninth Paragraph

' Should I after tea and cakes and ices...Almost at times, the Fool.'

Prufrock does not, after the party is over, have the strength to force or precipitate the crisis. Although Prufrock had been remorseful for his misdeeds, and although he has seen his bald head cut and dished, he is no prophet, as John the Baptist was, for we know that Baptist's head was demanded by Salome because he had rejected her love. He thinks that the 'crisis' will not have been worthwhile after taking tea and jam and participating in a social gathering. Marmalade is a kind of jam while porcelain is crockery or china-ware. Should he have spoken of his love quickly with a smile? It would have been improper. Prufrock is presently out of the room in the street, and thinking about his failure at the party. He now feels that to force the 'crisis' would have meant to attempt an impossible task, for it is not possible to 'squeeze the universe into a ball.' It will not have been worthwhile for him to rush towards the 'crisis' (which is real love). Prufrock is struck by his own inadequacy. He feels that it would have been unwise for him to force the 'crisis' after attending the evening party. Though Prufrock is unable to state precisely his feelings, he can still form vague ideas or patterns about them, which are not unlike 'a magic lantern' throwing pictures on a screen. Once again Prufrock is afraid of the unfavourable reaction of the lady. The passage beginning with these lines provides, as Joseph Margolis says, 'the only occasion on which Prufrock has attempted to sustain an exact evaluation of his entire career, and the statement — including his denial of heroic pretensions–forms a part of a larger and most remarkable unity.' Prufrock asserts that he is not Prince Hamlet, though indecision might suggest it. One should remember that Hamlet proposed to Ophelia, but postponed the 'crisis.' Instead he is cautious attendant like Polonius, a courtier of King Claudius; he is the attendant who will be fit to increase the number of a procession, to begin a scene or two, and to advise the Prince. Certain characteristics of a good attendant are detailed herein,–he will be compliant, easy to handle, respectful, useful, courteous, careful, full of wise words but a little dull, sometimes laughable and at other times playing the role of a fool (used in the Shakespearean sense).

Tenth Paragraph

'I grow old....and we drown.'

In this stanza, Prufrock assumes the role of a careful character and indulges in self-mockery. There is a sense of weariness in the repetition 'I grow old... I grow old...' Though he is resigned to his sad role and unromantic character, he resolves to be a little sportive in dress (by wearing his trousers cuffed). Having resigned to his sad role, Prufrock would raise 'the overwhelming question' no more. Now the problem before him whether he should try to hide his baldness, whether he should dare to eat a peach. The rising tempo of the lines suggests Prufrock walking hastily to the sea-beach after he has put on white woolen trousers. 'Flannel' means 'woolen'. Prufrock is an aging man standing on the sea-beach and wistfully watching the girls, who pay no heed to him. He is sunk into a vision or dream of beauty and vitality. These girls become mermaids riding triumphantly seawards into their creative natural element and singing to each other. But the mermaids, like the lady, probably will not sing to him. The reference here is to the mermaids riding seawards on the waves and floating on the white foam at a time when the wind blows the water white and black. The concluding lines, take us to the mermaids, reminding us of Prufrock's original situation. He has 'lingered', not in the drawing room surrounded by the women talking of Michelangelo, but in the 'chambers of the sea' surrounded by 'sea girls', who are garlanded with red and brown seaweed. However,

such an experience is possible only in dream: '…human voices wake us'. To wake is to return to the human world of suffocation and death: 'and we drown.'

The dawn of reality on Prufrock and his friends, who are lost in visions so far, disturbs them and renders them sad and frustrated.

DID YOU KNOW

T.S. Eliot delivered lectures in USA frequently in 1930s and 1940s.

1.6 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt that:

- One wonders whether the character of poetry, irrespective of the century it belonged to, was dependant on the non-literary developments. The practice of innovative and influential poets mainly determined the poetry of the seventeenth century.
- John Donne was one of the most prominent literary figures of the early seventeenth century. He began to write serious religious literature when he became the Dean of St. Paul's. Donne's poetry was so influential that it was considered as the basis of the metaphysical school of poetry.
- According to some critics Donne writes in distinct personas without any regard to consistency. His earlier poems were those of a witty courtier seeking favour and patronage while his later poems were concerned with theology and personal salvation.
- Although John Milton's poetry represents only about one-fifth of his total literary production, the prose works are more obscure, largely because he wrote in genres that no longer appeal to a large audience.
- During the Age of Sensibility, literature reflected the worldview of the Age of Enlightenment (or Age of Reason) – an approach to religion, society, economy and politics that was rational and scientific.
- Towards the end of the eighteenth century, *The Castle of Otranto*, a novel by Horace Walpole created the Gothic fiction genre, which was a combination of horror and romance.
- European literature of the eighteenth century refers to poetry, drama and novels written in the Continent during that age.
- John Dryden (1631–1700) was an English poet, literary critic, dramatist and leader in Restoration comedy. He was the writer of several plays, of which *Marriage A-la-Mode* (1672), was a comedy and *All for Love* (1678), a tragedy.
- The play *Marriage A-la-Mode* (1672) was followed by Dryden's unsuccessful work on the theme of Paradise Lost, *The State of Innocence*, staged in 1674. After 1676, he began to use blank verse, and he produced his best play, *All for Love* in 1678.

Check Your Progress

11. What were the major influences on W.B. Yeats?
12. Identify the source for the epigraph of The Love Song of T. Alfred Prufrock.

- Following the Revolution of 1688 John Dryden lost his Laureateship when William III occupied the throne. He refused to take an oath of allegiance and he lost favour in court due to his politics and religion.
- *The Rape of the Lock* is considered the best example of mock-heroic verse in the English language. Written in heroic couplets, the poem was probably composed during the late summer of 1711 and first published in the May edition of *Lintot's Miscellany* in 1712.
- The nineteenth century was marked by the accession to the British throne by Queen Victoria in1837. Poetry at the beginning of this period had been refreshed as well as sometimes muddied by two generations of Romantic innovation.
- Twentieth century English literary history underwent a change in poetic essence and experience. This was significant as it dismissed the view of poetry represented by Palgrave's Golden Treasury (first published in 1864 and used as a school textbook in Britain well into the 1930s) in favour of the view which looked upon poetry as intellectual, logical and analytical.
- The career of William Butler Yeats (1865–1939) represents the history of English poetry in his lifetime. He was influenced by Spenser, Shelley, Rossetti and the aesthetic movement of the late nineteenth century.
- Yeats spent a considerable time in London where he got a chance to interact with the younger English poets.
- Yeats hated Victorian science and he felt that it had made belief in orthodox Christianity impossible so he continually sought for a new religion, at first an aesthetic religion, 'almost an infallible church of poetic tradition, of a fardel of stories, and of personages, and of emotions, inseparable from their first expression passed on from generation to generation by poets and painters with some help from philosophers and theologians.'

1.7 KEY TERMS

- **Deism:** The belief, based solely on reason, in a God who created the universe and then abandoned it, assuming no control over life.
- **Heroic couplet:** It is a traditional form for English poetry, commonly used for epic and narrative poetry.
- **Neo-classicism:** A revival in literature in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, characterized by a regard for the classical ideals of reason, form, and restraint.

1.8 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. List the major developments that took place in the seventeenth century.
2. Write a short note on the writings of John Donne.
3. What is your opinion on *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*?

Long-Answer Questions

1. Explain the concept of Hell in *Paradise Lost.*
2. How was *Rape of the Lock* regarded by the critics of the eighteenth century?
3. Describe the significance of nature in *Ode to the West Wind.*

1.9 ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

1. During the general crisis, in seventeenth century, the European politics was dominated by Louis XIV of France.
2. Ben Johnson was one of the major critics of John Donne.
3. First disobedience in the poem *Paradise Lost* refers to not obeying God's command when He forbade Adam and Eve from eating the fruit of the Tree of Life.
4. In *Paradise Lost*, the people of Israel have been referred to as the chosen people all through the Bible.
5. Daniel Defoe wrote *Robinson Crusoe* in 1719.
6. *The Rape of the Lock* was composed during the late summer of 1711.
7. Belinda's guardian Sylph is Ariel. He is responsible for sending her the various dreams.
8. Belinda's puckish protectors warn her about some dread event that will happen to her that day. They can tell her nothing more besides this and conclude by saying that she should be beware of Man.
9. *The Lotos-Eaters* was written by Tennyson.
10. Tennyson's most controlled and perfectly wrought dramatic monologue is *Ulysses.*
11. The two leaders who were responsible for dramatic change in twentieth century English literary history are T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound.
12. The epigraph is taken from Dante's *Inferno,* Canto XXVII, lines 61–66.

1.10 FURTHER READING

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UNIT 2 CHAUCER AND SHAKESPEARE

Structure

2.0 INTRODUCTION

Geoffrey Chaucer (1343–1400), one of the greatest poets of the Middle Ages, is known as the Father of English literature. Chaucer was active in developing Middle English at a time when French and Latin were dominant languages in use. While court poetry was being written in Latin and Anglo-Norman, Chaucer was writing in English. The decasyllabic couplet that Chaucer used in most of the *Canterbury Tales* later developed into the heroic couplet. The heroic couplet was generally used for epic and narrative poetry in English. Chaucer was the pioneer in using the iambic pentameter.

The Elizabethan Era was named after the rule of Queen Elizabeth I (1558–1603). Prior to this, Chaucer had already established English as the language of the literature. While Chaucer had influenced the fifteenth century poets, the sixteenth century Renaissance also made English similar to its modern form. The intelligentsia started considering Chaucer as the modern Homer and a new flowering of poems started. The fifteenth and sixteenth century poets adopted Italian sonnet forms and composed a large number of love poems. These poets entertained other subjects like the advice of a father to a son, opinions on a cheerful life, true joys, tributes to the dead and the kingdom of the mind, etc., and attempted new meters. In this unit, you will learn about the medieval poet Chaucer, and other Elizabethan poets like Wyatt, Spencer and Drayton including Shakespeare.

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2.1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

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

- State the life and works of Chaucer
- List the various characters in *the Prologue to the Canterbury Tales*
- Analyse the presentation of various characters
- Identify the format of Shakespeare's sonnets
- List the characteristics of Shakespeare's sonnets
- Explain sonnet 60 and 73 of Shakespeare

2.2 GEOFFREY CHAUCER

Geoffrey Chaucer was born in London, circa 1343. His parents were John Chaucer and Agnes Copton. His father was a wealthy wine merchant and second-in-command to the King's butler. With the help of the links that his father possessed, Geoffrey held many positions early in his life, such as:

- A noblewoman's page
- A courtier
- A diplomat
- A civil servant
- A government collector of scrap metal

Fig. 2.1 Chaucer

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There are no authoritarian records of his early life and learning. However, it can be supposed from his works that he had the knowledge of French, Latin and Italian languages. Chaucer also participated in and was taken captive in the Hundred Years' War in 1359. In 1360, he was released after King Edward III provided a rescue fee. In 1366, Chaucer married a lady-in-waiting to the Queen, named Philipa de Roet. He was awarded a lifetime retirement fund by the King the next year. Chaucer became an ambassador to other countries like Italy. On one such trip, he came across Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio whose work ultimately influenced his later writing. Chaucer's early works like *Saint Cecilia* and *Romaunt of the Rose* were considerably influenced by French love poetry. The *Romaunt of the Rose* became the *Second Nun's Tale* in the *Canterbury Tales*. Chaucer's transitional works like *Anelida and Arcite*, *Parlement of Foules* and *Troilus and Criseyde* were composed around 1374 when his Italian connection began. Chaucer ultimately settled down in Kent and was chosen as the Member of Parliament and Justice of Peace in 1386. His wife passed away in 1387.

This phase saw an unprecedented artistic streak in him which began with the inscription of the *General Prologue of the Canterbury Tales*. He worked on this literary benchmark till his death in 1400. Chaucer's tales, presented with humour and general insight, present archetypes of the late-medieval English civilization. According to Ralph Waldo Emerson, the US poet and essayist, in his essay 'The Poet' in 1844, '...The rich poets, such as Homer, Chaucer, Shakespeare and Raphael, have obviously no limits to their works, except the limits of their lifetime, and resemble a mirror carried through the street, ready to render an image of every created thing'.

Chaucer made use of archaic English in his writings. At times, Chaucer is considered as the basis for the foundation of the English vernacular tradition. Modern English is a little different from the language of Chaucer's poems due to the effect of the Great Vowel Shift that took place after his death. This change in the pronunciation of English, makes it little difficult for the readers to understand the writings of Chaucer. However, Chaucer is regarded as one of the first authors to make use of the many common English words in his writings like *alkali*, *altercation*, *amble*, *angrily*, *annex*.

Chaucer passed away on 25 October 1400 and was buried at the entry of the chapel of St. Benedict in South Transept. Since then, about thirty poets comprising of Dryden, Hardy, Jonson and Kipling have been buried here and more than fifty others have been memorialized. Chaucer, thereby, started the tradition of the 'Poets' Corner' in Abbey.

Chaucer's characters—An outline

The Canterbury Tales is a frame story, or rather, stories within a story. Chaucer informs us, within the *Prologue*, about the framework of the plot. A few pilgrims get together in the Tabard Inn on their way to the shrine of Thomas Becket at Canterbury Cathedral. Harry Bailey, the innkeeper, suggests that the pilgrims narrate a story on their onward and return journey to pass time as well as entertain each other. He will judge the stories and the best story will get a free feast from others. All agree to the suggestion and the tales begin.

Chaucer's characters are extremely fascinating and life-like. In *Canterbury Tales*, we come across dishonest people like the merchant, the foul-mouthed miller and the reeve (senior government official). The reeve proves to be a thief, the merchant is about to go bankrupt and the miller cheats his customers while weighing the grains. Chaucer clearly shows his contempt for people who deceive the poor in daily life. We also get

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introduced to professionals like a greedy doctor who, with his minimal idea of healing, have been cheating his patients, while a lawyer, a boring person, is taken on by his uneducated manciple (a manciple is in charge of buying and storing grains for an institution).

Chaucer has portrayed those associated with the Church as the worst characters. In medieval Europe, the Catholic Church was the seat of power, and as is evident, with power comes corruption. His strong characterization exposes the wickedness of these ecclesiastics. We meet a monk who is richer than merchants; a friar who seduces young girls; a pardoner who charges people money against pardons; a summoner who is immoral and a nun who disobeys the Church.

What comes as a respite is that not all the characters we come across are evil. The priest and his brother, the plowman, are religious, poor yet upright. Both share a deep concern for the well-being of their fellow human beings. The Oxford Cleric, one more 'good guy', is a poor student. He loves reading and helps others in their studies. Chaucer summarizes his persona by stating, 'Gladly would he learn, and gladly teach.' It is also evident that the author has profound regard for the old Knight, an honest warrior who values his horse and his weapons more than other possession.

The character, who is closest to reality, is the Wife of Bath. She is a widow from the city of Bath who is neither all good nor all bad. She has had five marriages and is possibly on the trip in search of her sixth husband. She's rich, humorous, and romantic, prejudiced and is considerably wise about the ways of love. Chaucer appears to have a healthy regard for women, despite the misogynistic age.

Chaucer also displays his sense of humour by making comments on the lack of hygiene during the period by drawing the character of a cook named Roger. Poor Roger has an ulcer on his knee from which a thick white fluid oozes. Immediately after he reveals this reality to the readers, Chaucer makes a mention that this cook is popular for his blancmange, a chicken dish prepared from a thick white sauce.

The Prologue to the Canterbury Tales is an amazing work of literature. It is interesting, humourous and full of social commentary. It gives readers a factual insight into the culture of the Middle Ages. Its themes of love, power, lust, greed, compassion, courage and corruption are eternal. Meeting the pilgrims brings about a realization to the readers that the heart and soul of mankind remain the same over the centuries.

2.2.1 *The General Prologue*

The Prologue to the Canterbury Tales marks the attainment of Chaucer's ripeness as a poet. It is one of the most important pieces of literature ever written. Chaucer takes us on a beautiful journey through the medieval civilization of England, as we keep coming across the colourful characters. By using these interesting characters, the author highlights the controversial issues of the age.

A master or a frame story, *The Canterbury Tales* contains one story in another. We are informed of the plot in the *Prologue* which actually weaves all the tales together and presents an assemblage of the various characters portrayed. These characters are undertaking a journey to Thomas Becket's shrine at the Canterbury Cathedral.

Whan that Aprille with his shoures soote
The droghte of March hath perced to the roote . . .

The *Prologue* begins with a wonderful representation of the arrival of spring. The narrator gives an account of the April rains, the blossoming flowers and leaves,

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and the tweeting birds. During this season, according to the poet, people feel a strong urge to start on a pilgrimage. Many choose to take on a voyage to Canterbury for visiting the shrine of Saint Thomas Becket in Canterbury Cathedral. They wish to thank the sufferer for the help they received. The narrator says that as he made preparations to embark upon one such pilgrimage, lodging at an inn in Southwark called the Tabard Inn, wherein a huge group of twenty-nine travellers entered. They were a dissimilar group who, like the narrator, were going to Canterbury. They voluntarily agreed to let him go with them. That night, the assemblage slept at the Tabard Inn, and got up in the early hours the following morning to start their voyage. Before going on with the story, the narrator discloses his purpose to list and portray every individual member of the assemblage.

The Knight

The narrator starts the portrayal of his character with the Knight.

A Knight ther was, and that a worthy man,
That fro the tyme that he first bigan
To ryden out, he loved chivalrye,
Trouthe and honour, fredom and curteisye.

As seen from the narrator's eyes, the Knight is the noblest of all the pilgrims. He embodies military know-how, loyalty, honour, openhandedness and the right etiquettes. The Knight's behaviour is polite and mild in fashion. He is never impolite with anyone and shows greatest courtesy to all. He is a well-bred gentleman, and has won several combats.

At Alisaundre he was, whan it was wonne;
Ful ofte tyme he hadde the bord bigonne...

The Knight's son, who is also travelling with his father, is approximately twenty years old, and acts as his father's squire or apprentice.

With him ther was his sone, a yong Squyer,
A lovyer, and a lusty bacheler,
With lokkes crulle, as they were leyd in presse.

The young Squire was a valiant soldier, but he is also addicted to love. He was a well-built young man, with curly hair and dressed in an outfit embroidered with elegant flowers. He thinks of his courtly love and wants to impress the lady through his prowess in battle. He can sing, play the flute, draw and ride a fine horse. He cannot sleep at night as his love is fervent and passionate. He has the abilities to ride a fine horse, draw, play the flute and sing. He carries out all his duties towards his father (portrayed through the carving of meat for his father) as every son should. The Knight and the Squire are travelling with a freeborn servant, called a Knight's Yoeman.

A Yeman hadde he, and servaunts namo
At that tyme, for him liste ryde so;
And he was clad in cote and hood of grene;

The Yeoman is dressed in green from top to bottom. He is known to carry a huge bow and beautifully feathered arrows, besides a sword and small shield. His gear and attire give suggestions of his being a forester.

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The Prioress

The narrator now goes on to give an account of the Prioress, that is, madame Eglentyne. The Prioress wishes to imitate the manners of the court though she does not belong to it. She goes to enormous extent to eat her food in a delicate style. She picks up food from the table in a subtle manner, and swabs her lips clean of grease prior to drinking from her cup. She is smooth at speaking French, but speaks it with a local English accent. She demonstrates great sympathy towards animals, which is disclosed by the fact that she cries on seeing a mouse entrapped and gives her dogs roasted meat and milk to eat. The narrator finds her features beautiful, including her wide temple. On her arm she carries a set of prayer beads. A gold brooch hangs from another arm, on which Latin words are written, which when interpreted denote 'Love Conquers All'. She has one more nun and three priests with her.

The Monk

The subsequent pilgrim to be portrayed by the narrator is the Monk. He is fond of hunting and has a lot of horses. He is very handsome too. He is a proverbial charismatic leader riding in front of the followers at his monastery where he takes care of its trade with the outside world. His horse's bridle can be heard clearly jingling in the wind like a church bell. His ideas that the rule of his monastic order disheartens monks from engaging in functions such as hunting makes him dismiss such customs as valueless. The narrator agrees with the Monk as to why the Monk should drive himself wild with study or manual labour. The Monk looks like a fat, hairless and well-dressed wealthy Lord.

A monk ther was, a fair for the maistrie,
An outridere, that lovede venerie,
A manly man, to been an abbot able.
Ful many a deyntee hors hadde he in stable,
And whan he rood, men myghte his brydel heere
Gynglen in a whistlynge wynd als cleere
And eek as loude as dooth the chapel belle.

The Friar

The narrator now goes on to describe the Friar. According to the religious order, he belongs to survive on begging alms from citizens. He is a cheerful, well-spoken, socially pleasing person. He also listens to people's confessions and arranges for simple penance from people who pay a hefty amount for absolving their sins. He concurs that donating money to Friars is also a true and tested way to penance.

A frere ther was, a wantowne and a merye,
A lymytour, a ful solempne man.
In alle the ordres foure is noon that kan
So muchel of daliaunce and fair langage.
He hadde maad ful many a mariage
Of yonge wommen at his owene cost.
Unto his ordre he was a noble post.

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Ful wel biloved and famulier was he
With frankeleyns over al in his contree,
And eek with worthy wommen of the toun;
For he hadde power of confessioun,
As seyde hymself, moore than a curat,
For of his ordre he was licenciat.
Ful swetely herde he confessioun,
And plesaunt was his absolucioun.

He makes himself admired by the innkeepers and barmaids who can give him foodstuff and drink. To tramps and lepers, he pays no notice as they cannot help him on his fraternal order. In spite of his vow of scarcity, his extracted contributions permit him to dress richly and live fairly cheerfully.

The Merchant talks constantly about his incomes. He is dressed attractively in suave boots and imported fur hat. Though the Merchant is fast approaching bankruptcy, he covers up his borrowings with his flamboyant attitude. A ragged and thin student from Oxford arrives after the Merchant. He is an avid reader and seems to consume books in place of food. A powerful and corrupt lawyer enters the inn next. He can prepare faultless legal papers as he is intelligent. He pretends to be busier than he actually is and is always full of activity.

Analysis

The personalities portrayed in *The Canterbury Tales* are individual and real, and not cardboard characters out of similar moulds. Many of these characters seem conscious of their roles and go right ahead to redefine and change these. For example, though the Squire wants to don his father's hat, he is more enthusiastic about courtly love than crusades. The Prioress, a nun, emulates a court lady in her mannerisms. These show that the characters have a mind of their own and do not always adhere to social customs. The characters like the Monk and Friar are talented enough to lead corrupted and deceitful lives. The narrator describes the characters in vivid terms, promoting him or her as an exception to the kind. This apparently naïve stance of the narrator brings forth dissimilar ironies in the *Prologue*. The reader can distinguish between the personalities, though it is unclear to what extent the narrator was being sarcastic. The narrator's personality is a complex one. This has been portrayed when he inserts his own version of the Monk's personality into his actual self. More often than not, however, the narrator's views are subtle and soft.

The Knight, the Squire and the Yeoman

The Knight has been portrayed as a person who has participated in crusades all over the world. He not only worships ideals like truth, chivalry, honour, freedom and courtesy but also 'loves them'. He is virtuous as he chases these models consciously. The Knight is an excellent warrior and plans his actions amongst people well. He exudes humility and not vainglory. While the narrator describes the Knight through explanations of his valour and courage, his son, the Squire has been described in terms of his physical beauty and aesthetic appearance. He is more interested in displaying his courtly love for his lady rather than participating in crusades. He grooms and dresses himself carefully; sings and plays his flute. He does not sleep at night due to his irresistible love. The Squire

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has picked up all his mannerisms from the modern times and present civilization. The narrator restricts himself to describing the physical aspects of the Yeoman, the Knight's servant, who is quite well-attired for a person in his rank. He makes a conscious attempt at looking like a forester.

The Prioress, the Monk and the Friar

The accounts of the Monk, the Friar and the Prioress bring out the subtle but strong sarcasm from Chaucer. The Prioress imitates the mannerisms of a royal woman and Chaucer dwells mostly on her physical beauty more than her spiritual characteristics. Her wide forehead and her dainty manners have been dwelt on in great detail. The Prioress wears a bracelet with a quotation of courtly love: 'Love Conquers All' written on it. So, the entire depiction of the Prioress has been more physical than spiritual. He seems enthralled by her mannerisms, as he describes her smiling, singing, French-speaking, eating and drinking. He subtly moves to a deliberation of her 'conscience', but his choice to exemplify her great sympathy by concentrating on the manner she treats her pets and responds to a mouse is almost certainly tongue-in-cheek. The Prioress appears as a very sensibly portrayed human being, but she appears rather lacking as a spiritual figure. More than an individual responsibility, the Prioress' loyalty to courteous love shows the universal appeal and power of the courtly love custom during Chaucer's time. All through the *Canterbury Tales*, Chaucer seems to question the fame of courteous love in his contemporary England and to emphasize the disagreements between courteous love and Christianity. The narrator's admiration for the gaudy image of the Monk, where he is said to be jingling as loud as a church bell, is equally sarcastic, even not more. The Monk has been portrayed in the likes of the noble rather than a cleric. This is painfully ironic as the Monk is far away from the ecclesiastic practices his order professes.

The Friar also does not follow the orders of the Church. St. Francis who begged for alms and donated the same among lepers and beggars, considered the role model for Friars. This Friar that Chaucer describes only has contempt and scorn for beggars and lepers. The Friar also takes advantages of his position and exploits corrupt people in the name of salvation.

The account of his activities implies that he gives simple compensation in order to get additional money, so that he can live lavishly. Like the Monk, the Friar is prepared with good reason for his reinterpretation of his role: tramps and lepers cannot help the Church, and giving money is a sure symbol of repentance. The narrator powerfully hints that the Friar is lecherous as well as greedy. The indication that he arranged many marriages at his own cost proposes that he established husbands for young women whom he had made pregnant.

The Merchant, the Clerk and the Man of Law

The Merchant, the Clerk and the Man of Law typify three specialized types. Though the narrator bravely keeps up the charade of praising everybody, the Merchant obviously taxes his aptitude to do so. The Merchant is in amount overdue; it seems that a regular occurrence and his hypothetical deftness at hiding his indebtedness is underlined by the information that even the narrator knows about it. Although the narrator would like to praise him, the Merchant has not even told the group his name. Then the tattered Clerk materializes noticeably oblivious to worldly concerns. However, the final reason of his study is not clear. The Man of Law deviates piercingly with the Clerk in that he has used his studies for financial gain.

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The white-bearded Franklin is a wealthy farmer, possessed of earths but not of dignified birth. His principal feature is his fascination with food, which is so plentiful in his house that it seemed to snow meat and drink. The narrator then explains the five Guildsmen, all artisans. They are completely clad in the racing colours, or uniform of their association. The narrator praises their shining clothes and mentions that each of them is robust enough to be a city bureaucrat. With them is their clever Cook, whom Chaucer would have a high regard but for the ulcer on his skin. The hardy Shipman wears a blade on a cord around his scruff. When he is on his ship, he pilfers wine from the merchant while the latter sleeps off.

The taffeta-clad Physician bases his practice of medicine and surgery on methodical information of astronomy and the four humours (the four humours are black bile, yellow bile, phlegm and blood, the imbalance of which have been believed to be the cause of all diseases in Greek and Roman physiology). He has a fine system with his apothecaries, since they help each other in making money. He is conscious of antique and contemporary medical authorities, but reads little Scripture. He is rather careful, and the narrator jokes that the doctor's preferred medicine is gold.

The somewhat deaf Wife of Bath is described next by the narrator. This obsessive seamstress is forever first to the offering at the Mass, and if an important person goes ahead of her she is depressed. She wears head coverings to the Mass which the narrator wonders must weigh ten pounds. She has taken three pilgrimages to Jerusalem and has had five husbands. Furthermore, she has also been to Rome, Cologne and other foreign pilgrimage sites. Her teeth have gaps between them, and she sits contentedly straddling her horse. The Wife is cheerful and talkative, and she gives good love recommendation since she has had lot of knowledge.

Next, a calm and poor village Parson is portrayed. Pure of the sense of right and wrong and true to Christ's lessons, the Parson takes pleasure in preaching and instructing his parishioners, but he dislikes expelling those from the parish who cannot give their tithes. He marches with his squad to visit all his parishioners, no matter how distant. He considers that a priest must be clean, since he serves an instance for his people attending worship. The Parson is dedicated to his rural community and does not seek a better engagement. He is even caring to sinners, preferring to educate them by example rather than scorn. The Parson is followed by his brother, a Plowman, who works hard, loves God and his fellow citizen, toils 'for Christ's sake', and offers his tithes on time.

The red-haired Miller loves music, coarse jokes and drinking. He is immensely corpulent and strong, able to lift doors off their hinges or break them down by running at them with his head. He has a mole on his nose with bright red hairs on it like bristles, black nostrils, and a mouth like a furnace. He wears a sword and buckler, and loves to joke around and narrate erotic tales. He filches from his customers and plays the bagpipes.

An inn of court (school of law) with stipulations is stocked by the Manciple. Although he is unprofessional, this Manciple is smarter than most of the lawyers he serves. The spindly, irritated Reeve has hair so short that he harks back the narrator to a priest. He manages his lord's land so well that he is clever to save his own cash and property stingily. The Reeve is also a high-quality carpenter, and he travels behind everyone else always.

The Summoner blames those accused of violating Church rules. When intoxicated, he proudly spurts the few Latin phrases he knows. His countenance is bright red due to

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an undisclosed disease. He uses his preeminence immorally for his own gain. He is extremely lecherous, and uses his power to control the young women in his authority.

The Pardoner, who had just been in the court of Rome, negotiates with the Summoner. He sings with his assent, and has long, flowing blond hair. The narrator cites that the Pardoner believes he rides very stylishly, with nothing covering his head. He has brought back many mementos from his travel to Rome. The narrator contrasts the Pardoner's high voice to that of a goat, and states that he thinks the Pardoner might have been a homosexual. The narrator scoffs at the Pardoner for his rude treatment of the poor for his own material gain. Liable of selling Papal indulgences, he is despised by the Church and most churchgoers for counterfeiting pardons and pocketing the cash. The Pardoner is a good priest, storyteller and singer, the narrator admits; although he bickers it is only since he cheats people of their cash in that way.

Analysis

The narrator again portrays many of the characters as though he had, in fact, witnessed them doing things he has only listened to them talk about. Other portrayals, for example the Miller, are obviously shaped by class typecasts.

The Franklin, the Guildsmen and the Cook

The Franklin and the five Guildsmen distribute with the Merchant and the Man of Law a loyalty to material riches, and the narrator praises them in terms of their ownerships. The explanation of Franklin's table is a plentiful poetic praise to hospitality and luxury. The Haberdasher, Carpenter, Weaver, Dyer and Tapestry-Weaver are not individualized, and they don't inform about their arrogance in material exhibition of prosperity is clearly satirical. The Cook, with his loathing bodily defect, is himself an expression of the Guildsmen's substance, worth and prosperity.

The Shipman and the Physician

The recitations of the Shipman and the Physician are both barbed with eagerly satiric turns of expression suggesting deceit and avarice. The Shipman's theft of wine is slipped in among accounts of his expert proficiencies, and his cruelty in encounter is for a short time noted in the midst of his other nautical accomplishments. The narrator gives a remarkable catalog of the Physician's knowledge, but then exclaims the starting comment that he abandons the Bible, implying that his anxiety for the corpse comes at the expenditure of the soul. Furthermore, the narrator's remarks about the Doctor's love of gold suggest that he is out to make cash rather than to assist others.

The Wife of Bath

The Wife of Bath is perhaps Chaucer's most attractive character who has gone down in the pages of history. The Wife of Bath has been interpreted by readers as an image either of Chaucer's misogyny or his proto-feminism. This depends on whether they deduce Chaucer's implied approach towards this candid woman as mocking or adoring. The Wife of Bath is vain, bossy and immoral; a character so typically portrayed by contemporary women-hating writers. But Chaucer's portrayal of the Wife of Bath is so sensible and caring that it is hard to believe that he wanted to show her as the satire of a dreadful woman. The Wife is an experienced woman. 'Experience is right ynogh for me' said she. She has married five times and maintains that Christ has never preached that people should be satisfied with one marriage. The Bible does say, 'go

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forth and multiply' said she. The Wife has always chosen husbands by their 'chestes' and 'nether purs'. She affirms that Jesus had stressed that one should go ahead and enjoy bodily pleasures. After all, the sex organs were 'nat maad for noght'. She stresses that she will 'use myn instrument' when her husband makes his decision to 'paye his dette'. Her husband, the Wife goes on, shall be equally her 'dettour and my thral' (debtor and slave) and that she would score it on his flesh. Chaucer has also provided a detail of the Wife's husbands here. The first three husbands of the Wife were quite polite, while the last two were awful. The first three were wealthy, old and impotent. They were enthralled at her deftness and handed over all their possessions to her in return for physical favours. She used her body at will to extract exactly what she wished for from these men. She deliberately used to start a squabbling with these men by hurling a handful of grievances and Biblical glossing and abject lies about their alleged affairs. These were all done to cover up her follies with young men. She used these means to control her husbands. The fourth husband of the Wife was an ideal match for her, a reveller and a lecherous man who maintained mistresses all his life. This husband of hers died young and she moved on to her fifth husband. This man was cruel and beat her at every pretext. He could 'glose' (flatter) her hugely when he wanted sexual favours from her but she was hugely fond of him as he played hard to get. Jankin, the fifth husband was a student at Oxford and had an affair with the Wife while she was still married to her fourth husband. Once he died, she married Jankin, who was exactly half her age. Jankin used to read books about 'wikked wyves', an anti-feminist writing which contained works from Valerius and Theophrastus, Tertullian, Solomon and others. Jankin was reading aloud from his book by the fire, and the Wife, tired that he would by no means finish reading his 'cursed book al nyght', tore out three pages, hitting him in the face so that he fell backwards into the fire. Jankin wasted no time in getting up and hit her on the head with his fist, flinging her on the floor, where she lay like she had died. 'Hastow slayn me, false theef?' the Wife shouted, 'and for my land thus hastow mordred me?' (Have you killed me, false thief? And have you murdered me to get my land?). Jankin, then sought her pardon; and the Wife forced him to burn up his book immediately.

Having increased for herself all of the 'maistrie' (mastery, control, dominance), Jankin then begged her to keep all of her own possessions. After that day they never had a quarrel once more. They were both honest to each other with her being very kind to him.

The Parson and the Plowman

Coming after many deceitful characters, these two brothers are noticeable as strange examples of Christian ideals. The Plowman loves the Gospel, loving God and his fellow citizen, labouring for Christ's sake and loyally paying tithes to the Church. Their 'worth' is thus of a completely dissimilar kind from that allocated to the courageous Knight or to the skilled and rich characters. The Parson has a more-difficult-to understand role than the Plowman, and possesses an additional urbane awareness of his significance.

The Miller, the Manciple and the Reeve

The Miller, the Manciple and the Reeve have all been depicted in *The Canterbury Tales* as wardens. They use their wisdom to cheat other people of their assets. As in the Gospels, so also in *The Canterbury Tales*, stewardship plays an important role as

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Jesus portrayed stewardship as a symbol of Christian life. The Miller has an aggressive and terrible habit, and has been depicted more as a demon than Christian. He has a face like a furnace, with angry hairs growing out of his warts and black nostrils. His 'golden thumb' alludes to his practice of deceiving his clients. The narrator paradoxically sustains the Manciple as a replica of a good warden. The Manciple's employers are all lawyers, skilled to assist others to live within their means, but the Manciple is shrewder than they are. The Reeve is depicted as a dexterous thief; one who can swindle his own auditors, and who knows all the traps of managers, servants, herdsmen and millers since he is false himself. Worst of all, he enjoys his master's thanks for lending him the things he has stolen from him.

The Summoner and the Pardoner

The Summoner and Pardoner, who travel together, are the most deceitful and dehonoured of all the pilgrims. They are not members of ecclesiastic groups but lay officers of the Church. Both the Summoner and the Pardoner misuse their positions with the Church for increased incomes and benefits. The Summoner is a lecherous character with an unhealthy face and unhealthy soul. The Pardoner, on the other hand, is always enthralling his audience with ghastly stories. Beardless and long-haired, the Pardoner has been described as a mare and a gelding, proposing that his sexual interest lies in men. His homosexuality is further suggested by his harmonizing with the Summoner's 'stiff burdoun', which denotes the bass line of a tune but also hints at the male genitalia (673). The Pardoner launches into a lecture of indulgence-selling he regularly uses to dupe people in order to wreck the agreement of the journey. The narrator scorns at the Pardoner's amazing ability to enthrall people; exactly what every poet wishes to do.

Once the characters are introduced, the narrator apologizes and asks readers not to take offence at what the characters say and do. He maintains that he needs to replicate the exact words used by the characters though these may be revolting or impolite. He quotes Plato and Jesus Christ in saying that one should simply state the truth and not indulge in lying. Then he returns to the tale of the first night the pilgrims spent at the tavern. The tavern owner welcomes the pilgrims, congratulating them as the happiest group of people passing through the inn. He wishes to add to the excitement by proposing that the pilgrims tell a story each while coming and going on the pilgrimage to evade boredom. From among the stories, he would then pick the best and the storyteller thus picked would have to be offered a treat in the tavern banquet hall by others. The pilgrims agree and hence the tavern keeper becomes the account-keeper of the stories. They settle on a sum for the grand dinner for the winner and settles down to drinking wine. They then pick lots to decide who would be the first to tell a story. The Knight gets selected and begins his story.

2.2.2 Analysis

The tavern owner, called Bailey, is an astute businessman who takes the pilgrim's cash for their dinners as soon as they have comfortably settled down. In order to take their minds off the money he has collected for dinner, he offers them entertainment through arranging the storytelling sessions. Bailey maintains that pilgrims ventured on this pilgrimage to the shrine of Thomas Beckett to thank the saint for all his kindness and his help during their times of need, but this group 'Ye goon to Canterbury-God yow speede, / the blissful martir quite yow youre meede!' Here the word 'quite' means 'repay' and has been used to signify the storytelling session, where each member is put in debt by his predecessor, whom he/she should repay with a new story. In place of travelling to a destination, the travel itself becomes a purpose. The narrator has called the tavern owner the group's 'governor' 'judge' and 'reportour' (record-keeper), all the terms have a legal connotation.

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2.3 SHAKESPEARE'S SONNETS

Though researchers are of the opinion that Shakespearean sonnets were written between 1592 and 1593, the exact time of writing the sonnets was not clear. His friends had a few of his sonnets in text form as early as 1598. In 1599, two of these 138 and 144 were printed in *The Passionate Pilgrim*, a collection of verses by various poets. In 1609, the sonnets as we know them were printed by Thomas Thorpe as *Shakespeare's Sonnets*. Since this anthology has numerous errors, academicians are of the opinion that the proof has probably not gone through Shakespeare's hands ever. Yet Thorpe's edition is the foundation for all modern works.

With just a small number of exceptions—Sonnets 99, 126 and 145—Shakespeare's poetry follows the English form of sonnet. All sonnets are a fourteen-line poem in iambic pentameter, differentiated into four parts: three quatrains, or groups of four lines, followed by a couplet of two lines. Characteristically, a dissimilar—though linked—idea finds its appearance in every quatrain. The reasoning or subject of the poem is summarized or generalized in the concluding couplet. It is noteworthy that more than a few of Shakespeare's couplets do not have this typical characteristic. Shakespeare did, in any case, bring the conservative English sonnet rhyme scheme 'abab, cdcd, efef, gg' into exercise.

Shakespeare's 154 sonnets, in grouping, are frequently explained as a series. This is often categorized into two parts. Sonnets 1–126 basically deal with a young man and the speaker's friendship with him. Sonnets 127–152 talk about the speaker's friendship with a woman. Only in some of the poems in the first collection, it is evident that the human being referred to is a gentleman. Furthermore, most of the poems in the series taken in totality are not straightforward addresses to another human being. The two concluding sonnets, 153 and 154, are open translations of traditional verses about Cupid. Certain critics are of the opinion that they meet a scrupulous objective—although they do not have the same opinion about what this may be—but more than a few others see them as being non-considerate.

Fig. 2.2 William Shakespeare

Check Your Progress

1. What is Chaucer's contribution to English?
2. Discuss any characteristic feature of Chaucer's characterization.
3. What is the favourite activity of the Monk?
4. What is the name of the Prioress?
5. Who according to you is the most liked character of Chaucer?

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The English sonnet series touched the climax of its fame in the 1590s during which time *Astrophel and Stella* (1591) by Sir Philip Sidney was commonly celebrated as the foremost literary piece of the day. It inspired several English poets to create their own sonnet compilations as well. All these, which also contained Shakespeare's sonnets, are fairly obligated to the literary conferences, established by the *Canzoniere*—a sonnet series created by the fourteenth century Italian poet Petrarch. By the time Shakespeare started composing sonnets, an anti-Petrarchan conference had begun. It passed satirical comments or was known to make use of conventional motifs and methods. Critics of Shakespeare's sonnets often draw contrasts between these and the ones of his precursors and contemporaries. It constitutes Sidney, Sir Thomas Wyatt, Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, Samuel Daniel and Edmund Spenser.

The crux of the twentieth century critical remarks on the sonnets, in any case, is their subjects and poetic method. Analysis of official elements in the poems comprises surveys of the rhetorical tools, syntax and diction that Shakespeare employed here. The many and imprecise interpretations of his words and phrases have proved to be particularly fascinating and challenging—both for academicians and common readers. The impediment and indecision of Shakespeare's metaphorical language is also a critical issue, as is the hard-to-believe variety of tone and mood in the series. Shakespeare's divergences from or alterations of the poetic styles employed by other sonneteers have been a prominent theme of criticism as well.

More than a few of Shakespeare's themes are traditional sonnet topics like love and beauty, and the related motifs of time and change. Although Shakespeare takes care of these subjects in his unique style—most distinguished of these being his poems of love and admiration being addressed not to a fair maiden, but to a young man. He included another theme of fervour: a righteous and nice-looking woman. Reviewers have often drawn attention to Shakespeare's complex and opposing representation of love in the sonnets. Debates have been carried out about the poet's declaration that through his poetries he will make the young man's beauty immortal, leading to his contrasting the critical nature of time. The subjects of friendship and its disloyalty are also critical topics worth deliberation, similar to the nature of the relationship between the poet and the young friend. The indistinct eroticism of the sonnets has affected readers differently. This has been accompanied by the declaration from some critics that the friendship between the two men is asexual and others saying that it is sexual in nature.

The fervour, passion and emotional vibrancy of the lyrics have induced a lot of readers and critics over the centuries into thinking that these must certainly be based on memoirs. In any condition, no proof survives to prove that this is the case. However, people over the centuries have been continually speculating about the substance of these sonnets. Literary critics have been trying to look into them from the angle of 'what they tell us about their inventor'. Furthermore, researchers have tried to identify the individuals who were the real prototypes for the individuals the poet addresses in these poems. The enigma that still persists is that we have no fixed opinion about the degree to which Shakespeare's own knowledge is depicted in his sonnets. We do not even discern with surety if the people depicted in these poems are based on actual individuals or are the sole creation of Shakespeare's study, fantasy and understanding of the human spirit.

Inconsistencies and uncertainties can be spotted in Shakespeare's sonnets. These poems present a stiff competition to generalizations and conclusions both in the characteristic and collective forms. Their complex language and differing viewpoints

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have led to a whole range of interpretations, all of which may at times emerge relevant—even as they are disagreeing with each other. Some reviewers read the sonnets as personal parables. Certainly, commentators maintain that speculating about what these verses indicate about Shakespeare's life, morals and sexuality is an unprofitable literary endeavour. The readers identify him intimately with all the characters he creates. His vivid thoughts and sentimental emotions take our own undecided feelings regarding questions that concern us all, to the climax: love, friendship, jealousy, hope and dissatisfaction.

2.3.1 Sonnet 60

Sonnet 60

Like as the waves make towards the pebbled shore,
So do our minutes hasten to their end;
Each changing place with that which goes before,
In sequent toil all forwards do contend.
Nativity, once in the main of light,
Crawls to maturity, wherewith being crown'd,
Crooked eclipses 'gainst his glory fight,
And Time that gave doth now his gift confound.
Time doth transfix the flourish set on youth
And delves the parallels in beauty's brow,
Feeds on the rarities of nature's truth,
And nothing stands but for his scythe to mow:
And yet to times in hope my verse shall stand,
Praising thy worth, despite his cruel hand.

The sonnet is contemplation on transience. Sonnet 60 is symbolic of 60 minutes in an hour just as 12 marks the twelve hours of the day. After some deliberation, the beloved is mentioned in the final line as one who can be protected from the destruction caused by time. In spite of this assertion, the reader is once again reminded of the fact that everything that is perish will perish at the hands of time. Similarly, our past moves forward as irreversibly as the waves move forward beating incessantly on the shore.

Summary

This sonnet endeavours to explain the nature of time as it passes by and the kind of impact that it has on one's life. In the first quatrain, the speaker, compares the minutes of an hour that pass by so quickly just as the waves that come that strike the 'pebbled shore' in a regular sequence replacing one after the other. In the second quatrain, the speaker compares the journey of a human being with that of the sun. When an infant is born ('Nativity'), it rises over the ocean meaning he/she grows up ('the main of light'), then crawls upward toward noon (the 'crown" of"maturity')- attains maturity, then suddenly his fortunes get affected by the 'crooked eclipses', which fight against and amaze the sun's glory. In the third quatrain, time is compared with a devastating

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monster which cuts short youthful bloom, creates wrinkles on the forehead, greedily eats the wonders of nature and trims down with his scythe everything that is standing strong. The speaker also emphasizes the point that his verse will be able withstand the test of time and thus, will continue to admire the 'worth' of the beloved regardless of the 'cruel hand ': of time.

Commentary

This sonnet is written in a systematic manner and follows the quatrain/quatrain/quatrain/ couplet structure that characterizes the Shakespearean sonnet. Shakespeare in every quatrain has made use of a metaphor to explain the passage of time in human life. The metaphor, used in the first quatrain, is that of the tide. Just as the waves move forward and replace one another on the beach, in the same manner, minutes struggle forward in 'sequent toil.' In the second quatrain, the metaphor used is that of sun during the day. In the third quatrain, the metaphor takes the form of a personified force, a devastating monster, who plows trenches in beauty, gulps down nature, and cuts down all that stands with his scythe.

This is one of the most popular sonnets and probably the best description of the theme of the ravages of time. Every quatrain deals with the theme in an exceptional manner with the destructive force of time increasing with each consecutive line. Even though the poet knows that destruction caused by Time is unavoidable yet the poet is optimistic that his literary writing (verse) will stand the test of Time.

In quatrain one the flow of time is contrasted with the ceaseless thumping of the waves against a shore, each wave building in force and then crashing down again only to be followed by another in its place. The second quatrain draws on the sun as a metaphor for human life: it is born ('Nativity') and 'crawls' (like a baby) until it reaches its highest point, whereupon it is 'crown'd' (with maturity) and then advances to fall back into darkness, or death. Line 8 ends the metaphor with the affirmation that Time both gives the gift of life and takes it away again. This sentiment is reiterated in lines 9-12, with greater emphasis. Time wipes out the accomplishments of youth: he digs deep wrinkles in a beautiful face and devours the preciousness of nature in its most perfect shape – 'And nothing stands but for his scythe to mow.' (Time and Death each were often pictured carrying a scythe.) However, the final couplet delves into the poet's intention to overcome Time himself, challenging his 'cruel hand.'

2.3.2 Form and Structure

Sonnet 60 exhibits the conventional attributes of a Shakespearean sonnet—three quatrains and a couplet written in iambic pentameter with an ABAB CDCD EFEF GG rhyme scheme. In fact, Helen Vendler calls Sonnet 60 'one of the perfect examples of the 4-4-4-2 Shakespearean sonnet form.' According to Vendler, 'Each quatrain introduces a new and important modification in concept and tone, while the couplet—here a 'reversing' couplet contradicting the body of the sonnet—adds yet a fourth dimension.' In other words, Vendler is of the opinion that each section of the poem provides new insight and content; hence, there are four distinctive parts or 'dimensions' of the sonnet—each quatrain is not merely presenting the same idea, while the couplet is not just summarizing the quatrains. However, Sonnet 60 contains distinctive characteristics, such as several trochees, which differentiate it from some of Shakespeare's other sonnets and further assist to build up the main ideas of the sonnet. Shakespeare's sonnets generally contain iambs, feet that have an unstressed syllable

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followed by a stressed syllable, but Sonnet 60 includes several trochees, feet that have a stressed syllable followed by an unstressed syllable. Vendler writes that the first two lines of the sonnet begin with trochees, which 'draw attention to the hastening of the waves, the attacks by eclipses and by Time, and the countervailing praising by verse.' According to Robert Arbour, after these initial trochees, Shakespeare ends each of these first two lines with a 'calm, iambic meter.'

2.3.3 Analysis and Criticism

This poem has many opposing images, like time, conflict, and the sea. According to Stephen Booth's criticism of Sonnet 60, the poet has made use of various battle ground words to signify the battle that the speak wages against time in his attempt to be one with the youth. The words chosen by Shakespeare such as toil, transfix, fight, contend, glory, confound, and scythe all suggest a fierce clash to which the speaker finds himself permanently attached.

The poet explains the third quatrain as the deprivation of his fascination's beauty, the weapons that time systematically uses to slowly cut down what the speaker regards valuable is a severe blow. The comprehensiveness of time's destruction is made comprehensible as if man's beauty and goodness are created only for time to annihilate.

2.3.4 Sonnet 73

That time of year thou mayst in me behold
When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang
Upon those boughs which shake against the cold,
Bare ruined choirs, where late the sweet birds sang.
In me thou seest the twilight of such day
As after sunset fadeth in the west,
Which by and by black night doth take away,
Death's second self, that seals up all in rest.
In me thou seest the glowing of such fire
That on the ashes of his youth doth lie,
As the deathbed whereon it must expire
Consumed with that which it was nourished by.
This thou perceiv'st, which makes thy love more strong,
To love that well which thou must leave ere long.

Sonnet 73 received sharp criticism by many critics but still it is known as one of his best sonnets. Theme is not entirely different from other sonnets as it also talks of ravages of time, transience of life, mortality, old age, destructive nature of time but the tone of the poem is introspective and pensive. The sonnet is pensive in tone, and although it is written to a young friend. It is wholly introspective until the final couplet, which finally turns to the person who is addressed 'thou' in line one.

This sonnet's theme is the inter-relation of old age and death. The poet has used the metaphor of autumn leaves which fall from the trees. Old age is also like those 'yellow leaves' which fall from the branches of life. The poem deals with the

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inevitability of death. This poem is addressed to a lover whom the poet informs about mortality of life. The poem is relevant to each and every age in history and even today as it talks of universal truth.

Every one during his life span feels the difficulties of old age. Throughout his sonnet, Shakespeare wants his audience to observe and analyze the outcomes and blemishes of old age. In the first quatrain, the poet tells his beloved that his age is like a ' time of year', like autumn season when leaves completely fall from the trees and weather grows cold and birds also leave their branches.

The poem can be compared to John Keats' *Ode to Autumn*, where he glorifies autumn season because of its ripeness and maturity. Every one celebrates spring but Keats sings and celebrates autumn unconventionally as this is the season when fruits get ripened, crops are stored in granary and farmers sit idle. This season has its own charm and value. If everyone sings celebrate the blossoming of flowers and chirping of birds, who will sing about autumn.

But here, Shakespeare seems to be haunted by traumatic effects of old age. He informs the readers about inevitable relationship of old age and death. This sonnet also remind us of modern poet W. B. Yeats who in his poem *Sailing to Byzantium* mentions that old age is like a 'tattered coat', he looks like a scarecrow. He is not befitting for carnal pleasures. That is why, he appeals to the readers to go to a city of Byzantium which stands for immortality of art. Byzantium is present day Ithaca. Yeats is emphasizing on immortality of art in the form of a golden bird which is eternal. Here also, Shakespeare mentions that in old age, body can no longer bear cold, eyes can no longer have clear vision and his age is like late twilight and the remaining light is replacing with darkness which is actually 'Death's Second Self'. As a result, when night approaches, this faded light also goes away and complete darkness is pervaded which finally result in death.

Thus the poet beautifully uses the metaphor of 'yellow leaves' and autumn season. The poet traces all moments in approaching old age. Speaker compares himself to the glowing remnants of fire which lies on the ashes of his youth. And in the final stage, youth disappears forever as the fire goes out and life is extinguished from the strength of youth and old age finally, prevails youth.

Shakespeare is concerned with the reality of death. But his intention is not to make his readers afraid of death rather he emphasizes on the power and force of love which will be remaining behind only when death captures body. Thus life is short-lived and transient but only the song of true love can respond to death as love is not a slave to time; it does not yield to the power of time and ages.

The closing couplet is like an admonition as it focuses on the fruitful nature of love' only love can strengthen the power of knowledge and only love can bear the adverse consequences led by the assault of old age. It is not clear from the sonnet whether he is pinpointing his growing age or his lover's but the poem is applicable to one and all as it is based on inevitability of death. The poem also reminds us of John Donne's *Death Be Not Proud* in which he challenges death unconventionally that it should not feel swollen with pride as mighty kings can even defeat it. But here not might and material can win over death but only true love which never yields to time. The speaker seems to be distressed by his inevitable fate: old age, death and eternal separation from the fair lord.

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Use of Metaphor in Sonnet

Metaphor is a figure of speech of comparison stating an identity rather than a likeness, i.e., something is said to be that which it only resembles, e.g., 'I fall upon the thorns of life'(Shelley's *Ode to the West Wind*), 'the very honey of earthly joy' (*Cowley's The Wish*). Hamlet's famous soliloquy begins,

"To be or not to be, that is the question:
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles
And by opposing end them."

Hamlet is trying to decide which is the nobler course of action, suffering the blows of fortune or fighting them. The third and fourth lines both employ metaphors: *outrageous fortune* is described in terms of *slings and arrows,* and *troubles* are described in terms of a *sea.* Thus Hamlet's troubles are only his personal feelings of unhappiness but by associating his feelings with such large and chaotic subjects as warfare and the sea, the individual experience is linked with vast and important aspects of life— almost making a huge statement about human experience.

Metaphor is a figure of speech in which similarities of two unlike things are seen as identical. For example, He is a donkey. In simile, the comparison becomes He is like a donkey. Metaphor is always an implied or compressed comparison. Aristotle in Poetics claims that for one to master the use of metaphor is '...a sign of genius, since a good metaphor implies an intuitive perception of the similarity in dissimilar.' In Macbeth, 'There is daggers in man's smiles', the implication is 'Men conceal enmity beneath their apparent good will as man might conceal a dagger under cloak'.

Sonnet 73 is highly metaphorical. The poem is full of metaphors; it grows with the growth of metaphors each implying something different. The first quatrain focuses on the metaphor of winter day and emphasizes the harshness and emptiness of old age. As winter's cold breeze is unbearable, old body is also unable to bear the cold. In the second quatrain, the metaphor shifts to twilight which does not emphasize on the chill of old age but rather the gradual fading of light of youth. Both the metaphors employed by the poet talk something of cyclic nature as cold can turn into hot and dark can turn into light but old age is the final stage which only mingles with death. Winter follows Spring and Spring will follow Winter surely and after the Twilight fades, dawn comes next definitely but in human life youth will never come back again.

The poem is highly remarkable because of its abundant use of metaphors. Metaphor employed by the poet is not only deco rational but rather thematic. Different variety of metaphors gives the poem aestheticism. The poem received criticism because of its complexity. The poem seems to be the personal journey of poet from youth to old age. Shakespeare also seems to be depressed by the adverse effects of time and old age but he gives a remedy at the end of it that only true love can survive even at the end of your life.

Overall, the structure and use of metaphors are two connected entities toward the overall progression within the sonnet. Seen as a harsh critic on age, Shakespeare sets up the negative effects of aging in the three quatrains of this poem. These aspects not only take on a universal aspect from the symbols, but represent the inevitability of a

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gradual lapse in the element of time in general from their placement in the poem. Further, many of the metaphors utilized in this sonnet were personified and overwhelmed by this connection between the speaker's youth and death bed. This inevitability leads to the purpose and transformation experienced from our author by the final lines of the poem. A deeper appreciation for his lover in spite of his narcissistic views toward death serves as the overall rationale behind Sonnet 73.

ACTIVITY

Whom do you think can be compared with Shakespeare in the modern times?

DID YOU KNOW

Sonnet 73 is one of the best known sonnets of Shakespeare.

2.4 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt that:

- Geoffrey Chaucer was born in London, circa 1343. His parents were John Chaucer and Agnes Copton. His father was a wealthy wine merchant and second-in-command to the King's butler.
- There are no authoritarian records of his early life and learning. However, it can be supposed from his works that he had the knowledge of French, Latin and Italian languages.
- Chaucer passed away on 25 October 1400 and was buried at the entry of the chapel of St. Benedict in South Transept.
- *The Canterbury Tales* is a frame story, or rather, stories within a story. Chaucer informs us, within the *Prologue*, about the framework of the plot.
- Chaucer's characters are extremely fascinating and life-like. In *Canterbury Tales*, we come across dishonest people like the merchant, the foul-mouthed miller and the reeve (senior government official).
- The character, who is closest to reality, is the Wife of Bath. She is a widow from the city of Bath who is neither all good nor all bad.
- Chaucer also displays his sense of humour by making comments on the lack of hygiene during the period by drawing the character of a cook named Roger.
- *The Prologue to the Canterbury Tales* marks the attainment of Chaucer's ripeness as a poet. It is one of the most important pieces of literature ever written.
- The narrator starts the portrayal of his character with the Knight followed by the Prioress, The Monk, the Friar, the Squire and the Yeoman, the Merchant, the Clerk and the Man of Law, the Franklin, the Guildsmen and the Cook; the Shipman and the Physician, the Wife of Bath, the Parson and the Plowman, the Miller, the Manciple and the Reeve, the Summoner and the Pardoner.

Check Your Progress

6. How many sonnets were written by Shakespeare?
7. How many quatrains and couplets consist in Shakespearean sonnet?
8. Name the figure of speech that has been increasingly used in Sonnet 73.
9. What is the theme of sonnet 73?

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- Though researchers are of the opinion that Shakespearean sonnets were written between 1592 and 1593, the exact time of writing the sonnets was not clear.
- With just a small number of exceptions—Sonnets 99, 126 and 145—Shakespeare's poetry follows the English form of sonnet.
- Shakespeare's 154 sonnets, in grouping, are frequently explained as a series. This is often categorized into two parts. Sonnets 1–126 basically deal with a young man and the speaker's friendship with him. Sonnets 127–152 talk about the speaker's friendship with a woman.
- The English sonnet series touched the climax of its fame in the 1590s during which time *Astrophel and Stella* (1591) by Sir Philip Sidney was commonly celebrated as the foremost literary piece of the day.
- The fervour, passion and emotional vibrancy of the lyrics have induced a lot of readers and critics over the centuries into thinking that these must certainly be based on memoirs. In any condition, no proof survives to prove that this is the case.
- Sonnet 60 is contemplation on transience. Sonnet 60 is symbolic of 60 minutes in an hour just as 12 marks the twelve hours of the day.
- Sonnet 60 endeavours to explain the nature of time as it passes by and the kind of impact that it has on one's life.
- Sonnet 73 received sharp criticism by many critics but still it is known as one of his best sonnets.
- This sonnet's theme is the inter-relation of old age and death. The poet has used the metaphor of autumn leaves which fall from the trees.
- The poem can be compared to John Keats' *Ode to Autumn*, where he glorifies autumn season because of its ripeness and maturity.
- Shakespeare is concerned with the reality of death. But his intention is not to make his readers afraid of death rather he emphasizes on the power and force of love which will be remaining behind only when death captures body.
- Metaphor is a figure of speech of comparison stating an identity rather than a likeness, i.e., something is said to be that which it only resembles, e.g., 'I fall upon the thorns of life' (Shelley's *Ode to the West Wind*), 'the very honey of earthly joy' (*Cowley's The Wish*).
- Sonnet 73 is highly metaphorical. The poem is full of metaphors; it grows with the growth of metaphors each implying something different.
- The poem seems to be the personal journey of poet from youth to old age. Shakespeare also seems to be depressed by the adverse effects of time and old age but he gives a remedy at the end of it that only true love can survive even a the end of your life.
- Overall, the structure and use of metaphors are two connected entities toward the overall progression within the sonnet. Seen as a harsh critic on age, Shakespeare sets up the negative effects of aging in the three quatrains of this poem.

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2.5 KEY TERMS

- **Renaissance**: The period in European history from about the 14th through 16th centuries regarded as marking the end of the Middle Ages and featuring major cultural and artistic change.
- **Elizabethan Era:** The time associated with the queen of England, Elizabeth I. The Elizabethan Era was named after the rule of Queen Elizabeth I (1558–1603).
- **Metaphor:** Metaphor is a figure of speech of comparison stating an identity rather than a likeness, i.e., something is said to be that which it only resembles.
- **Prologue:** An introductory part of a play. It gives information to the audience about the play.
- **Sonnet:** Originated in Italy, it is a lyric poem of fourteen lines.

2.6 ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

1. Geoffrey Chaucer (1343–1400), one of the greatest poets of the Middle Ages, is known as the Father of English literature. Chaucer was active in developing Middle English in a time when French and Latin were dominant languages in use. While court poetry was being written in Latin and Anglo-Norman, Chaucer was writing in English. The decasyllabic couplet that Chaucer used in most of the *Canterbury Tales* later developed into the heroic couplet. The heroic couplet was generally used for epic and narrative poetry in English. Chaucer was the pioneer in using the iambic pentameter.
2. Chaucer's characters are extremely fascinating and life-like. In *Canterbury Tales*, we come across dishonest people like the merchant, the foul-mouthed miller and the reeve (senior government official). The reeve proves to be a thief, the merchant is about to go bankrupt and the miller cheats his customers while weighing the grains.
3. He is fond of hunting and has a lot of horses.
4. The narrator now goes on to give an account of the Prioress, that is, madame Eglentyne.
5. The Wife of Bath is perhaps Chaucer's most attractive character who has gone down in the pages of history.
6. Shakespeare wrote 154 sonnets.
7. Shakespeare's sonnets consisted of three quatrains and one couplet.
8. Metaphor is a figure of speech of comparison stating an identity rather than a likeness; this has been increasingly used in Sonnet 73.
9. This sonnet's theme is the inter-relation of old age and death.

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2.7 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. Give a brief biography of Geoffrey Chaucer.
2. Write short notes on the Prioress, Monk and Friar as represented in *The Canterbury Tales*.
3. Write a brief note on the characteristic of Shakespeare's sonnets.

Long-Answer Questions

1. 'Chaucer's characters represent the society of medieval Europe'. Do you agree with the statement? Justify your answer.
2. Analyse Chaucer's narrative art in *The Prologue to the Canterbury Tales*
3. Explain Sonnet 60 of Shakespeare.

2.8 FURTHER READING

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UNIT 3 RENAISSANCE AND METAPHYSICAL POETS

Structure

3.0 INTRODUCTION

In the previous unit, you studied some of the literary writings of Chaucer and Shakespeare.

Literature as a term is used to describe whatever is written or spoken. It basically comprises creative writing, innovative style and imagination. Literature has various forms; some popular ones are fiction, drama, prose and poetry. Following the death of Shakespeare, the poet and playwright Ben Jonson became the primary literary figure of the Jacobean Era. In any case, Jonson's art can be traced back to the Middle Ages instead of the Tudor Era. His characters personified the Theory of Humours. As per this theory, behavioural differences are given rise to from the existence of one of the body's four humours (blood, phlegm, black bile and yellow bile). Jonson was a ruler of style and an excellent satirist. *Volpone* by him displayed the ways in which a bunch of scammers were made fool of by a renowned con-artist, vice being punished by vice and virtue being rewarded. Other than Shakespeare, who soared over the initial seventeenth century, the primary poets of the early seventeenth century included John Donne and the other metaphysical poets.

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Under the influence of continental Baroque, besides adopting as his subject matter a combination of Christian mysticism and eroticism, metaphysical poetry used irregular or unpoetic metaphors.

John Donne is the master of conceits and analogies. In his poem, *A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning,* he uses the conceit of compass. Husband and wife are parting from each other and the two ends of a compass embody this couple. The more the distance, the more they are tilted towards each other which actually strengthens their love. If the wife is shedding tears, husband says that she is shedding his blood and if she will sigh in despair and distress, she will sigh away his soul. A conceit is that stylistic device by which the poet can show similarity even between most dissimilar things. As in the poem *Flea* is based on a conceit by which a flea is termed as a 'marriage bed'. Unusual images are coined together in his poems.

With the declining years of the Renaissance Queen had waned the patriotic unity of the country, and the wisdom necessary to cement the factions and to revive patriotic fervour was not possessed by the new King. The people resented the new taxes made necessary by the Monarch's lavish expenditures and resented the attempted at an alliance with Spain through the betrothal of the King's son Charles.

John Milton got famous for his *Paradise Lost, Paradise Regained and Areopagitica*. When Scotland proclaimed Charles II the King of Ireland, Scotland, and England, Cromwell immediately took steps to break Scotland's resistance, succeeding in his purpose by 1651. The place of the provisional Rump, expelled in 1683, was taken by the Nominated or 'Barebone's' Parliament. Upon Cromwell's death (1658) there succeeded a period of strife, under his son Richard. Finally the Parliament voted (1660) to restore the monarchy with Charles II as King. It was during this period that poets like Thomas Gray and Alexander Pope made a mark with their literary writings.

3.1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

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

- Explain the metaphysical conceit used by John Donne
- Analyse the epic *Paradise Lost*
- Describe the characteristics of an epic
- Explain the autobiographical elements in *Paradise Lost*
- Discuss the concept of Hell in the poem
- Assess the character of Satan
- Describe the theme of *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*
- Identify the mock-heroic style of *Rape of the Lock*

3.2 JOHN DONNE

John Donne was born in the Elizabethan England. He was born into a religious Catholic family in 1572. He was an extremely devout man who was persecuted as he was a Christian. Though Donne is reputed for his sonnets and love songs, he had, in his early life, written religious poetry as well. His love poems and sonnets are marked by

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multiplicity of attitudes and moods. Metaphysics is a part of philosophy dealing with any subject that surpasses its traceability through the senses. Therefore, the mind, the time, free will, God and here, love, are all matters of metaphysical thought. *The Good Morrow* is a key sample of one of Donne's metaphysical poems.

Fig. 3.1 *John Donne*

According to John Dryden, Donne, 'He affects the metaphysics, not only in his satires, but in his amorous verses, where nature only should reign; and perplexes the minds of the fair sex with nice speculations of philosophy, when he should engage their hearts, and entertain them with the softnesses of love. In this . . . Mr. Cowley has copied him to a fault.'

Probably, the only writer before Dryden to speak of a certain metaphysical school or group of metaphysical poets is John Donne, Drummond of Hawthornden (1585–1649), who in one of his letters speaks of 'metaphysical ideas and scholastical quiddities'.

3.2.1 Characteristics of Metaphysical Poetry

Metaphysical poetry is a kind of poetry that lays stress on the belief that the logical aspect rules the emotional; signified by sarcasm, absurdity and extraordinary comparisons of unlike features; the latter often being fanciful, to the limit of peculiarity. 'Metaphysical poets' was a term used for the first time by the eighteenth century poet and critic Dr. Samuel Johnson. He considered a certain group of poets, metaphysical, because he wanted to portray a loose group of British lyric poets who belonged to the seventeenth century. These poets were generally interested in metaphysical issues and had a common method of examining them. Their writings were marked by the innovativeness of metaphor (these included comparisons known as metaphysical conceits). The changing times had a significant influence on their poetry.

Most of Donne's poems, such as *The Sun Rising, The Good-Morrow* and *A Valediction: Of Weeping* are based on the theme of love and involve a beloved or a pair of lovers. They are represented as complete worlds unto themselves. The lovers are deeply in love with each other and oblivious to the world around them. Donne uses the analogy to express the extent to which the lovers are involved with each other. They are so engrossed that they forget their surroundings and behave as if they are the only people in existence. Nothing else matters to them except they themselves.

In *The Sun Rising*, the poet ends the poem by requesting the sun to shine only on his beloved and himself. He tries to convince the Sun by saying that by shining on the two of them he will actually be shining on the whole world.

Just like other metaphysical poets, Donne used vanity and analogies to build thematic relations between dissimilar objects. In *The Good-Morrow*, for instance, the orator uses metaphors brilliantly and employs spheres to jump from the description of the world to a description of globes before going on to describe his beloved's eyes and the flawlessness of their romance. Going beyond mere praise of his lover, the orator compares her to the sphere, which is a shape without faults; a shape that has without corners or edges. By comparing her to a sphere he also draws attention to the way his lover's face now means the world to him, or has come to represent the world. In his work *A Valediction: Of Weeping*, the orator uses sphere-shaped tears to establish a connection with pregnancy, the moon and the world. As the orator weeps, each tear comprises a tiny reflect of his lover. This is yet another example of the use of the sphere to demonstrate the perfect personality and physicality of the person being addressed.

3.2.2 *The Good Morrow*

I wonder by my troth, what thou and I
Did, till we loved? Were we not wean'd till then?
But suck'd on country pleasures, childishly?
Or snorted we in the Seven Sleepers' den?
'Twas so; but this, all pleasures fancies be;
If ever any beauty I did see,
Which I desired, and got, 'twas but a dream of thee.
And now good-morrow to our waking souls,
Which watch not one another out of fear;
For love all love of other sights controls,
And makes one little room an everywhere.
Let sea-discoverers to new worlds have gone;
Let maps to other, worlds on worlds have shown;
Let us possess one world; each hath one, and is one.

My face in thine eye, thine in mine appears,
And true plain hearts do in the faces rest;
Where can we find two better hemispheres
Without sharp north, without declining west ?
Whatever dies, was not mix'd equally;
If our two loves be one, or thou and I
Love so alike that none can slacken, none can die.

The Good Morrow is a metaphysical poem consisting of twenty-one lines, divided into three stanzas. The poet speaks to the woman he loves as they wake up after spending the night together. The poem starts with a direct question from the poet to his love. The poet maintains that he and his lover started living only when they fell in love. Earlier, they were just infants at their mothers' breasts or were involved in childish 'country pleasures'.

Michael Hall says that *The Good Morrow* is a chronological and spatial poem. It is with the aid of this poem that the orator exposes his increasing maturity and awareness of his love as a reply to his thrilling passion. The musical theme of the poem reinforces this union. There are few examples that prove that the poem is sequential, such as it goes on from a metaphorical phase of early life in the first stanza, to the dawn of the present in the next stanza and finally in the final stanza, to a never-ending point of view of their association in the times to come. The poetry indicates that it also considers space, as love is at first represented as being confined to 'one little room', or a cave, and later it is expected to expand to fill the whole 'world', and thereafter contracting all this love into a influential force that is contained in the lovers' eyes. One can also consider the poem as the achievement of maturity by the storyteller, which can be witnessed in the succession of his life of physical pull to that of pure love, which in the end eagerly waits to conclude in being joined with his lover for perpetuity. Furthermore, a rising awareness is experienced by the storyteller about his love for the beloved. At first, he was in the company of other ladies, and he almost immediately realized that all these ladies just reflected the one that he was in fact looking for—the one true lady in his life. As well, the poetry is based on a subject of initiation.

The poem starts with the speaker characteristically sleeping in a cave, just like Plato's analogy. Though, he is lastly released by his woman who makes him go into the daylight, or *The Good Morrow*. He is now a changed man who is getting increasingly aware of his love for the woman. Furthermore, the narrator stresses this union through the musicality of the verse. At first, the poem is concentrated on the couple with references that highlight 'we', but ends with sound that highlights 'I'. This is a symbol of the union of the two separate beings into a single 'I'.

Donne's poetry is typically dramatic. A fine method of observing this is to see how the poems begin. In *The Good Morrow,* the 'I' voice keeps putting forth questions to which he insists an answer. Although the question put is a semi-rhetorical question—the other person is never allowed a moment to reply! This is in striking contrast to the much gentle second stanza. It begins with a note of confined triumph and finishes with a convincing plea to enjoy their world. There are no uncertainties any more.

Michael Hall, while analysing the poem, says that, there are but a few people who express love as completely as John Donne. Donne, in this poem, makes full use of the innumerable devices of poetry for communicating his appealing message to his beloved. He makes use of structure, symbolic language, perspective and tone that supports the speaker in his undertaking, in a creative manner. In any case, all the characteristics of the poem are not completely evident because of the perceptive references and allusions by the knowledgeable poet. Instances of these elements which have not been clearly brought forth can be seen in the use of 'seven sleepers den' in the first stanza, the discovering metaphors of the second stanza and the semi-circular images used in the last stanza. Superficially, these allusions may appear to have been aimlessly made a part of the central concept. However, as the poem progresses, we will be able to understand that these allusions contribute immensely to further support the poet's message. We will find out that Donne's poetry is of the genre that effectively makes use of the devices in order to increase the poetic capacity of the verse. The intellectual allusions and references enhance narrator's message to his lover.

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Structure

The structure of the poem is such that it enhances the poet's message to his beloved. It contains three stanzas, each including seven lines. Besides, every stanza has been further divided into a quatrain and a triplet. In his book, *John Donne and the Metaphysical Gesture*, Judah Stampfer notes that each 'iambic pentameter quatrain is rounded out, not with a couplet, but a triplet with an Alexandrine close a, b, a, b, c, c, c.' This division is not solely reflected in the rhyme scheme, but also in the verse. For example, the quatrain is used for revealing the poet's state of mind; whereas, the triplet permits him to ponder on that outlook. Besides, the first stanza methodically makes use of the assonance for reinforcing the term 'we', which is achieved by the long 'e' sound being repeated through different words. For instance, each of these terms have been taken from the first stanza: 'we', 'wean'd', 'countrey', 'childlishly', 'sleepers', 'fancies', 'bee', 'any', 'beauty', 'see', 'desir'd', 'dreame', 'thee'. It is evident that far from being a coincidence this is an incredible technique to lay further stress on the two lovers being united as one. In any case, Donne makes use of the assonance for the reverse influence in the final stanza. Rather than concentrating on the couple, the narrator concentrates on himself by the reinforcement of the term 'I'. This is achieved by the long 'i' sound being repeated. For instance, each of these terms can be seen in the third stanza: 'I', 'thine', 'mine', 'finde', 'declining', 'dyes', 'alike', 'die'. Undoubtedly, the long 'e' sound has been used in the third stanza, but it is the long 'i' sound that rules. This results in an evident contradiction to that which the narrator says, besides the musical nature of the poem. From a musical perspective, instead of being primarily focused on the union, the narrator seems to be increasingly concerned with himself.

The symbolic language that Donne uses coupled with the narrator's perspective and the tone, add beauty to the poem. Firstly, one can see the presence of sexual symbolism in the first paragraph. For instance, terms like 'wean'd' and 'suck'd' bring out breast symbols. Such weighty words even enable the identification of 'country pleasures' in the form of a metaphor for breasts. One more metaphorical example is the term 'beauty' in line 6 that in fact is a representation of the woman. One can even notice the presence of 'metaphysical conceits' in the poem. An instance is the semi-circular imagery that represents the lovers in the final paragraph. In the next paragraph, there is an instance of hyperbole where the narrator says 'makes one little room, an everywhere'. This is evidently exaggerated and is physically impossible as well. Paradox has also been used in the poem. As an instance, where the speaker says: 'true plain hearts doe in the faces rest'. Evidently, this phrase is paradoxical since it is impossible for hearts to be resting in faces.

One can also find an instance of metonymy in the final paragraph with the narrator stating: 'My face in thine eye, thine in mine appears'. The narrator here does not actually mean that his face literally appears in his lover's eye, but that she is aware of him. Again, one can see the presence of two allusions in the poem, one with the 'seven sleepers den', the other with the 'hemispheres'. Moreover, an excellent instance of imagery in the poem exists. One can find an appearance of this in the poem itself, and in the title *The Good Morrow*. Besides, representing the actual sunrise, it also depicts the birth of *The Good Morrow*. This not only represents the physical sunrise, but also symbolizes the birth of an awakened person. Besides, the speaker's perspective is from the first-person viewpoint. In spite of the presence of two persons in the poem, it is only the voice of the male narrator that is prominent. Lastly, the tone is that of casual intimacy. There are hints pertaining to the casual atmosphere of the poem.

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This is made evident by taking a glance at the rough language that the narrator uses, like: 'suck'd,' 'snorted' and 'got'. In spite of the roughness, the narrator is evidently infatuated with the women being addressed.

It is possible to interpret the phrase 'seven sleepers den', which is first brought in the poem, in several ways. This phrase may most directly be hinting at a 'Christian and Mohammedan legend of the seven youths of Ephesus who hid in a cave for 187 years so as to avoid pagan persecution during the dawn of Christianity'. Surprisingly, these young people, instead of dying, continued to sleep for the entire period. Therefore, the narrator may possibly be drawing a comparison between the time before they became aware about their love through the term the 'seven sleepers' by saying that they both 'snorted', or continued to sleep, in that which seemed to be a seemingly unending amount of time and between the time when they fully became aware about their love and confessed it to one another. In any case, besides line 4, no allusions exist to carry the comparison further. There is, however, another possibility. In his article, *'Plato in John Donne's, 'The Good Morrow'*, Christopher Nassar makes a proposal that this reference could be exactly referring to Plato's Cave Allegory. Book VII of *'The Republic'*, gives a description of an earth in which humanity has been held as a prisoner in a cave since the time that it was born. These 'prisoners' have been held in chains, which have been tied around their legs and neck. They can merely see the reflections on the wall caused by themselves and other objects that block the firelight. Therefore, all that the prisoners feel is real is actually all an illusion. They are committing a mistake of thinking about shadows as being 'shadows of shadows for reality'. The analogy goes on with the release of a prisoner and his ascension from the cave to the external world. It is here that he ultimately discovers God, the world's actual fact, as well as the illusionary character of the cave. Donne's narrator continues to draw comparison between his life before love with the imprisonment of Plato's prisoners. Typically, when comparisons are drawn against their present love, 'all past pleasures have been merely fancies, and the women he 'desir'd, and got' were merely a 'dream of this one woman'. Finally, on ascending from the cave, he realizes the supreme fact of his lover and no longer has the desire to go back to the lustful cave of the previous times.

The main objective of the exploration metaphors in the second stanza is to continue revealing that the narrator prefers his newly-built association instead of earthly and carnal things. The triplet of the second paragraph sees the narrator stating that:

Let sea-discoverers to new worlds have gone,

Let Maps to other, worlds on worlds have showne,

Let us possesse one world, each hath one, and is one.

This evident digressing from the topic, in fact, goes on to support the Platonic relationship of the first stanza. Firstly, we should keep in mind the fact that the worldly chasings of Elizabethan England happened to be very different as compared to the current times. Constantly exploring the world happened to be one of the main activities that largely interested the people. Despite its continuing for quite a period of time, it was actually in the 'Elizabethan-Jacobean era' when discovery 'saw its really great florescence'. Moreover, 'with the Thames, the most popular of local thoroughfares and with sailors scattered throughout the city, the average Londoner of Elizabeth's day could hardly help knowing something of ships and sea travel'. However, there were several of this period who had knowledge about the Americas; however, only some had actually gone there. Whatever know-how they had was insubstantial. This

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knowledge resulted in the Elizabethans possessing an unclear view of the New World. Thus, such 'new worlds' signify a kind of dream, with them desiring to follow these dreams being directly associated with the illusions of the cave. The narrator sees this famous pastime merely as something being used to pacify slaves. He believes that this is far from being an activity for a liberal person like himself. He does not anymore feel that he needs to be searching for a 'new world' as he claims to have already found it in his being united with his lover. 'In possessing one another, each has gained world enough'.

The semi-circular imagery in stanza three can be translated as something that is both acute in the spatial sense, and associated with a ridiculous Platonic perspective on the basis of mankind. Donne 'collapses his geographical metaphor into the tiny reflection of each lover's face in the other's eye'. Therefore, while he openly confesses his love for his beloved in paragraph two, the narrator also goes on to state that it is their eyes which contain their entire world of love. In any case, this perspective turns out to be very tough to be supported on seeing the lines that follow. This is due to Donne's narrator symbolically describing the pair as two different 'hemispheres'. What could also be possible here, could be the fact that these two 'hemispheres' in fact signify the eyes. In any case, as the narrator is describing the couple, what might have been more exact would have been the narrator mentioning the four couples instead of two. Moreover, the cardinal point imagery is unclear when this interpretation is being used. Moreover, the semi-circular imagery even bears allusions to an absurd speech that Aristophanes makes in Plato's Symposium.

In his speech, Aristophanes is seen to relate a humorous legend of how mankind originated. Typically, Aristophanes is seen to state that in the starting of time, human beings assumed the shape of a globe. Every 'individual' had four legs, four arms with a single head and a face on each side. According to the story, the Greek God Zeus as a punishment for annoying him made two divisions of every individual, thereby separating them into two different beings. However, in spite of being different human beings, they continued to be divine halves who unendingly sought to reunite as one body. This instinct which comes naturally of that of reuniting the halves is how Aristophanes explains love. Thus, Donne's narrator is under the belief that he has found his other half in his beloved, and together they form the original whole. Moreover, this interpretation clarifies the cardinal point metaphor. For instance, the narrator states: 'Where can we find two better hemispheres/Without sharp North, without declining West'. The narrator here states the absence of 'North' and 'West' in their new united spherical world. The association will be all but cold, or 'sharp', it will not diminish or be 'declining'. Rather, their relationship will be one which would be warm and filled with eternal love.

On the whole, the poem brings the poetic tools and learned allusions that Donne has so beautifully used, supporting the speaker. First of all, we carried out an analysis of the unique structure and musical elements in the poem. Then we went on to examine the way Donne has made use of the figurative language, perspective and tone for creating a narrator that readers would find easy to believe. Then, we looked closely at 'seven sleepers den' phrase, discovering that it has its roots in both Christian mythology and Platonic allegory. Then, we went on to gain a clearer comprehension of how Donne has used exploration metaphor in paragraph two. Then we examined the Platonic base for the semi-circular metaphor in paragraph three. Lastly, we investigated the poem from a holistic viewpoint and realized as to how each of these various elements

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had their own contribution to the entire message. Therefore, we can conclude by saying that Donne's *The Good Morrow* is a poem that effectively makes use of tools for maximizing the poetic capacity of the verse. It consists of intellectual references that go on to support the message of the speaker for his lover.'

Uncertainty

The poem seems to conclude on a note of some uncertainty: 'If … or ...' Perchance after all Donne cannot any longer keep up the vanity that nothing will come to change their love or encroach upon it.

3.2.3 *The Sun Rising*

Busy old fool, unruly sun,
Why dost thou thus,
Through windows, and through curtains call on us?
Must to thy motions lovers' seasons run?
Saucy pedantic wretch, go chide.
Late school boys and sour prentices,
Go tell court huntsmen that the king will ride,
Call country ants to harvest offices,
Love, all alike, no season knows nor clime,
Nor hours, days, months, which are the rags of time.
Thy beams, so reverend and strong
Why shouldst thou think?
I could eclipse and cloud them with a wink,
But that I would not lose her sight so long;
If her eyes have not blinded thine,
Look, and tomorrow late, tell me,
Whether both th' Indias of spice and mine
Be where thou leftst them, or lie here with me.
Ask for those kings whom thou saw'st yesterday,
And thou shalt hear, All here in one bed lay.
She's all states, and all princes, I,
Nothing else is.
Princes do but play us; compared to this,
All honor's mimic, all wealth alchemy.
Thou, sun, art half as happy as we,
In that the world's contracted thus.
Thine age asks ease, and since thy duties be
To warm the world, that's done in warming us.
Shine here to us, and thou art everywhere;
This bed thy center is, these walls, thy sphere.

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The Sun Rising is a witty and amusing poem. It is light verse, but it is also extremely serious. It is, in fact, a good example of the fact that seriousness is different from solemnity and may be accompanied with a good deal of frivolity. This poem also illustrates Donne's revolt against the artificiality and absurdity of the fashionable love poetry of courtly chivalry in which the conceit of the beloved's eyes being regarded as brighter than the sun had long become a tedious formula. Donne laughs at the hyperboles or the fantastic exaggerations of the courtly poetry by pretending to accept them. He piles hyperbole on hyperbole and praises his mistress in the most extravagant manner, but the poem is not intended to be merely literary satire. It is a genuine and sincere expression of the poet's deep sense of the beauty and perfection of his loved one. Its final objective is to express the poet's feeling of happiness and completeness in the possession of his mistress. She is so all-perfect, all-lovely, all-complete that she, and she alone, justifies the fantastic hyperboles of courtly poetry.

The poet treats the sun familiarly, colloquially, and irreverently. It is one of the paradoxes of the poem that the poet uses the adjective 'unruly' for the sun when the sun is really the standard of order, regulation, and law.

Busy old fool, unruly sun, Why dost thou thus,

Through windows, and through curtains call on us?

But order and rule in the sphere of Nature threaten the pleasure of love. So the poet rails against the sun. Love transcends time, and so the poet-lover feels a scorn for the sun which is an index of passing time. The tones of the poem, and the changes and developments of the tone, are of great importance. The poem begins with a rhetorical arrogant address to the sun. Like many of Donne's poems, this one begins abruptly, with a sharp, surprising colloquial exclamation: 'Busy old fool, unruly Sun.' The poet expresses his contempt for the sun by addressing it as "saucy pedantic wretch". The reason for this is that the poet, in his joy at his complete possession of his mistress, feels that he possesses, rules, and controls the whole world, and therefore is superior to the sun itself.

The sun, says the poet, may be a source of fear to schoolboys who get late for school, or apprentices who get late for work, or court-huntsmen who get late in reporting to the king whom they have to accompany on a hunting expedition, or country ants who must get busy in collecting grains. But the sun cannot scare lovers because the lovers are not to be governed by the artificial divisions of time. The lovers are indifferent to the rising of the sun because they can go on making love even after the sun has arisen. The lover, further, claims that he can eclipse and darken the sun merely with a wink. The lover has only to close his eyes, and the sunlight exists no more for him and the beloved's eyes are so bright that their light can dazzle the sun.

I could eclipse and cloud them with a wink,

But that I would not lose her sight so long;

Normally we are dazzled by the sun's brightness, but here the situation is reversed. In the second stanza the poet continues his boastful tone. The thought of his present good fortune makes him feel greater than the world-dominating sun. While expressing this feeling he also manages to pay exquisite compliments to his mistress. The lover asks the sun to go and find out whether the East Indies and the West Indies are still situated at their original location or they have moved from there to lie with him in his bed.

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Whether both th' Indias of spice and mine

Be where thou leftst them, or lie here with me.

Ask for those kings whom thou saw'st yesterday,

And thou shalt hear, All here in one bed lay.

The idea is that the beloved who lies in the bed is a combination of both the East and the West Indies. The East Indies were known for their fragrant spices, and the West Indies for their diamond mines. The beloved is fragrant and sweet-smelling like the spices of the East Indies, and she has the lustre and glitter of the diamonds of the West Indies. The mistress sums up in herself all the riches and perfumes of the East and the West. She is the glory of the whole world. Also, the setting of the scene, only implied in the first stanza, is now made more specific.

In the final stanza, the poet not only exalts his mistress but himself:

'She's all states, and all princes I'.

In other words, she is the whole world and he the supreme ruler of the world. Here is an extravagant conceit, indeed. His tone in speaking to the sun now softens instead of harsh. Let the sun warm the lovers and it will truly be warming the whole world because the lovers are a microcosm of the world. The poet claims that, with a wink of his eyes, he can eclipse and cloud the sun. The beloved who lies in the bed with him is a combination of both the Indies; of spice and mine. She thus represents both the East and the West Indies because of her sweet fragrance and her glitter. As for himself he represents all the kings of the world. The beloved is all the kingdoms of the world, and the poet is all the monarch of the world. If the sun shines on the lover's bed-room only, and does not travel to other places, it will still be warming the whole world because their bed-room is a microcosm of the whole world. These are all far-fetched and fantastic ideas.

The poet and his mistress symbolize the whole world and all its rulers. Those who claim to be the rulers of the world are in fact, merely imitating the lovers. Likewise all honour in the world is a shadow of the true honour which belongs to these lovers. All the wealth in the world is, too, an imitation of the wealth which the lovers represent. In other words, these lovers are the true rulers of the world; they are all the honour, and all the wealth of the world, and they are the whole world too. Nothing else exists.

Shine here to us, and thou art everywhere;

This bed thy center is, these walls, thy sphere.

What distinguishes Donne's love-poetry is not merely its seriousness but its single mindedness. Everything except their love for one another is shadowy and unsubstantial: everything else exists for him only in so far as it can be related to this, can be made to illustrate this, to throw light upon this. He does not use this experience as a mere starting-point, as a means for investigating and interpreting other experiences: all other experiences, all other universes of discourse, all his ingenious analogies, all his so-called metaphysics, are valuable to him only in so far as they help him to feel and comprehend more clearly and more intensely the essentialness of this experience.

Check Your Progress

1. What does the title The Good Morrow represent?
2. What is the structure of the poem The Good Morrow?
3. How does the poem The Good Morrow conclude?
4. What are the different interpretations of the phrase 'seven sleepers den.'?
5. How does the poet treat the 'Sun' in the poem The Sun Rising?

ACTIVITY

Compare *The Sun Rising* with Marvell's *To His Coy Mistress*.

DID YOU KNOW

John Donne is known as the father of metaphysical poetry.

3.3 *PARADISE LOST*

The period of 1625 to 1660 is generally known as the age of Milton in English literary history. This period marks the end of the Renaissance. It is remarkable for the growth of Reformation and Puritanism. It was an age of political and religious strife and civil war. Mrs. Una Former refers to the age of Milton as an age of uncertainty, misgiving, depression, anxiety, frustration, pessimism and inner gloom, and in all these respects a sharp contract to the glorious and exuberant age of Elizabeth when the nation marched ahead in achievements and zest and confidence. Where on one hand the age of Shakespeare lay stress on materialism and power, knowledge and riches, there on the other hand, the age of Milton blended the Renaissance and reformation periods. London still had eminent men of letters, and the court continued to patronize art and learning. But the stress and the strain caused by the civil ultimately led to a decline in literature and later on in social and moral values.

Fig. 3.2 John Milton

The entire age of Milton is dominated by the civil war. The early years were marked by quarrel and alarms which led up to actual hostilities in 1642; the middle of the period saw occasional fighting that lasted till the execution of Charles-I in 1649; and the last portion covers the establishment of the commonwealth, the rise and disappearance of Cromwell (1653-58), the confusion following upon his death, and the final restoration of monarchy in 1660.

During this period the decline from the high Elizabethan standard is apparent in several ways. The output of poetry is much smaller, and the fashion is toward shorter poems, the strikingly dignified poetical intensity of the previous age dies. The new poetry plays with fancy and passion and wisdom, blending thought and passion together, bringing to mind far-fetched images, from various ideas. In prose, there is a matured sadness that one is generally associates with advancing years.

The poetry of the period is largely lyrical, and Donne and Ben Jonson are the two most outstanding and original lyricists of the age. Milton is in a class by himself. Nevertheless, there is a marked decay in the exulted poetical fervour of the previous age. There is a marked increase in prose activity. Milton attempted epics too, and it is as an epic poet that he is more widely known than anything else.

John Milton was born on December 9, 1608, in London. He was the second child of John and Sara. John Milton Sr, was a legal secretary and also a composer of church music which was how Milton developed his lifelong love of music. The family's financial prosperity made it possible for Milton to be taught classical languages, first privately home, and then at St. Paul's School from age twelve, in 1620.

In the spring of 1642, Milton married Mary Powell, who was seventeen years younger to him. Even though it was not a happy marriage, Milton had three children with Mary. In February 1652 Milton lost his eyesight and later that year in May he lost his wife as well.

Milton married Katherine Woodcock, but this happiness was short-lived also. Milton's daughter Katherine was born in late 1657, but by early 1658, both mother and daughter had passed away.

In 1663, Milton was married again, to Elizabeth Minshull. It was also the year he finished his life's work, the epic, *Paradise Lost*. It is considered among the greatest works ever to be written in English, the feat is all the more remarkable as it was written inspite of Milton's blindness — he would compose verse upon verse at night in his head and then dictate them from memory to his aides in the morning.

Milton died peacefully of gout in November, 1674.

3.3.1 Literary and Socio-Cultural Background of the Poem

It was a period of great social changes. There were two divergent trends – the Puritanical trend emphasizing purity of conduct, religious earnestness and moral virtues and the royalists who were used to immoral living. The puritans wanted to make men honest and to make them free. The Royalists and country people were victims of various vices; they wanted a spell of free sex and license, a free display of immorality. Whereas from 1642 to 1649 Puritanism saw its heyday, the Restoration profligacy began and held sway after 1660.

In the broadest sense Puritanism may be regarded as the Renaissance of the moral sense of man. The Greco-Roman Renaissance of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries was largely Pagan and sensuous. It did not touch the moral nature of man; it did nothing for his religious, political and social emancipation. The puritan movement was the greatest movement for moral and political reform. Its aims were: i. Religious liberty, i.e., that men should be free to worship according to their conscience

(i) They should enjoy full civil liberty

(ii) Church reform

The factors responsible for the rise of Puritanism were political as well as social, namely the immorality of the king and the court, internal political dissensions, loss of faith, etc.

Milton's great spic *Paradise Lost* is the product of the Reformation and Renaissance. Here he employs the art and learning of the Renaissance in the service of those religious and moral truths which had now become the dominant factors in his life. The theme of *Paradise Lost* is based on the Bible, Milton rejects the subjects of King Arthur and his Round table as the subject of the Fall of Man as told in the Bible. His aim in writing the epic is to stress on outside influences, and justify the ways of God to Men. The theme of the epic is Biblical and is directly traceable to the puritan element in Milton. But the treatment of the Biblical theme of Puritanism is thoroughly classical.

3.3.2 Detailed Summary

(a) Conversation between Satan and Beelzebub

Milton begins his great epic with an invocation to the heavenly *Muse*. In this respect he follows the practice of Homer, the Father of epic poetry who started his epics in this manner. The heavenly Muse of Milton may be considered as a personification of divine inspiration. He seeks the help of the Muse because he is going to sing about a great subject dealing with the disobedience of Adam and Eve who ate the fruit of the forbidden tree of knowledge of good and evil and were therefore turned out of Paradise, their long tale of suffering until they were restored to their original bliss by the sacrifice of Christ. It was this heavenly Muse which on the mountain of Sinai and Horeb who gave inspiration to Moses, the shepherd, who was called by God to deliver Israel from the domination of the Egyptians. Under her inspiration, Moses taught the Israelites who were God's chosen people how the earth rose out of chaos which prevailed everywhere before the creation of the world. Milton appeals to the same heavenly Muse who, according to some authorities, lives on the Sinai Mountain on which Jerusalem was built, or near the Siloa's stream which flows past the temple of Jerusalem, where the oracle of God was heard.

Milton requests the Muse to bestow on him the power to sing of a great subject which has never been attempted before with unparallel *sublimity*. Milton's idea is to write his poetry in a far superior manner than was ever attempted by the ancient Greeks. He further appeals to God himself, who gives preference to those men whose hearts are pure and honest, to guide and instruct him in his great undertaking. God had always been present even when the whole earth was flooded, and it was He who sat like a dove on the vast Abyss and from the void produced the vegetable world, the birds and animals, the heavenly bodies, and finally the man. Milton appeals to God to drive away his ignorance and weakness and raise him to magnificent heights, so that he may be able to deal adequately with a great subject and thereby prove the justice of the ways of God on this earth.

Milton seeks to describe the cause of the fall of Adam and Eve from Paradise where they were living so comfortably and happily in the company of God. He goes on to describe the occasion on which they disobeyed the will of God and were punished. They were not to be blamed because it was Satan who tempted them to disobey God. So he first describes Satan who along with the rebel angels had been thrown out of heaven because he fought against God in order to establish his equality with him. The Almighty God hurled him headlong from the heavenly sky down to the bottomless hell. He was punished to live there in chains and in a burning fire because he defied and challenged the authority of God.

(b) The Important Rebel Angels

'Now, O muse, please give the names of these leaders of rebel angels who were roused from their slumber at the call of their commander and who came out from the crowd and presented themselves one by one.'

The chiefs of these rebel angles, who from the bottom of hell roamed about to seek their prey on earth and who got their temples built near the temple of God and corrupted the sacred altars and ceremonies by many impure things and who obstructed the light of God by their darkness, were the following :

The first of them was Moloch, the horrible, whose altar was covered with the blood of human sacrifice and tears of the parents whose children were sacrificed in this manner in the midst of the deafening noise of drums and tumbrels. He was worshipped especially by the Animoniles. It was he who by deceit persuaded Solomon to build a temple in his honour opposite to the temple of God. He also got a grove of trees grown on a hill, but it looked like Hell.

The next god was Chemes whose other name was Peor. It was he who enticed the people of Israel on their march from the Nile to perform the ceremonies, which brought great sufferings upon them. He enlarged his influence on many other people, who were filled with lust and hate for which they were ultimately sent to Hell.

The next two chiefs were Baalim and Ashtaroth, who could change to whichever sex they liked. Their bodies had no bones and flesh so they could change themselves to any shape and perform their wicked deeds. Under their influence the people of Israel gave up their real gods and started worshipping them. The result was that they were defeated in battle by their enemies.

The next chief was Astoreth who had crescent horns and who called by Phoenicians, Astrate, the queen of heaven. The Sidionian virgins used to worship her bright image at night by the moon with their vows and songs. Her temple was built on an unholy mount in Sinai and she was worshipped by the king, who was deceived by her and thus engaged himself in the worship of foul idols.

The next chief was Thammuz in whose honor the Syrian damsels used to sing amorous songs during the summer. From the wound which was inflicted on him by his enemies there ran the smooth river Adonis which was full of blood. The worship of this god filled the people with lustful passions.

The next chief was Dagon who was a sea-monster. His upper half was man and the lower half fish. His huge image was broken in the presence of his own worshippers. A tall temple was built in Azotus in his honour and it was dreaded by people living in the neighboring state like Palestine.

His temple was situated opposite the temple of God. He made the Scottish conqueror Ahaz destroy the temples of God in Syria and start the worship of corrupt gods.

After these there came a group of gods, Osris, Isis and Orus, and their followers. By their monstrous shapes and magic they persuaded the Egyptian priests to worship these brutish forms rather than the gods in human shape. The people of Israel also followed their example. Jeroboam, who rebelled against the son of Solomon and made himself king over the greater part of Palestine, made two golden calves and so doubted the sin of Israelites in Oreb, who only made one calf. Jehovah, while marching through Egypt, destroyed with one stroke all the gods who had the shape of animals.

The last chief was Beliel, who was the most wicked of them all. He loved vice for itself. No temple or altar was built in his honour yet whenever any priest in the temple of god turned an atheist, he began to worship him right there. Wherever in courts, palaces and prosperous cities, there where riots and bloodshed, he was there and during the night his proud and wanton sons used to wander at night and they engaged themselves in all sorts of wicked deeds.

These were the important chiefs of the rebel angels. To describe the rest would take a long time though there were some who were famous and therefore worthy of description. They were especially the gods worshipped by the Greeks and were the descendants of Javan. Titan was the most important of them, though his power was usurped by Satan, who ultimately was defeated by Jone. These gods and their descendants reigned in Greece but they also established their religion up to Great Britain and Ireland.

(c) Satan Motivates his Followers

All these chiefs appeared there in a crowd but from their looks it was clear that they were depressed and disappointed. There were some signs of joy in them because they found that their leader was not completely disappointed, though on his face they saw some deigns of doubt. Satan, however, soon recovered his pride and in his speech full of high sounding words restored courage in them and removed their fears. Then in the midst of warlike sounds he held up his mighty flag. Azazel, a tall rebel angel, at once unfurled that imperial flag which was shining like a meteor in the sky. It was studded with gems and golden trophies. In the meanwhile bugles were blown producing martial songs at which all the rebel angels made such noise that it shook Hell and added to the chaos and darkness which prevailed there. Suddenly there flew into the air ten thousand banners and along with them a large number of spears, helmets and shields. They all marched in tune with the music produced by flutes as do armies marching towards the battlefield. The music drove away fear, sorrow and pain from the minds of the rebel angels and filled them with courage.

In this manner, united and of one mind they marched in silence over the burnt soil. They eagerly waited for the command of their mighty leader, who surveyed the whole army with his experienced eye and counted their number. His large following filled his heart with pride and he felt very strong because never even in the great battles of the world had such a huge army gathered. The army of the rebel angels was far superior to any army of men and it was fully disciplined and ready to obey the command of their leader who stood among them as prominent as a tower. He still possessed his original brightness, though it had become a little masked like the Sun under the eclipse. In spite of this he was shining more brightly than the others. His face bore the marks of wounds which he had received in the battle in heaven. His cheeks had lost their colour but under his brows there were signs of undefeatable courage and great pride waiting for revenge. There was cruelty in his eyes and they were full of sorrow and anger at the sad condition of his followers who were condemned along with him to suffer eternal pain in hell. He realized that on account of his revolt millions of rebel angels were punished in this manner, but in spite of their heavy loss they stood faithful to him. Encouraged by this he prepared to speak to them and all his followers came closer to listen to him with full attention. Satan tried three times to speak but he burst into tears. At last with deep sighs he commenced his speech.

When Satan spoke thus, millions of shining swords were drawn out by the rebel angels confirming their commitment. By the sound of their shields they produced a terrible noise of war by which they sent a challenge towards Heaven.

Nearby there was a hill from the top of which fire and smoke was coming out. The rest of it had a glossy surface which indicated that within it there was metallic ore. Towards this a large number of rebel angels flew with speed like some pioneers, who go ahead to throw down a huge wall with their spades and axes. They were led by Mammon, who, of all those spirits that fell from Heaven, could not stand erect. Even in Heaven his eyes were bent downwards because he admired more the riches and gold on the floor of Heaven rather than to enjoy the heavenly vision. It was he who in course of time taught man to dig into the interior of earth for search of gold. His followers soon made a big hole into the hill and brought out gold from it. No one should admire the gold coming out of Hell because it should have better remained undiscovered as the precious metal has proved to be a curse for mankind. Some feel proud of the achievements of man like the great buildings of Babylon and the Pyramids built by Egyptian kings, which ultimately were destroyed in no time, though they were raised with great difficulty. The work of those rebel angels was far superior to that of men because a second group of them with great skill melted the solid ore in the cells made in ground beneath which flowed liquid fire. They separated gold and removed the scum, which rose on the surface. A third group of them with great haste made in the ground a mould of various patterns into each of which molten gold was carried by a strange method as in an organ one puff of wind is transmitted to the various pipes of the organ. Very soon they raised a huge building like a Greek temple with pillars overlaid with golden sculpture. Such a beautiful piece of architecture has never been found anywhere in the world. It looked very majestic and was very spacious. From its roofs many starry lamps which were hanging there as by magic emitted light as it comes from the sky. The rebel angels entered that building and admired the work of Mammon, the great architect, who had built many beautiful buildings in heaven as well. Mammon has been worshipped in various countries of the world and there are many stories currently about his fall from Heaven and so forth. In fact he along with his followers had been sent earlier to Hell than the rebel angels in order to construct buildings there.

3.3.3 Critical Appreciation of the Poem

(a) Origin and History

Aubrey states that *Paradise Lost* was begun in about 1658. Mason believes that the first two books might have been written before the Restoration. The poem was finished in 1663 or 1665. It was first published in 1661 in ten Books. In the second edition of the poem in 1674, Milton divided Books VII and X into two each, thereby making it an epic of twelve books in the manner of Virgil's epic, *Aeneid*.

Although Milton started writing this poem when he was nearly fifty, yet the imaginative conception of the intended epic was present in his mind from an early age. In 1640-41, he had about a hundred possible subjects, Biblical and historical. Earlier he also thought favourably of the Arthurian romances, but he abandoned romances in favour of the Biblical subject of Man's fall.

(b) Formative Influences

About the influences which shaped this epic, Verity writes, 'We must indeed recognize in *Paradise Lost*, the meeting point of the Renaissance and Reformation periods and the impress of four great influences : the Bible, the Classics, the Italian poets, and English literature. Milton possessed a knowledge of the Bible, such as only a few have had.' There are hundreds of allusions to it; the words of the Scriptures underlie some part of the text of every page of *Paradise Lost*; and apart from verbal reminiscences there is much of the spirit that pervades that noblest achievement of the English tongue. Scarcely less powerful was the influence of the classics. Milton's allusiveness extends over the whole empire of classical humanity and letters, and to the scholar his work is full of the exquisite charm of endless reference to the noblest things that the ancients have thought and said. That he was deeply versed in Italian poetry the labours of his early editors have abundantly proved : and their comparative studies are confirmed by the frequent mention of Dante, Petrarch, Tasso, Ariosto and others, in his prose works and correspondence. In English literature I imagine that he had read everything worth reading.'

(c) Theme and Subject Matter

The theme of *Paradise Lost* is Man's fall, his redemption through Christ, and the purpose is to justify the ways of God to Man. The epic opens with an account of the fallen angels - Satan and his followers in Hell. The account of the war in Heaven, which resulted in that fall, is given later on along with the account of the Creation of the world. Satan, though defeated, has not lost hope. He encourages his followers; they collect together in Pandemonium to hold a conference to decide upon their future course of action. After much discussion it is decided that they would have their revenge upon God by corrupting the newly created Man. So Satan undertakes a journey to the new world through Chaos, reaches the Earth and the Garden of Eden. He disguises as a serpent, and tempts Eve to taste the fruit of the forbidden tree. He succeeds in seducing Eve, and Adam, despite the warning of God's angel Raphael, tastes the tree of knowledge. He thus commits the Sin of Disobedience. The result is divine punishment. Consequently, there is the loss of Paradise and the Fall of Man. Suffering becomes the lot of Man as a result of this original sin. Satan too is punished in as much as his followers are transformed into hissing serpents.

Milton summarizes the theme and the story of the epic in the opening lines:

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

(d) A Classical Epic

Paradise Lost is a classical epic. It has all the common features of the epics of Homer and Virgil. Though it is based upon Christian theology, its frame work is classical. Its design is like that of Homer's *Illiad* and Virgil's *Aeneid*. It is an unbiased narrative poem having the unity of theme and treatment; it has a historical theme, that is, the history of human race. Its characters are super-human — First Man and Woman,

God, Satan and Angels. It is divided into twelve Books; its subject and manner are lofty and grand. The poem begins with an invocation to the Muse. Its similes are epical. It is full of descriptions of the events like other classical epics. There is in this epic an interest in the supernatural. However, the paucity of human actors, and consequent lack of human interest is the basic weakness of this epic.

(e) Characterization

Broadly speaking there are four groups of characters in *Paradise Lost* :

(i) God His Son and His Angels, including Raphael, Michael, Gabriel and Abidel

(ii) Fallen Angels, Satan and his followers, including Beelzebub, Moloch, Belial, Chemon, etc.

(iii) Allegorical or abstract personages, Sin and Death

(iv) Human characters, Adam and Eve

Milton seems to adopt the view of some tragic poets that even the Gods are subject to the decree of Destiny. Satan in his pride exalts himself and the other angels to the rank of God. Although the epic lacks human interest (as Dr. Johnson says), yet Milton has tried to make his God too human. 'The Glory of God', said Solomon, 'is to conceal a thing', 'but the glory of Milton's God is to explain a thing' (Raleigh). God in *Paradise Lost* is too garrulous; he is the tyrant of Heaven whose laws are arbitrary and occasional. The Son of God, Christ of Messiah, as Tillyard points out, represents 'heroic energy', which is devoted to good ends and controlled by reason. While all the other angels keep quiet when God asks them to atone for the sin of Adam, it is the Son who takes it upon himself to suffer for Man and thus redeem him. He is the very embodiment of mercy, reason and energy. The angels are human with additional powers. The fallen angels can contract or expand at will. All of them are imperishable, immortal, and have greater powers of a sixth sense.

As pointed out by Raleigh, 'the epic value of *Paradise Lost* is centered in the character and achievements of Satan. 'Just as the *Iliad* exists for Achilles, and the *Odyssey* for Odysseus, *Paradise Lost* exists for Satan (Abercrombie).' Milton did partly ally himself with Satan.' (Tillyard). Milton's Satan has unending courage and heroism. He never wants to submit. He believes, it is better to rule in hell than to serve in Heaven. He is a lover of liberty. He has the true qualities of leadership. He dominates Books I and II, but after that there is progressive degradation in his character. By his own will he becomes a serpent. Having been defeated, he takes his revenge upon human beings who have done him no harm, only to annoy the enemy whom he cannot directly attack. This brings him as a spy into the universe. 'From hero to General, General to politician, from politician to secret service agent, and thence to a thing that peers in at bedroom or bathroom windows, and thence to a toad, and finally to a snake—such is the progress of Satan' .

Sin and Death are personified abstractions or allegorical personages. Sin is the daughter of Satan; she comes out of his head fully formed. The lower part of her body is partly serpentine. Satan falls in love with Sin, and Death is the Child of this monstrous marriage. Death, in his own turn, commits rape on his mother Sin and the result is a brood of innumerable dogs. These dogs tear the entails of their mother. None can escape the fatal dart of Death. That is why during the fight between father and son, Satan and Death, Sin intervenes to prevent the fight. Both Sin and Death are guardians of the gates of Hell. None can enter or leave Hell without their permission.

Adam and Eve, the grandparents of Man, are the only human figures in the epic. Adam has a heroic build and such majesty and grandeur that even Satan is afraid of approaching him. They have absolute freedom of action, except the one restraint, and yet they transgress. In the case of Eve the fall results from her 'frivolity of mind', in her inability to foresee the consequences of her action, her vanity, pride, and susceptibility to flattery. In the case of Adam, the fall results from his instinct of gregariousness; he cannot live alone without the company of Eve's and so commits the folly of yielding to Eve's persuasions, though he knows fully well the enormity of her, and his own, transgression. After the fall, they are swayed by passion. They quarrel with each other and grow greedy and sensual. At one time, Adam exclaims:

'If such pleasure be
In things to us forbidden, it might be wished,
For this one Tree had been forbidden ten.'

(f) Cosmology

In portraying the physical action of *Paradise Lost* against the background of Heaven, Hell and Earth, Milton had to visualize the structure of the universe. For imaginative purposes he had to choose one of the several astronomical systems which were its current in his own day. He inevitably adopted the Ptolemaic, with the Earth fixed at the centre and the heavenly bodies revolving about it, because it was firmly established in poetic and theological tradition and was better adapted to imaginative representation. He presents Hell and Heaven purely on the lines of the Bible. Heaven is placed on top and higher than this is the Holy Mount where God, the Father, and God the Son live under the wings of the Holy Ghost guarded and attended to by Cherubim and Seraphim. The universe and heavens are joined by the golden ladder, yet separated by the river of Hades. In the universe is situated Paradise. Below the universe is Hell, surrounded by chaos. The gates of Hell are guarded by Sin and Death.

Eden is a district of Mesopotamia, and the garden, called Paradise, is situated in the east of Eden. It is a raised table-land, surrounded on all sides by high ride of hill, thickly wooded and impenetrable. Its single gate, hewn out of rock of alabaster, faces eastward, and is accessible only by a pass leading up from the plains with craggy cliffs jutting out. Through Eden runs a river which passes by a tunnel under Paradise, and, rising through the porous earth, waters the Garden with springs. It was through this underground passage that Satan entered the Garden of Eden.

(g) Language and Style

The language of *Paradise Lost* is Latinized. It's characterized by frequent images and antique names. His language is known for its to the point shortness. His sentences are full of substance and weight. He uses old English words or words in their original Latin sense. Thus the quaint expression 'sounding alchemy' is used for 'trumpets of brass', 'landscape', 'highth' for 'height', and 'strucken' for 'striken'. In his sentences, says Raleigh, 'You cannot guess the adjective from the substantive, nor the end of the phrase from its beginning. He is much given to inverting the natural English order of epithet and noun, that he may gain a greater emphasis for the epithet.'

Mark Pattison has rightly remarked that an enjoyment of Milton's poetry is the ultimate reward of consummate scholarship. Milton was a very learned poet, and his learning is strewn all over *Paradise Lost*. Allusions to classical literature and mythology,

to Biblical mythology, and to the contemporary literatures of Europe, more especially of Italy, are abundant and beautify stumbling blocks in the way of the readers. Latin constructions, use of words in their original Latin sense, and *epigrammatic* terseness are other sources of difficulty. That is why the real beauty and grandeur of the epic can be enjoyed only after a number of readings. The Homeric or epic similes are more frequent in *Paradise Lost* than even in Homer and Virgil; they uplift and develop the imagination, thrill the senses with their range and variety and are a source of great aesthetic pleasure. Coupled with the sublimity and grandeur of diction, there is sonorous verbal music in the work of Milton. Its music is the resounding music of the mighty organ of a Cathedral.

(h) Versification

'The meter of *Paradise Lost* is blank verse, of five accents. This meter was first used by Surrey in his translation of Virgil with nothing to vary it. This meter, in a long poem such as *Paradise Lost*, would become intolerably monotonous. As variations, Milton uses:

(i) Weak endings, i.e. an additional syllable at the end of a line.

(ii) The trochee instead of the regular iambus. Milton never could tolerate the way of making the end of each sentence coincide with the end of a line. He took care that in his poem, 'the sense should be variously drawn out from one verse to another.' But he carries this principle to excess, and thus it is impossible sometimes, in hearing the poem read, to determine where some of his lines begin or end. In all verses, there is naturally a pause at the end of line. This pause, therefore, (1) ought not to fall in middle of a word; (2) should not separate a qualifying word from the word it qualifies; (3) accent an otherwise unaccented syllable.

Into these faculties, though rarely, Milton falls in his too vehement desire for variety. His caesura (the line pause), however, he manages with consummate skill. As a rule, it falls at the end of the third foot. Its range through the ten syllables of a line gives great beauty, variety and force to Milton's verse. Milton demanded for 'true musical delight,' not only that the sense should be variously drawn out from one verse to another, but also, 'apt numbers and fit quantities of syllables' (Macmillan). 'Perhaps no man ever paid the same attention to the quality of his rhythm as Milton.' (Dr. Guest). What other poets failed, Milton succeeded by the aid of science and art. He studied the aptness of his numbers, and diligently tutored an ear which nature had gifted with the most delicate, sensibility. 'In the flow of his rhythm, in the quality of letter sounds, in the disposition of his pauses, his verse almost ever fits the subject and so insensibly does poetry lend with this—the last beauty of exquisite versification—that the reader may sometimes doubt whether it be the thought itself, or merely the happiness of its expression, which is the source of a gratification so deeply felt' (Dr. Guest).

(i) Defects and Beauties of the Poem

Why has *Paradise Lost* lived so long? It is not the story, nobly though that illustrates the eternal antagonism of righteousness and wrong, and the overthrow of evil; nor the construction, though this is sufficiently architectonic; nor the learning, though that is vast; nor the characterization, for which there is little scope, but the incomparable

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elevation of the style, 'the shaping spirit of Imagination,, and 'the sheer majesty of the music'. '*Paradise Lost* is in several ways one of the most wonderful of the works of men.'

As regards defects Milton has been charged of freely employing not only the usages of Pagan writers (such as the invocations of the Muse) but also the fiction of Pagan mythology, thus blending the unreal with the real, and so destroying credibility. Both the Ptolemaic and the Copernican systems find place in the poem. Milton's geography of the world is as bad as Herodotus. The notes of time are not appropriate. The son is spoken of in a way which is neither, the orthodox belief of the Athanasian Creed, nor the heterodox teaching of Arian. There is a constant confusion of material and spiritual in the acts ascribed to the Angels.

3.3.4 Important Passages for Explanation

OF Mans First Disobedience, and the Fruit
Of that Forbidden Tree, whose mortal tast
Brought Death into the World, and all our woe,
With loss of Eden, till one greater Man
Restore us, and regain the blissful Seat, [5]
Sing Heav'nly Muse, that on the secret top
Of Oreb, or of Sinai, didst inspire
That Shepherd, who first taught the chosen Seed,
In the Beginning how the Heav'ns and Earth
Rose out of Chaos: Or if Sion Hill [10]
Delight thee more, and Siloa's Brook that flow'd
Fast by the Oracle of God; I thence
Invoke thy aid to my adventrous Song,
That with no middle flight intends to soar
Above th' Aonian Mount, while it pursues [15]
Things unattempted yet in Prose or Rhime.
And chiefly Thou O Spirit, that dost prefer
Before all Temples th' upright heart and pure,
Instruct me, for Thou know'st; Thou from the first
Wast present, and with mighty wings outspread [20]
Dove-like satst brooding on the vast Abyss
And mad'st it pregnant: What in me is dark
Illumin, what is low raise and support;
That to the highth of this great Argument
I may assert Eternal Providence, [25]
And justifie the wayes of God to men.
Say first, for Heav'n hides nothing from thy view

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Nor the deep Tract of Hell, say first what cause
Mov'd our Grand Parents in that happy State,
Favour'd of Heav'n so highly, to fall off [30]
From thir Creator, and transgress his Will
For one restraint, Lords of the World besides?
Who first seduc'd them to that foul revolt?
Th' infernal Serpent; he it was, whose guile
Stird up with Envy and Revenge, deceiv'd [35]
The Mother of Mankind, what time his Pride
Had cast him out from Heav'n, with all his Host
Of Rebel Angels, by whose aid aspiring
To set himself in Glory above his Peers,
He trusted to have equal'd the most High, [40]
If he oppos'd; and with ambitious aim
Against the Throne and Monarchy of God
Rais'd impious War in Heav'n and Battel proud
With vain attempt. Him the Almighty Power
Hurld headlong flaming from th' Ethereal Skie [45]
With hideous ruine and combustion down
To bottomless perdition, there to dwell
In Adamantine Chains and penal Fire,
Who durst defie th' Omnipotent to Arms.
Nine times the Space that measures Day and Night [50]
To mortal men, he with his horrid crew
Lay vanquisht, rowling in the fiery Gulfe
Confounded though immortal: But his doom
Reserv'd him to more wrath; for now the thought
Both of lost happiness and lasting pain [55]
Torments him; round he throws his baleful eyes
That witness'd huge affliction and dismay
Mixt with obdurate pride and stedfast hate:
At once as far as Angels kenn he views
The dismal Situation waste and wilde, [60]
A Dungeon horrible, on all sides round
As one great Furnace flam'd, yet from those flames
No light, but rather darkness visible
Serv'd onely to discover sights of woe,

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Regions of sorrow, doleful shades, where peace [65]
And rest can never dwell, hope never comes
That comes to all; but torture without end
Still urges, and a fiery Deluge, fed
With ever-burning Sulphur unconsum'd:
Such place Eternal Justice had prepar'd [70]
For those rebellious; here thir Prison ordain'd
In utter darkness, and thir portion set
As far remov'd from God and light of Heav'n
As from the Center thrice to th'utmost Pole.
O how unlike the place from whence they fell! [75]
There the companions of his fall, o'rewhelm'd
With Floods and Whirlwinds of tempestuous fire,
He soon discerns, and weltring by his side
One next himself in power, and next in crime,
Long after known in Palestine, and nam'd [80]
Beelzebub. To whom th'Arch-Enemy,
And thence in Heav'n call'd Satan, with bold words
Breaking the horrid silence thus began.
If thou beest he; But O how fall'n! how chang'd
From him, who in the happy Realms of Light [85]
Cloth'd with transcendent brightness didst out-shine
Myriads though bright: If he Whom mutual league,
United thoughts and counsels, equal hope
And hazard in the Glorious Enterprize,
Joynd with me once, now misery hath joynd [90]
In equal ruin: into what Pit thou seest
From what highth fall'n, so much the stronger prov'd
He with his Thunder: and till then who knew
The force of those dire Arms? yet not for those,
Nor what the Potent Victor in his rage [95]
Can else inflict, do I repent or change,
Though chang'd in outward lustre; that fixt mind
And high disdain, from sence of injur'd merit,
That with the mightiest rais'd me to contend,
And to the fierce contention brought along [100]
Innumerable force of Spirits arm'd

That durst dislike his reign, and me preferring,
His utmost power with adverse power oppos'd
In dubious Battel on the Plains of Heav'n,
And shook his throne. What though the field be lost? [105]
All is not lost; the unconquerable Will,
And study of revenge, immortal hate,
And courage never to submit or yield:
And what is else not to be overcome?
That Glory never shall his wrath or might [110]
Extort from me. To bow and sue for grace
With suppliant knee, and deifie his power,
Who from the terrour of this Arm so late
Doubted his Empire, that were low indeed,
That were an ignominy and shame beneath [115]
This downfall; since by Fate the strength of Gods
And this Empyreal substance cannot fail,
Since through experience of this great event
In Arms not worse, in foresight much advanc't,
We may with more successful hope resolve [120]
To wage by force or guile eternal Warr
Irreconcileable, to our grand Foe,
Who now triumphs, and in th' excess of joy
Sole reigning holds the Tyranny of Heav'n.
So spake th' Apostate Angel, though in pain, [125]
Vaunting aloud, but rackt with deep despare:
And him thus answer'd soon his bold Compeer.
O Prince, O Chief of many Throned Powers,
That led th'imbattelld Seraphim to Warr
Under thy conduct, and in dreadful deeds [130]
Fearless, endanger'd Heav'ns perpetual King;
And put to proof his high Supremacy,
Whether upheld by strength, or Chance, or Fate,
Too well I see and rue the dire event,
That with sad overthrow and foul defeat [135]
Hath lost us Heav'n, and all this mighty Host
In horrible destruction laid thus low,
As far as Gods and Heav'nly Essences

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Can perish: for the mind and spirit remains
Invincible, and vigour soon returns, [140]
Though all our Glory extinct, and happy state
Here swallow'd up in endless misery.
But what if he our Conquerour, (whom I now
Of force believe Almighty, since no less
Then such could hav orepow'rd such force as ours) [145]
Have left us this our spirit and strength intire
Strongly to suffer and support our pains,
That we may so suffice his vengeful ire,
Or do him mightier service as his thralls
By right of Warr, what e're his business be [150]
Here in the heart of Hell to work in Fire,
Or do his Errands in the gloomy Deep;
What can it then avail though yet we feel
Strength undiminisht, or eternal being
To undergo eternal punishment? [155]
Whereto with speedy words th' Arch-fiend reply'd.
Fall'n Cherube, to be weak is miserable
Doing or Suffering: but of this be sure,
To do ought good never will be our task,
But ever to do ill our sole delight, [160]
As being the contrary to his high will
Whom we resist. If then his Providence
Out of our evil seek to bring forth good,
Our labour must be to pervert that end,
And out of good still to find means of evil; [165]
Which oft times may succeed, so as perhaps
Shall grieve him, if I fail not, and disturb
His inmost counsels from thir destind aim.
But see the angry Victor hath recall'd
His Ministers of vengeance and pursuit [170]
Back to the Gates of Heav'n: The Sulphurous Hail
Shot after us in storm, oreblown hath laid
The fiery Surge, that from the Precipice
Of Heav'n receiv'd us falling, and the Thunder,
Wing'd with red Lightning and impetuous rage, [175]

Perhaps hath spent his shafts, and ceases now
To bellow through the vast and boundless Deep.
Let us not slip th' occasion, whether scorn,
Or satiate fury yield it from our Foe.
Seest thou yon dreary Plain, forlorn and wilde, [180]
The seat of desolation, voyd of light,
Save what the glimmering of these livid flames
Casts pale and dreadful? Thither let us tend
From off the tossing of these fiery waves,
There rest, if any rest can harbour there, [185]
And reassembling our afflicted Powers,
Consult how we may henceforth most offend
Our Enemy, our own loss how repair,
How overcome this dire Calamity,
What reinforcement we may gain from Hope, [190]
If not what resolution from despare.
Thus Satan talking to his neerest Mate
With Head up-lift above the wave, and Eyes
That sparkling blaz'd, his other Parts besides
Prone on the Flood, extended long and large [195]
Lay floating many a rood, in bulk as huge
As whom the Fables name of monstrous size,
Titanian, or Earth-born, that warr'd on Jove,
Briareos or Typhon, whom the Den
By ancient Tarsus held, or that Sea-beast [200]
Leviathan, which God of all his works
Created hugest that swim th' Ocean stream:
Him haply slumbring on the Norway foam
The Pilot of some small night-founder'd Skiff,
Deeming some Island, oft, as Sea-men tell, [205]
With fixed Anchor in his skaly rind
Moors by his side under the Lee, while Night
Invests the Sea, and wished Morn delayes:
So stretcht out huge in length the Arch-fiend lay
Chain'd on the burning Lake, nor ever thence [210]
Had ris'n or heav'd his head, but that the will
And high permission of all-ruling Heaven

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Left him at large to his own dark designs,
That with reiterated crimes he might
Heap on himself damnation, while he sought [215]
Evil to others, and enrag'd might see
How all his malice serv'd but to bring forth
Infinite goodness, grace and mercy shewn
On Man by him seduc't, but on himself
Treble confusion, wrath and vengeance pour'd. [220]
Forthwith upright he rears from off the Pool
His mighty Stature; on each hand the flames
Drivn backward slope thir pointing spires, and rowld
In billows, leave i'th' midst a horrid Vale.
Then with expanded wings he stears his flight [225]
Aloft, incumbent on the dusky Air
That felt unusual weight, till on dry Land
He lights, if it were Land that ever burn'd
With solid, as the Lake with liquid fire;
And such appear'd in hue, as when the force [230]
Of subterranean wind transports a Hill
Torn from Pelorus, or the shatter'd side
Of thundring Ætna, whose combustible
And fewel'd entrals thence conceiving Fire,
Sublim'd with Mineral fury, aid the Winds, [235]
And leave a singed bottom all involv'd
With stench and smoak: Such resting found the sole
Of unblest feet. Him followed his next Mate,
Both glorying to have scap't the Stygian flood
As Gods, and by thir own recover'd strength, [240]
Not by the sufferance of supernal Power.
Is this the Region, this the Soil, the Clime,
Said then the lost Arch-Angel, this the seat
That we must change for Heav'n, this mournful gloom
For that celestial light? Be it so, since he [245]
Who now is Sovran can dispose and bid
What shall be right: fardest from him is best
Whom reason hath equald, force hath made supream
Above his equals. Farewel happy Fields

Where Joy for ever dwells: Hail horrours, hail [250]
Infernal world, and thou profoundest Hell
Receive thy new Possessor: One who brings
A mind not to be chang'd by Place or Time.
The mind is its own place, and in it self
Can make a Heav'n of Hell, a Hell of Heav'n. [255]
What matter where, if I be still the same,
And what I should be, all but less then he
Whom Thunder hath made greater? Here at least
We shall be free; th' Almighty hath not built
Here for his envy, will not drive us hence: [260]
Here we may reign secure, and in my choyce
To reign is worth ambition though in Hell:
Better to reign in Hell, then serve in Heav'n.
But wherefore let we then our faithful friends,
Th' associates and copartners of our loss [265]
Lye thus astonisht on th' oblivious Pool,
And call them not to share with us their part
In this unhappy Mansion, or once more
With rallied Arms to try what may be yet
Regaind in Heav'n, or what more lost in Hell? [270]
So Satan spake, and him Beelzebub
Thus answer'd. Leader of those Armies bright,
Which but th' Onmipotent none could have foyld,
If once they hear that voyce, thir liveliest pledge
Of hope in fears and dangers, heard so oft [275]
In worst extreams, and on the perilous edge
Of battel when it rag'd, in all assaults
Thir surest signal, they will soon resume
New courage and revive, though now they lye
Groveling and prostrate on yon Lake of Fire, [280]
As we erewhile, astounded and amaz'd,
No wonder, fall'n such a pernicious highth.
He scarce had ceas't when the superiour Fiend
Was moving toward the shoar; his ponderous shield
Ethereal temper, massy, large and round, [285]

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Behind him cast; the broad circumference
Hung on his shoulders like the Moon, whose Orb
Through Optic Glass the Tuscan Artist views
At Ev'ning from the top of Fesole,
Or in Valdarno, to descry new Lands, [290]
Rivers or Mountains in her spotty Globe.
His Spear, to equal which the tallest Pine
Hewn on Norwegian hills, to be the Mast
Of some great Ammiral, were but a wand,
He walkt with to support uneasie steps [295]
Over the burning Marle, not like those steps
On Heavens Azure, and the torrid Clime
Smote on him sore besides, vaulted with Fire;
Nathless he so endur'd, till on the Beach
Of that inflamed Sea, he stood and call'd [300]
His Legions, Angel Forms, who lay intrans't
Thick as Autumnal Leaves that strow the Brooks
In Vallombrosa, where th' Etrurian shades
High overarch't imbowr; or scatterd sedge
Afloat, when with fierce Winds Orion arm'd [305]
Hath vext the Red-Sea Coast, whose waves orethrew
Busiris and his Memphian Chivalry,
While with perfidious hatred they pursu'd
The Sojourners of Goshen, who beheld
From the safe shore thir floating Carkases [310]
And broken Chariot Wheels, so thick bestrown
Abject and lost lay these, covering the Flood,
Under amazement of thir hideous change.
He call'd so loud, that all the hollow Deep
Of Hell resounded. Princes, Potentates, [315]
Warriers, the Flowr of Heav'n, once yours, now lost,
If such astonishment as this can sieze
Eternal spirits; or have ye chos'n this place
After the toyl of Battel to repose
Your wearied vertue, for the ease you find [320]
To slumber here, as in the Vales of Heav'n?
Or in this abject posture have ye sworn

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To adore the Conquerour? who now beholds
Cherube and Seraph rowling in the Flood
With scatter'd Arms and Ensigns, till anon [325]
His swift pursuers from Heav'n Gates discern
Th' advantage, and descending tread us down
Thus drooping, or with linked Thunderbolts
Transfix us to the bottom of this Gulfe.
Awake, arise, or be for ever fall'n. [330]
They heard, and were abasht, and up they sprung
Upon the wing, as when men wont to watch
On duty, sleeping found by whom they dread,
Rouse and bestir themselves ere well awake.
Nor did they not perceave the evil plight [335]
In which they were, or the fierce pains not feel;
Yet to thir Generals Voyce they soon obeyd
Innumerable. As when the potent Rod
Of Amrams Son in Egypts evill day
Wav'd round the Coast, up call'd a pitchy cloud [340]
Of Locusts, warping on the Eastern Wind,
That ore the Realm of impious Pharaoh hung
Like Night, and darken'd all the Land of Nile:
So numberless were those bad Angels seen
Hovering on wing under the Cope of Hell [345]
'Twixt upper, nether, and surrounding Fires;
Till, as a signal giv'n, th' uplifted Spear
Of thir great Sultan waving to direct
Thir course, in even ballance down they light
On the firm brimstone, and fill all the Plain; [350]
A multitude, like which the populous North
Pour'd never from her frozen loyns, to pass
Rhene or the Danaw, when her barbarous Sons
Came like a Deluge on the South, and spread
Beneath Gibralter to the Lybian sands. [355]
Forthwith from every Squadron and each Band
The Heads and Leaders thither hast where stood
Thir great Commander; Godlike shapes and forms
Excelling human, Princely Dignities,

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And Powers that earst in Heaven sat on Thrones; [360]
Though of thir Names in heav'nly Records now
Be no memorial blotted out and ras'd
By thir Rebellion, from the Books of Life.
Nor had they yet among the Sons of Eve
Got them new Names, till wandring ore the Earth, [365]
Through Gods high sufferance for the tryal of man,
By falsities and lyes the greatest part
Of Mankind they corrupted to forsake
God thir Creator, and th' invisible
Glory of him that made them, to transform [370]
Oft to the Image of a Brute, adorn'd
With gay Religions full of Pomp and Gold,
And Devils to adore for Deities:
Then were they known to men by various Names,
And various Idols through the Heathen World. [375]
Say, Muse, thir Names then known, who first, who last,
Rous'd from the slumber, on that fiery Couch,
At thir great Emperors call, as next in worth
Came singly where he stood on the bare strand,
While the promiscuous croud stood yet aloof? [380]
The chief were those who from the Pit of Hell
Roaming to seek thir prey on earth, durst fix
Thir Seats long after next the Seat of God,
Thir Altars by his Altar, Gods ador'd
Among the Nations round, and durst abide [385]
Jehovah thundring out of Sion, thron'd
Between the Cherubim; yea, often plac'd
Within his Sanctuary it self thir Shrines,
Abominations; and with cursed things
His holy Rites, and solemn Feasts profan'd, [390]
And with thir darkness durst affront his light.
First Moloch, horrid King besmear'd with blood
Of human sacrifice, and parents tears,
Though for the noyse of Drums and Timbrels loud
Thir childrens cries unheard, that past through fire [395]
To his grim Idol. Him the Ammonite

Worshipt in Rabba and her watry Plain,
In Argob and in Basan, to the stream
Of utmost Arnon. Nor content with such
Audacious neighbourhood, the wisest heart [400]
Of Solomon he led by fraud to build
His Temple right against the Temple of God
On that opprobrious Hill, and made his Grove
The pleasant Vally of Hinnom, Tophet thence
And black Gehenna call'd, the Type of Hell. [405]
Next Chemos, th' obscene dread of Moabs Sons,
From Aroar to Nebo, and the wild
Of Southmost Abarim; in Hesebon
And Horonaim, Seons Realm, beyond
The flowry Dale of Sibma clad with Vines, [410]
And Eleale to th' Asphaltick Pool.
Peor his other Name, when he entic'd
Israel in Sittim on thir march from Nile
To do him wanton rites, which cost them woe.
Yet thence his lustful Orgies he enlarg'd [415]
Even to that Hill of scandal, by the Grove
Of Moloch homicide, lust hard by hate;
Till good Josiah drove them thence to Hell.
With these came they, who from the bordring flood
Of old Euphrates to the Brook that parts [420]
Egypt from Syrian ground, had general Names
Of Baalim and Ashtaroth, those male,
These Feminine. For Spirits when they please
Can either Sex assume, or both; so soft
And uncompounded is thir Essence pure, [425]
Not ti'd or manacl'd with joynt or limb,
Nor founded on the brittle strength of bones,
Like cumbrous flesh; but in what shape they choose
Dilated or condens't, bright or obscure,
Can execute thir aerie purposes, [430]
And works of love or enmity fulfill.
For those the Race of Israel oft forsook
Thir living strength, and unfrequented left

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His righteous Altar, bowing lowly down
To bestial Gods; for which thir heads as low [435]
Bow'd down in Battel, sunk before the Spear
Of despicable foes. With these in troop
Came Astoreth, whom the Phoenicians call'd
Astarte, Queen of Heav'n, with crescent Horns;
To whose bright Image nightly by the Moon [440]
Sidonian Virgins paid thir Vows and Songs,
In Sion also not unsung, where stood
Her Temple on th' offensive Mountain, built
By that uxorious King, whose heart though large,
Beguil'd by fair Idolatresses, fell [445]
To Idols foul. Thammuz came next behind,
Whose annual wound in Lebanon allur'd
The Syrian Damsels to lament his fate
In amorous dittyes all a Summers day,
While smooth Adonis from his native Rock [450]
Ran purple to the Sea, suppos'd with blood
Of Thammuz yearly wounded: the Love-tale
Infected Sions daughters with like heat,
Whose wanton passions in the sacred Porch
Ezekiel saw, when by the Vision led [455]
His eye survay'd the dark Idolatries
Of alienated Judah. Next came one
Who mourn'd in earnest, when the Captive Ark
Maim'd his brute Image, head and hands lopt off
In his own Temple, on the grunsel edge, [460]
Where he fell flat, and sham'd his Worshipers:
Dagon his Name, Sea Monster, upward Man
And downward Fish: yet had his Temple high
Rear'd in Azotus, dreaded through the Coast
Of Palestine, in Gath and Ascalon [465]
And Accaron and Gaza's frontier bounds.
Him follow'd Rimmon, whose delightful Seat
Was fair Damascus, on the fertil Banks
Of Abbana and Pharphar, lucid streams.
He also against the house of God was bold: [470]

A Leper once he lost and gain'd a King,
Ahaz his sottish Conquerour, whom he drew
Gods Altar to disparage and displace
For one of Syrian mode, whereon to burn
His odious off'rings, and adore the Gods [475]
Whom he had vanquisht. After these appear'd
A crew who under Names of old Renown,
Osiris, Isis, Orus and their Train
With monstrous shapes and sorceries abus'd
Fanatic Egypt and her Priests, to seek [480]
Thir wandring Gods disguis'd in brutish forms
Rather then human. Nor did Israel scape
Th' infection when thir borrow'd Gold compos'd
The Calf in Oreb: and the Rebel King
Doubl'd that sin in Bethel and in Dan, [485]
Lik'ning his Maker to the Grazed Ox,
Jehovah, who in one Night when he pass'd
From Egypt marching, equal'd with one stroke
Both her first born and all her bleating Gods.
Belial came last, then whom a Spirit more lewd [490]
Fell not from Heaven, or more gross to love
Vice for it self: To him no Temple stood
Or Altar smoak'd; yet who more oft then hee
In Temples and at Altars, when the Priest
Turns Atheist, as did Ely's Sons, who fill'd [495]
With lust and violence the house of God.
In Courts and Palaces he also Reigns
And in luxurious Cities, where the noyse
Of riot ascends above thir loftiest Towrs,
And injury and outrage: And when Night [500]
Darkens the Streets, then wander forth the Sons
Of Belial, flown with insolence and wine.
Witness the Streets of Sodom, and that night
In Gibeah, when the hospitable door
Expos'd a Matron to avoid worse rape. [505]
These were the prime in order and in might;
The rest were long to tell, though far renown'd,

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Th' Ionian Gods, of Javans Issue held
Gods, yet confest later then Heav'n and Earth
Thir boasted Parents; Titan Heav'ns first born [510]
With his enormous brood, and birthright seis'd
By younger Saturn, he from mightier Jove
His own and Rhea's Son like measure found;
So Jove usurping reign'd: these first in Creet
And Ida known, thence on the Snowy top [515]
Of cold Olympus rul'd the middle Air
Thir highest Heav'n; or on the Delphian Cliff,
Or in Dodona, and through all the bounds
Of Doric Land; or who with Saturn old
Fled over Adria to th' Hesperian Fields, [520]
And ore the Celtic roam'd the utmost Isles.
All these and more came flocking; but with looks
Down cast and damp, yet such wherein appear'd
Obscure some glimps of joy, to have found thir chief
Not in despair, to have found themselves not lost [525]
In loss it self; which on his count'nance cast
Like doubtful hue: but he his wonted pride
Soon recollecting, with high words, that bore
Semblance of worth, not substance, gently rais'd
Thir fainting courage, and dispel'd thir fears. [530]
Then strait commands that at the warlike sound
Of Trumpets loud and Clarions be upreard
His mighty Standard; that proud honour claim'd
Azazel as his right, a Cherube tall:
Who forthwith from the glittering Staff unfurld [535]
Th' Imperial Ensign, which full high advanc't
Shon like a Meteor streaming to the Wind
With Gemms and Golden lustre rich imblaz'd,
Seraphic arms and Trophies: all the while
Sonorous mettal blowing Martial sounds: [540]
At which the universal Host upsent
A shout that tore Hells Concave, and beyond
Frighted the Reign of Chaos and old Night.
All in a moment through the gloom were seen
Ten thousand Banners rise into the Air [545]

With Orient Colours waving: with them rose
A Forest huge of Spears: and thronging Helms
Appear'd, and serried shields in thick array
Of depth immeasurable: Anon they move
In perfect Phalanx to the Dorian mood [550]
Of Flutes and soft Recorders; such as rais'd
To hight of noblest temper Hero's old
Arming to Battel, and in stead of rage
Deliberate valour breath'd, firm and unmov'd
With dread of death to flight or foul retreat, [555]
Nor wanting power to mitigate and swage
With solemn touches, troubl'd thoughts, and chase
Anguish and doubt and fear and sorrow and pain
From mortal or immortal minds. Thus they
Breathing united force with fixed thought [560]
Mov'd on in silence to soft Pipes that charm'd
Thir painful steps o're the burnt soyle; and now
Advanc't in view, they stand, a horrid Front
Of dreadful length and dazling Arms, in guise
Of Warriers old with order'd Spear and Shield, [565]
Awaiting what command thir mighty Chief
Had to impose: He through the armed Files
Darts his experienc't eye, and soon traverse
The whole Battalion views, thir order due,
Thir visages and stature as of Gods, [570]
Thir number last he summs. And now his heart
Distends with pride, and hardning in his strength
Glories: For never since created man,
Met such imbodied force, as nam'd with these
Could merit more then that small infantry [575]
Warr'd on by Cranes: though all the Giant brood
Of Phlegra with th' Heroic Race were joyn'd
That fought at Theb's and Ilium, on each side
Mixt with auxiliar Gods; and what resounds
In Fable or Romance of Uthers Son [580]
Begirt with British and Armoric Knights;
And all who since, Baptiz'd or Infidel

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Jousted in Aspramont or Montalban,
Damasco, or Marocco, or Trebisond,
Or whom Biserta sent from Afric shore [585]
When Charlemain with all his Peerage fell
By Fontarabbia. Thus far these beyond
Compare of mortal prowess, yet observ'd
Thir dread commander: he above the rest
In shape and gesture proudly eminent [590]
Stood like a Towr; his form had yet not lost
All her Original brightness, nor appear'd
Less then Arch Angel ruind, and th' excess
Of Glory obscur'd: As when the Sun new ris'n
Looks through the Horizontal misty Air [595]
Shorn of his Beams, or from behind the Moon
In dim Eclips disastrous twilight sheds
On half the Nations, and with fear of change
Perplexes Monarchs. Dark'n'd so, yet shon
Above them all th' Arch Angel: but his face [600]
Deep scars of Thunder had intrencht, and care
Sat on his faded cheek, but under Browes
Of dauntless courage, and considerate Pride
Waiting revenge: cruel his eye, but cast
Signs of remorse and passion to behold [605]
The fellows of his crime, the followers rather
(Far other once beheld in bliss) condemn'd
For ever now to have thir lot in pain,
Millions of Spirits for his fault amerc't
Of Heav'n, and from Eternal Splendors flung [610]
For his revolt, yet faithfull how they stood,
Thir Glory witherd. As when Heavens Fire
Hath scath'd the Forrest Oaks, or Mountain Pines,
With singed top thir stately growth though bare
Stands on the blasted Heath. He now prepar'd [615]
To speak; whereat thir doubl'd Ranks they bend
From wing to wing, and half enclose him round
With all his Peers: attention held them mute.
Thrice he assayd, and thrice in spight of scorn,

Tears such as Angels weep, burst forth: at last [620]
Words interwove with sighs found out thir way.
O Myriads of immortal Spirits, O Powers
Matchless, but with th' Almighty, and that strife
Was not inglorious, though th' event was dire,
As this place testifies, and this dire change [625]
Hateful to utter: but what power of mind
Foreseeing or presaging, from the Depth
Of knowledge past or present, could have fear'd,
How such united force of Gods, how such
As stood like these, could ever know repulse? [630]
For who can yet beleeve, though after loss,
That all these puissant Legions, whose exile
Hath emptied Heav'n, shall fail to re-ascend
Self-rais'd, and repossess thir native seat?
For mee be witness all the Host of Heav'n, [635]
If counsels different, or danger shun'd
By me, have lost our hopes. But he who reigns
Monarch in Heav'n, till then as one secure
Sat on his Throne, upheld by old repute,
Consent or custome, and his Regal State [640]
Put forth at full, but still his strength conceal'd,
Which tempted our attempt, and wrought our fall.
Henceforth his might we know, and know our own
So as not either to provoke, or dread
New warr, provok't; our better part remains [645]
To work in close design, by fraud or guile
What force effected not: that he no less
At length from us may find, who overcomes
By force, hath overcome but half his foe.
Space may produce new Worlds; whereof so rife [650]
There went a fame in Heav'n that he ere long
Intended to create, and therein plant
A generation, whom his choice regard
Should favour equal to the Sons of Heaven:
Thither, if but to pry, shall be perhaps
Our first eruption, thither or elsewhere: [655]

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For this Infernal Pit shall never hold
Cœlestial Spirits in Bondage, nor th' Abyss
Long under darkness cover. But these thoughts
Full Counsel must mature: Peace is despaird, [660]
For who can think Submission? Warr then, Warr
Open or understood must be resolv'd.
He spake: and to confirm his words, out-flew
Millions of flaming swords, drawn from the thighs
Of mighty Cherubim; the sudden blaze [665]
Far round illumin'd hell: highly they rag'd
Against the Highest, and fierce with grasped arms
Clash'd on thir sounding Shields the din of war,
Hurling defiance toward the vault of Heav'n.
There stood a Hill not far whose griesly top [670]
Belch'd fire and rowling smoak; the rest entire
Shon with a glossie scurff, undoubted sign
That in his womb was hid metallic Ore,
The work of Sulphur. Thither wing'd with speed
A numerous Brigad hasten'd. As when Bands [675]
Of Pioners with Spade and Pickax arm'd
Forerun the Royal Camp, to trench a Field,
Or cast a Rampart. Mammon led them on,
Mammon, the least erected Spirit that fell
From heav'n, for ev'n in heav'n his looks and thoughts [680]
Were always downward bent, admiring more
The riches of Heav'ns pavement, trod'n Gold,
Then aught divine or holy else enjoy'd
In vision beatific: by him first
Men also, and by his suggestion taught, [685]
Ransack'd the Center, and with impious hands
Rifl'd the bowels of thir mother Earth
For Treasures better hid. Soon had his crew
Op'nd into the Hill a spacious wound
And dig'd out ribs of Gold. Let none admire [690]
That riches grow in Hell; that soyle may best
Deserve the precious bane. And here let those

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Who boast in mortal things, and wond'ring tell
Of Babel, and the works of Memphian Kings
Learn how thir greatest Monuments of Fame, [695]
And Strength and Art are easily out-done
By Spirits reprobate, and in an hour
What in an age they with incessant toyle
And hands innumerable scarce perform.
Nigh on the Plain in many cells prepar'd, [700]
That underneath had veins of liquid fire
Sluc'd from the Lake, a second multitude
With wondrous Art found out the massie Ore,
Severing each kind, and scum'd the Bullion dross:
A third as soon had form'd within the ground [705]
A various mould, and from the boyling cells
By strange conveyance fill'd each hollow nook,
As in an Organ from one blast of wind
To many a row of Pipes the sound-board breaths.
Anon out of the earth a Fabrick huge [710]
Rose like an Exhalation, with the sound
Of Dulcet Symphonies and voices sweet,
Built like a Temple, where Pilasters round
Were set, and Doric pillars overlaid
With Golden Architrave; nor did there want [715]
Cornice or Freeze, with bossy Sculptures grav'n,
The Roof was fretted Gold. Not Babilon,
Nor great Alcairo such magnificence
Equal'd in all thir glories, to inshrine
Belus or Serapis thir Gods, or seat [720]
Thir Kings, when Ægypt with Assyria strove
In wealth and luxurie. Th' ascending pile
Stood fixt her stately highth, and strait the dores
Op'ning thir brazen foulds discover wide
Within, her ample spaces, o're the smooth [725]
And level pavement: from the arched roof
Pendant by suttle Magic many a row
Of Starry Lamps and blazing Cressets fed
With Naphtha and Asphaltus yeilded light

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As from a sky. The hasty multitude [730]
Admiring enter'd, and the work some praise
And some the Architect: his hand was known
In Heav'n by many a Towred structure high,
Where Scepter'd Angels held thir residence,
And sat as Princes, whom the supreme King [735]
Exalted to such power, and gave to rule,
Each in his Hierarchie, the Orders bright.
Nor was his name unheard or unador'd
In ancient Greece; and in Ausonian land
Men call'd him Mulciber; and how he fell [740]
From Heav'n, they fabl'd, thrown by angry Jove
Sheer o're the Chrystal Battlements: from Morn
To Noon he fell, from Noon to dewy Eve,
A Summers day; and with the setting Sun
Dropt from the Zenith like a falling Star, [745]
On Lemnos th' Ægean Ile: thus they relate,
Erring; for he with this rebellious rout
Fell long before; nor aught avail'd him now
To have built in Heav'n high Towrs; nor did he scape
By all his Engins, but was headlong sent [750]
With his industrious crew to build in hell.
Mean while the winged Haralds by command
Of Sovran power, with awful Ceremony
And Trumpets sound throughout the Host proclaim
A solemn Councel forthwith to be held [755]
At Pandæmonium, the high Capital
Of Satan and his Peers: thir summons call'd
From every Band and squared Regiment
By place or choice the worthiest; they anon
With hunderds and with thousands trooping came [760]
Attended: all access was throng'd, the Gates
And Porches wide, but chief the spacious Hall
(Though like a cover'd field, where Champions bold
Wont ride in arm'd, and at the Soldans chair
Defi'd the best of Paynim chivalry [765]
To mortal combat or carreer with Lance)
Thick swarm'd, both on the ground and in the air,
Brusht with the hiss of russling wings. As Bees
In spring time, when the Sun with Taurus rides,
Pour forth thir populous youth about the Hive [770]
In clusters; they among fresh dews and flowers
Flie to and fro, or on the smoothed Plank,
The suburb of thir Straw-built Cittadel,
New rub'd with Baum, expatiate and confer
Thir State affairs. So thick the aerie crowd [775]
Swarm'd and were straitn'd; till the Signal giv'n.
Behold a wonder! they but now who seemd
In bigness to surpass Earths Giant Sons
Now less then smallest Dwarfs, in narrow room
Throng numberless, like that Pigmean Race [780]
Beyond the Indian Mount, or Faerie Elves,
Whose midnight Revels, by a Forrest side
Or Fountain some belated Peasant sees,
Or dreams he sees, while over-head the Moon
Sits Arbitress, and neerer to the Earth [785]
Wheels her pale course, they on thir mirth and dance
Intent, with jocond Music charm his ear;
At once with joy and fear his heart rebounds.
Thus incorporeal Spirits to smallest forms
Reduc'd thir shapes immense, and were at large, [790]
Though without number still amidst the Hall
Of that infernal Court. But far within
And in thir own dimensions like themselves
The great Seraphic Lords and Cherubim
In close recess and secret conclave sat [795]
A thousand Demy-Gods on golden seats,
Frequent and full. After short silence then
And summons read, the great consult began.

Explanation

(i) *'Thou from .....and support.'*

These lines are a part of the 'invocation' at the opening of Book I of *Paradise Lost*. Having invoked the aid of the heavenly Muse, Milton now addresses the Divine Spirit, a power higher than the Muse. He seeks instruction from this Spirit which was present in the universe from the very beginning. This Spirit,

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Check Your Progress

6. Which heavenly muse does Milton appeal to?
7. Who was the first of the rebel angels to be described?
8. What are the characteristics of an epic?
9. What are the main four groups of characters in the play?
10. How does Milton portray the universe?
11. What is the criticism against Paradise Lost?
12. How does Milton make us aware of how huge Satan is in size?
13. What was Aristotle's condition of being classified as an epic?
14. What are six features of Milton's style of writing?
15. Describe one autobiographical element in the play.
16. How does Milton portray Hell?

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with its massive, outspread wings sat, like a dove, meditating upon (or moving upon), the vast Chaos which it quickened with life. He calls upon this spirit to illuminate what is dark in him, and to elevate and strengthen what is low in him.

(ii) '*What though .....from me.*'

These lines are a part of Satan's first speech in Book I of *Paradise Lost*. Speaking to Beelzebub, Satan briefly dwells upon the revolt of angels against God and the defeat they have suffered. Here he makes light of what has happened. It does not matter if he and his followers have lost the battle, the war had yet to be fought. They shall have their invincible determination, their decision to pursue their revenge, their undying hatred for their enemy (i.e. God), and the courage never to surrender. As they have all these, it means that they have not been defeated. No matter how wrathful or powerful their energy might be, they will never allow him to win the glory of achieving a triumph over them.

(iii) '*Fall'n Cherub, ...Whom we resist.*'

Satan here tries to allay Beelzebub's fears. Beelzebub has expressed the apprehension that fallen angels may have to stay on in Hell forever to satisfy God's revengeful fury ('vengefulre'). Satan points out that to have a feeling of weakness means feeling miserable, whether they have to work as God's slaves or they have merely to undergo torture (without having to do God's errands). One thing is sure that they will never do any good work and their only pleasure will always be to commit evil and thus oppose the high will of Him whom they have to resist. Satan thus declares his resolve to do 'ill' in order to thwart God's purposes.

(iv) '*Be it so, ...above his equals.*'

After surveying the mournful gloom of the infernal regions, Satan speaking to Beelzebub reconciles himself to the change from Heaven to Hell. God, he says, is now supreme since God has won the battle. God is in a position to dole out and to command, what He (God) thinks to be right The fallen angels have no choice but to accept what has been dealt out to them. It will now be the best course for them to stay at the farthest possible distance from God. Satan claims that he and his comrades are the equals of God in respect of the faculty of reason. God is now supreme but He has won this supremacy over His equals and His victory is due to superior force, not due to any other kind of superiority.

(v) '*But wherefore .....lost in Hell?*'

This passage is the concluding portion of the famous speech that Satan makes after surveying the infernal regions in the company of Beelzebub in Book I of *Paradise Lost*. He has declared his resolve to live in Hell where he and his comrades will at least be free from God's tyranny. Here, addressing Beelzebub, he proposes that his faithful friends, the companions and co-sharers of the defeat and the misfortune they have suffered, should not continue to lie stunned on the lake which has made them quite forgetful of their condition. Satan says that he and Beelzebub should call them all to share their lot with their leaders in this unhappy abode. Satan also visualizes the possibility of his mobilizing the fallen angels once again in order to regain whatever they can in Heaven. If the worst happens, they will lose something more of what is still left with 'them here in Hell'.

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(vi) '*A multitude, ...to the Lybionjarufe.*'

This refers to the march of the fallen spirits roused from their stupefaction. It is described in these memorable lines. The barbarian incursions from the North of Europe from the first century A D. until, in the sixth, they overran even the Empire of Rome and a Teutonic chieftain was crowned King of Rome. So numerous were the Teuton hordes that they not only over-ran the whole of South Europe but also overflowed into North Africa, through the Straits of Gibraltar. In this simile Milton gives us a page of European history and the havoc wrought upon the more civilized Rookie by the fierce warrior tribes from the Baltic regions—the ancestors of modern Germans. Note the unfamiliar forms of the rivers named the Rhine and the Danube as Milton uses the terms 'Rhene' and 'Danaw' for more musical effect. The report that Teutonic tribes went into the Libyan sands has reference to legendary accounts of isolated Germanic rulers having established their way in North Africa. Poet Robert Southey deals with the adventures of some of them in one of his epics.

(vii) '*But in .....enmity fulfill'*

Milton describes here the elements of which the bodies of angels are made. Angelic bodies are not like ours. They are composed of one 'pure essence'; our bodies are composed of so many base elements. Consequently angels possess a perfect control over their bodies. Angels can expand themselves or reduce their size at will. They can assume any form they please. They can make their bodies shining; or if they so like, they can make themselves dimly visible and even invisible. Thus they can work out their own will easily. If they love anybody they can do him infinite good and if they hate anybody, they can cause unlimited harm.

(viii) '*A Leper once .....he had vanquished.*'

Milton here refers to Rimmon, one of the chiefs of Satan's rebel angels. Later on, Rimmon was worshipped as a god by the Syrians in Damascus. There was a general, Naaman by name. He was a leper and worshipper of Rimmon but, being cured of his leprosy by God's grace, Naaman gave up worshipping Rimmon and so the latter lost a leper. Rimmon got a King for his worshipper. This king was Ahaz who was a great conqueror. He conquered the heathens and so should have known that the heathen's gods were too weak to save their worshippers. But the foolish Ahaz took to the worship of these false heathen gods whom he himself had defeated. He further insulted the true God by making impure His altar in Jerusalem. He changed God's holy altar in Jerusalem into one of Syrian pattern, after the style of Dagon's altar.

(ix) '*To him no .....the house of God?*'

Last among the fallen angels, who took a name later in the universe of man, and was worshipped in preference to God, the Almighty, was Belial. No temples were erected to him, but he made use of the temples of other gods, 'just as the immortal cuckoo makes use of the nests of other birds.' Being the patron of atheism, liberty and disorderliness, his cult was most often professed by those who were greedy and rapacious, and completely destroyed the piety and the holiness that belonged to the church. Thus Eli's sons were the adherents of this

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spirit, when they filled the houses of God in Jerusalem with 'lust and violence'

(x) '*For never since .....all the Giant brood*'

When the fallen angels had assembled in a military array before their lord and chief, Satan, Milton digresses for a while to convey to the reader an adequate impression of their appearance by means of certain similes. They are introduced by summing up the effect in a vivid manner, as in these lines. Never since the creation of man, as compared with these fallen angels, could any army be regarded as more than pygmies who were attacked by Cranes.

(xi) '*Darken'd so, ...Waiting revenge*'

In these lines, Milton gives a fine description of Satan. He had lost his original splendour and yet he appeared brighter than any of the fallen angels. His face showed the wounds caused by God's thunder. His cheeks had lost all colour and he appeared to be worried on account of the defeat and the adverse circumstances. His brows showed signs of fearless courage. His pride had not been affected, though he was waiting for an opportunity to take revenge on God for his defeat.

(xii) '*But he who .....wrought our fall.*'

In these lines, Satan tries to convince the fallen angels that the war against God was worth-while, though it led to very disastrous consequences His argument is that nobody knew of the latent power of God till it was put to test. He wants to avoid the blame for the defeat. He, like the other fallen angels, has suffered and gone through all the tortures of Hell. Satan's argument is that God is the supreme sovereign and He rules by convention. They were, therefore, tempted to challenge the power of God. They had not taken into account the concealed strength of God, which He did use in order to defeat the angels.

(xiii) '*War then, ...vault of Heav'n.*'

In these lines, Milton describes the reaction of the fallen angels to the proposal of Satan who proposes another war against Heaven. The fallen angels drew their flashing swords from their sides which glittered brightly in the darkness of Hell. They did so in order to express their determination and agreement with the proposal of Satan. The angels shouted against God and clasped their swords in their hands and struck them on their shield. This produced a clanging noise as if of war and appeared to be an open challenge thrown to Heaven. In these lines, the fallen angels express their unity and display their strength which appears ridiculous in view of their defeat by God and his angels. We also find here the towering personality of Satan, who wins the confidence of the fallen angels. They have become so to worship their hero and here they express their loyalty to him through their words and behaviour.

(xix) '*But far .....consult began.*'

In these lines, Milton describes the meeting of the fallen angels in Pandemonium. The leaders of the fallen angels look their seats according to their own dimensions. The angels, lords, the Seraphs and Cherubs and thousand demi gods sat on the golden thrones within the Hall. The small fallen angels, however, assumed tiny shapes and sat close together in the Hall. The meeting was held to decide the future course of action of the fallen angels.

Milton distinguishes the leader and the followers among the angels. The leaders sat in all their glory and in their original forms while the followers assumed the smaller shape in order to accommodate themselves within the limited space available in the hall. Milton shows that angels can reduce or increase their size and shape according to the requirements of the occasion.

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3.3.5 Main Characters

Satan

The Miltonic Satan in undoubtedly one of the most stupendous and awful creations of poetry—one of its grandest studies ' Reed (English Literature).

Satan is a classic creation of Milton. From the artistic point of view, he is much more remembered than the heroes of Shakespeare. Although not so grand and great in morality as heroes of the classical epics, he stands to challenge even Ulysses and Hercules. Satan is the poetic representation of Milton's own pride, invincible temper, love of liberty, defiance of authority and heroic energy. He is the most active and energetic character in the poem. There are two aspects of Satan's character. In the first two Books he is different from what he is in the later Books.

In the broad outlines of Satan's character, there is Biblical warrant, though we shall not find it, as we find the story of Adam and Eve, in any one passage. In Cruden's Concordance, it is observed:

> By collecting the passages where Satan or the Devil is mentioned, it may be observed that he fell from Heaven, with all his company; that God cast him down from thence for the punishment of his pride; that by his envy and malice, sin and death, and all other evils, came into the world; that by the permission of God he exercises a sort of government in the world over his subordinates, over apostate angels like himself; that God makes use of him to improve good men, and chastise bad ones ..... That his power and malice are restrained within certain limits, and controlled by the will of God. In a word, he is an enemy to God and man, uses his utmost endeavours to rob God of his glory, and men of their souls.

This is all true of Milton's Satan. He fully stands by his etymological meaning. The word 'Satan' in Hebrew means 'an adversary, a plotter'. Like other villain-heroes he is also ambitious revengeful, boastful, deceitful, cunning, melancholic, and witty. We are terrified and horrified as well as fascinated by this evil character like Richard III, Iago, or Tamburlaine. So does Satan bring out a response or reaction from us. He is huge in size:

'His other Parts besides
Prone on the Flood, extended long and large
Lay floating many a rood, in bulk as huge
As whome the Fables name of monstrous size .....'
His shield is as big as the largest round object imaginable:
'the broad circumference
Hung on his shoulders like the Moon....'

And compared with his spear, the mast in the biggest ship of fleet would seem like a mere wand. Elsewhere in Book I, Satan is described as being like a Tower and like the

Sun. He appears less than the Arch-Angel ruined, and the excess of glory obscured. He is still like the sun, but like the sun seen through the morning mist 'Shorn of his Beams'. After Book II, the deterioration of Satan is shown through a progressive diminution of the images by which he is described. In the beginning of Book II he is described as under :

'High on a Throne of Royal State, which far
Outshone the wealth of Ormus and of Ind,
Or where the gorgeous East with richest hand
Showers on her Kings Barbaric Pearl and Gold,
Satan exalted .....sat.'

In Books I and II Satan is in his own element. Early in Book III, we see him through God's eyes, and in this diminishing perspective he is almost pathetic: 'ready now/To stoop with wearied wings' (72). A little later we see him as a vulture (III, 431), as a wolf (IV, 183), as a cormorant (IV .800). Finally, not through comparison or his own intended deceit, but in actual fact imposed by God, we see him as a serpent (X, 514). In Book VI, we find Satan 'Squat like a Toad, close at the ears of Eve'.

He, however, has the 'courage never to submit or yield and what is else not to be overcome.' He is ready to welcome Hell.

3.3.6 As a Classical Epic

Paradise Lost is an epic par excellence. In the English language, besides Sri Aurobindo's Savitri, there is not any other epic that can be compared with it. An epic is a very ancient form of poetry, originating in an age before writing, when long narratives dealing with the mighty deeds of the military aristocracy were recited to an assembled company, on long winter evenings or after a feasting. The narrative consisted of a series of loosely linked and easily detachable episodes to enable the overall length to be varied as circumstances demanded and centred on the exploits of some national hero who was something more than human if slightly less than divine. To provide some rest for the narrator and some relief for the listeners, stock passages came, to be included in the epic; the hero's ancestry; the description and history of his weapons; a council or debate, usually in heaven; and so on. These epics are called Primary Epics because their characteristics naturally reflect the society that gave them birth, and the most famous examples are the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, supposedly composed by the blind poet Homer, whose authorship and even existence are uncertain.

Whereas Homer's epics are the Primary Epic, the Roman poet Virgil (70-19 B.C.) wrote the Secondary Epic which became Milton's model. Virgil's *Aeneid* was intended to be read by an individual in solitude, not recited to an assembly of listeners. In the Renaissance period romantic epics were written by Ariosto, Tasso, and Boiardo which became models for Spenser's *Faerie Queen*. Milton, being the child of both the Renaissance and the Reformation, preferred scriptural literature over the classical, not only in subject but in style. He knew both languages and both literatures thoroughly. Eventually, Milton rejected the choice of a national hero, King Arthur, and a national subject, in favour of the universal subject of the Fall of Man. He did for English what Virgil had done for Latin.

However, in many respects, Milton consciously follows the classical epic pattern. The structure of Paradise Lost, its division into several Books (XII), is on the classical pattern. Not merely are supernatural characters introduced, all the characters in Book I and II are superhuman. The Muse's aid is invoked, since human endeavour alone cannot support so weighty a subject, the weapons of the heroes are described (Satan's shield and spear, (I. 284-96) and some of the fallen Angels pass the time, while Satan is away on reconnaissance, by indulging in heroic games and chariot races, (II. 528-38 R) The whole epic is written in one meter throughout, i.e. Blank Verse. The Fall of Man is the theme which is single and compact. The battle of Angels, the creation of the world, Satan's fight with Sin and Death are episodes and are subordinated to the main action. The action of *Paradise Lost* satisfies Aristotle's condition that an epic should consist of a beginning, middle and an end. It has a lofty motif and is written in a grand style.

Epic similes abound in the whole of the epic, more particularly in the first two books. The epic or Homeric simile is much longer than an ordinary poetic comparison; it is a complete picture in itself, a *vignette*. In *Paradise Lost*, the epic similes serve a special purpose by bringing the superhuman subject within the compass of human experience. Milton uses his vast learning to show his readers what it was like to live in a world they could never know, and the measure of his success is that most Englishmen would describe hell and the fall in Miltonic terms - the Book of Genesis in the Bible makes no mention of Satan in the Garden of Eden, only the serpent is there.

3.3.7 Autobiographical Elements

Shakespeare's poetry is characterless, that is, it does not reflect the individual Shakespeare; but John Milton himself is in every line of the *Paradise Lost*. His Satan, his Adam, his Raphael, almost his Eve, are all John Milton; and it is a sense of this egotism that gives me the greatest pleasure in reading Milton's works. The egotism of such a man is a revelation of spirit.

Milton's poetry is a mirror of himself. His work reflects his character, his likes and dislikes. It was imperatively necessary, he thought, that the poet should prepare himself for his high calling by hard study, a pure life, and 'devout prayer to that Eternal Spirit who can enrich with all utterance and knowledge and sends out His seraphim with the hallowed fire of His altar to touch and purify the lips of whom He pleases.' Milton had conscientiously set himself to satisfy the intellectual and moral tests laid down by him. All the best works of Hebrew, Greek, Roman, and contemporary writers had been carefully studied by him, and he could proudly declare, like Matthew Arnold's Mycerninus, that,

'Rapt in reverential awe,
He sat obedient in the fiery prime
of youth self-governed at the foot of law,'

transformation from the objective to the subjective in *Paradise Lost*. Milton made the objective art of the epic subjective in tone and temper. To quote Legouis, 'Milton is in truth the only living being who exists in his own work.' He has given expression to his religious, moral and philosophical beliefs and ideas in his epic. At the same time he has identified himself with his characters. As mentioned by Legouis and Cazamian in their *History of English Literature*. 'He projects himself, his feelings, knowledge, and aspirations into the characters of his epic, both the primitive human creatures and the superhuman beings, whether they were celestial or infernal.'

Kenneth Muir has gone to the extent of saying that Milton's dominant intention in writing *Paradise Lost* was personal. Milton was not only justifying God's way to men, but he was also justifying his ways to Englishmen between 1640 and 1660. He was telling them why they had failed to establish the good society; when they had welcomed back the monarchy. They had failed through their own weakness; their own lack of faith, their own passions and creed, their own sin. God was not to blame. Milton's *Physical and Intellectual State* reflected the following lines simply refer to the physical and intellectual state of Milton:

'Standing on Earth, not rapt above the Pole,
More safe I sing, with mortal voice unchanged
To hoarse or mute, though fall'n on evil dayes,
On evil dayes though fall'n, and evil tongues;
In darkness; and with dangers compost round
And solitude : yet not along, while thon
Visit's my slumbers Nightly, or when Mom.
Purples the East; still govern thou my song,
Urania, and fit audience finds, though few,'

—Book, VII (Opening lines)

Besides his intellectual and spiritual ideas; his political ideas are also expressed from time to time in *Paradise Lost*. For example, in the Twelfth Book when Michael tells Adam that true liberty is lost because of his fall, Milton seems to be blaming the failure of the Commonwealth to the original sin. And 'the debate in Hell would have been lacking in power and verisimilitude if the poet had not lived through the period of the long parliament.' Furthermore, the following lines of Book II also reflect Milton's own personality:

'For who would lose,
Though full of pain, this intellectual being,
Those thoughts that wander through Eternity,
To perish rather, swallowed up and lost
In the wise womb of uncreated night,
Devoid of sense and motion?'

In these lines, as mentioned by Bailey, it is no longer Belial who is speaking. It is the voice of a highly cultivated and intellectual human being with all Greek thoughts behind him; it is, in short, Milton himself.

3.3.8 Concept of Hell

In *Paradise Lost*, Milton gives a vivid and effective picture of Hell. Hell is a place of torment, evoking the quality of sinister wilderness. It is a 'dismal situation waste and wild' as Satan realizes on surveying the place to which he has fallen. It is the 'infernal world' of horrors. The place resembles a dungeon burning like a furnace. 'But the flames give no light, or only just enough light to emphasize the darkness - to make 'darkness visible'. The light brings to Satan's sight the misery, and sorrowful places where 'rest can never dwell' and hope, which comes to all beings, is totally absent. There is only never-ending torture, since there is no release from here for the fallen

angels. They have fallen into a 'fiery gulf', a 'fiery deluge' fed with 'ever-burning sulphur unconsumed.' The ocean of fire spreads over an indefinite space. The place is constantly afflicted with 'floods and whirlwinds of tempestuous fire.' The place is compared to a volcano;

'Whose grisly top
Belched fire and rolling smoke; the rest entire
Shone with a glossy scurf, undoubted sign
That in his womb was hid metalic ore.
The work of sulphur.'

The 'torrid clime vaulted with fire' naturally produced intense heat. The dry land is solid fire just as the lake is of liquid fire. Milton compares the fiery land with the bottom of the burning Pelorus or Aetna which is torn from its base by a violent underground wind and, on catching fire, converts solid minerals into vapour and blown off rocks. What is left is a burnt surface at the bottom, all wrapped up in smoke and foul smell.

Milton in his description of Hell in Lines 59-75 makes use of the medieval notion —that Hell, being a place where the damned are deprived of the sight of God (who is light), is a place of sorrowful darkness. The Old Testament's description of the land of the dead is also recalled 'where the light is as darkness.' Hell is a place far removed from the light of Heaven, and the difference between the two places is clearly suggested:

'Oh how unlike the place whence they fell!'

The greatest punishment is to be deprived of the beatific vision, and to be immersed in eternal despair.

Milton presents the abstract as concrete. He uses striking images drawn from different sources to focus our attention on fire. Terms such as 'dry land', 'burning lake', 'gate', etc., contribute to the technique of making the abstract into concrete.

Milton's Hell is described partly as the reader might see it, and partly through Satan's eyes. The objective and subjective torments of Hell are thus mingled. We view Hell and also experience it from the point of view of Satan who is to dwell in it for ever. That Hell is a place of confusion and contradiction is brought out by the description - it is a place where fire exists without light and darkness is almost tangible and this darkness itself reveals the sights of misery.

The hopelessness of Hell is an important feature to note. Man can bear suffering and pain partly because of the hope that it will end sometime. What is more important, complete hopelessness indicates an inner disintegration. But the fallen angels have brought Hell upon themselves. 'The devils, like fallen men, are caught in a recalcitrant and dangerous world of their own making: having tried to burst Heaven, they find themselves domiciled in a volcano.' And they have to face it for eternity.

Milton, however, does not make Hell formless, even though he does not indicate its size or degree of heat. Sea and land exist and from its soil the precious metals are refined which go into the construction of Pandemonium. It gives the atmosphere of busy planning, 'of life as nearly as lively as ever, of energies unquenched' says Waldock.

Satan contemplates the fiery wilderness but rises valiantly to try and overcome despair. He hails the 'Infernal world' and declares that the 'Mind is its own place' Andean in itself make a Heaven of Hell, a Hell of Heaven'. He declares:

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'Here we may reign secure; and, in my choice,
To reign is worth ambition, though in Hell,
Better to reign in Hell than serve in Heaven.'

3.3.9 Satan's Speech

Satan makes his first speech to Beelzebub, his closest comrade. Here Satan admits that God proved stronger than his opponents, because of his thunder and that God's true strength became known only in the course of the battle, which Satan and his followers fought against God, 'and till then who knew the force of those dire arms?' He asserts that he is not repentant of his rebellion against Heaven's ruler, that his mind is 'fixed' (steadfast), that he feels a great contempt for the heavenly ruler because of his 'sense of injured merit.' He claims that a battle only, not the war, has been lost, and that there remains in him an integrated personality still by virtue of the unifying power of the unconquerable will, the pursuit of revenge, and undying hate, to which he adds the courage never to submit or yield. He will never beg for reconciliation with his victor. He proposes endless war with that power. Satan's supreme self-confidence, his determination to continue the war against God and his declaration not 'to bow and sue for grace with suppliant knee' are generally regarded as heroic qualities worthy of admiration. But this speech also makes Satan's evil intentions quite clear. He is prompted by undying hatred for God and a desire for revenge: 'And study of revenge, immortal hate.' He is prepared to wage the war 'by force or guile'. These are certainly not heroic aspects of his character. These do but lower him in our estimation by neutralizing, to a great extent, his heroic characteristics, Besides, his assertion that nobody knew beforehand the precise strength of God's 'dire arms' is sheer hypocrisy because, dwelling in Heaven, he could not have been unaware of the extent of God's power. His claim to superiority over God in respect of what he calls 'foresight' is sheer arrogance. How, then, can we admire, or sympathize with, Satan?

Satan's second speech is also addressed to Beelzebub. He begins in the heroic vein by saying that 'to be weak is miserable, doing or suffering!'. But the evil in him emerges immediately when he says that 'to do aught good never will be our task, but ever to do ill our sole delight.' If God seeks 'to bring forth good' out of the evil of his enemies (Satan and his followers), they must strive to prevent that end and 'out of good still to find means of evil'. Only a perverse reader or critics can sympathize with Satan when Satan talks thus. Satan then goes on to speak of the opportunity that offers itself for the mobilization of the fallen angles. Here is an implicit admission by Satan of God's superior strength because the opportunity lies in God's having 'recalled his ministers of vengeance and pursuit back to the gates of Heaven.' He now proposes the reassembling of the rebellious angels in order to decide how to overcome this 'dire calamity' and what support to get from hope or what strength from despair. It cannot be denied that, in respect of the intensity of determination and courage, quite apart from any moral consideration, Satan does attain a heroic stature even by this speech, as he did by his first. But moral considerations can never be ignored.

Satan's third speech is also made with Beelzebub as his audience. This is one of his most celebrated speeches, and some lines from here became so famous that they are often quoted by anyone who knows anything of English poetry. Most readers find this speech to be highly inspiring and are therefore quickly won over to Satan's side. To the

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heroic qualities that he has previously revealed, Satan now adds a love of freedom and a hatred of slavery. He calls himself the 'new possessor' of Hell and claims to be 'one who brings a mind not to be changed by place or time.' 'The Mind is its own place, and in itself can make a Heaven of Hell, a Hell of Heaven'. These are certainly noble lines. 'Here at least we shall be free,' he goes on. 'To reign is worth ambition, though in Hell it is better to reign in Hell; than to serve in Heaven.' Such statements are bound to stir a certain degree of response in every reader. But the contradictions and absurdities of this speech leave no doubt in our minds about Milton's intentions. On one hand, Satan is shocked to see the region, the soil, the clime which he has got in exchange for Heaven. On the other, he speaks as if he had come to possess a grand treasure: 'Here at least we shall be free.....Here we may reign secure.' He finds himself in a place of 'mournful gloom' and total misery, and yet he declares that the mind in its own place and so on, He talks of being ' still the same', implying that he is equal in every respect to God except that God has a store of thunder at his disposal. If Hell is a place of total misery, how is it better to reign there than to serve in Heaven? In short, it is only the surface glitter of Satan's speech and its high sounding phrases that impress the reader. It is the language and the formal speech which holds the reader spellbound. The true substance of this speech and its true reality, amount to very little.

Satan's next speech is addressed to the fallen angels as they lie stunned on the fiery lake. This speech certainly shows the qualities of leadership in Satan, as is clear from its effect on the listeners. The speech is a combination of sarcasm and threat. But we should not forget the fact that he wrongly addresses the fallen angels as 'Princes, Potentates, and Warriors, ', speaking as if they were still in possession of their thrones and dignities in Heaven. He warns them that, if they remain disinterested, God's swift pursuers will transfix them to the bottom of Hell. This threat at least, is quite realistic. By means of it Satan is able to make his listeners feel ashamed of themselves for their inaction; On the whole, this is the speech of a great and effective leader who wins our respect and, to some extent, our sympathy.

Satan's next and last speech in Book I is also a stirring address to the fallen angels. He begins this speech with a bit of flattery by describing the fallen angels as 'Powers matchless, but with the Almighty'. The battle they have fought against God was 'not inglorious', though the result proved disastrous. But how could anyone, on the basis of knowledge, past or present, have anticipated that such a united force of angels could ever be defeated? Having thus restored their confidence in themselves, Satan holds out to them the hope of their being able to regain' Heaven. These 'puss ant legions' whose exile hath 'emptied' Heaven, he boastfully says, cannot fail to repossess their heavenly abode. He tries to explain away the defeat by saying that God's true strength had always been kept concealed by him, and it was this fact which tempted them to revolt against God.

Check Your Progress

17. When did Thomas Gray complete the poem *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*?
18. What is an elegy?

3.4 THOMAS GRAY

Fig. 3.3 Thomas Gray

Thomas Gray was born in Cornhill, London. He was the only son of Philip and Dorothy to survive infancy. He began living with his mother following her being separated from her husband. He was sent to Eton College where his uncle was a teacher. Reminiscing his wonderful days at Eton College, he later wrote *Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College*. Gray was a delicate and intelligent child who loved reading literature. During this time, he made three close friends- Horace Walpole, Thomas Ashton, and Richard West.

Gray moved to Peterhouse, Cambridge in 1734. He did not like the curriculum, teachers and his classmates at Peterhouse. He found the curriculum boring, teachers 'mad with Pride' and his classmates 'sleepy, drunken, dull, illiterate Things'. Though he took admission as a law student, yet he spent most of his time reading classical and contemporary literature.

It was in 1742 that he took poetry writing seriously after losing his close friend Stacy James Ruffer. He went to Cambridge and began a self-imposed programme of literary study. He turned out to be one of the most learned men of this period, though he called himself lazy. He became a Fellow of Peterhouse and later of Pembroke College, Cambridge. He spent most of his life as a scholar in Cambridge. Interestingly, he is considered a leading poet of the mid eighteenth century even though his published work during his lifetime amounts to less than 1,000 lines. He was offered the post of Poet Laureate in 1757 which he declined.

He was also known to be extremely self-critical and afraid of failures so much so that he published only thirteen poems throughout his lifetime. It is believed that the poet started writing his most popular poem *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard* in 1742 soon after the death of his close friend. However, he completed the poem in

1751 and it was soon published. The poem immediately turned out to be a literary sensation and is still considered one of the most popular poems of English language. Some of the popular phrases used in this poem are 'the paths of glory', 'celestial fire', 'kindred spirit', 'the unlettered muse', 'far from the madding crowd' and 'some mute inglorious Milton'. His poems exhibit his sharp observation and mischievous sense of humor. He passed away on 30 July 1771 in Cambridge.

Some of his popular poems are:

- *The Progress of Poesy*
- *The Bard*
- *Ode on the Death of a Favourite Cat*
- *Drowned in a Tub of Gold Fishes*
- *Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College*
- *Sonnet on the Death of Richard West*
- *Elegy*
- *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*

3.4.1 *Elegy written in the Country Churchyard*

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

Now fades the glimmering landscape on the sight,
And all the air a solemn stillness holds,
Save where the beetle wheels his droning flight,
And drowsy tinklings lull the distant folds:

Save that from yonder ivy-mantled tower
The moping owl does to the moon complain
Of such as, wandering near her secret bower,
Molest her ancient solitary reign.

Beneath those rugged elms, that yew-tree's shade,
Where heaves the turf in many a mouldering heap,
Each in his narrow cell for ever laid,
The rude Forefathers of the hamlet sleep.

The breezy call of incense-breathing morn,
The swallow twittering from the straw-built shed,
The cock's shrill clarion, or the echoing horn,
No more shall rouse them from their lowly bed.

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

Oft did the harvest to their sickle yield,
Their furrow oft the stubborn glebe has broke;
How jocund did they drive their team afield!
How bow'd the woods beneath their sturdy stroke!

Let not Ambition mock their useful toil,
Their homely joys, and destiny obscure;
Nor Grandeur hear with a disdainful smile
The short and simple annals of the Poor.

The boast of heraldry, the pomp of power,
And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave,
Awaits alike th' inevitable hour:-
The paths of glory lead but to the grave.

Nor you, ye Proud, impute to these the fault
If Memory o'er their tomb no trophies raise,
Where through the long-drawn aisle and fretted vault
The pealing anthem swells the note of praise.
Can storied urn or animated bust
Back to its mansion call the fleeting breath?
Can Honour's voice provoke the silent dust,
Or Flattery soothe the dull cold ear of Death?
Perhaps in this neglected spot is laid
Some heart once pregnant with celestial fire;
Hands, that the rod of empire might have sway'd,
Or waked to ecstasy the living lyre:

But Knowledge to their eyes her ample page,
Rich with the spoils of time, did ne'er unroll;
Chill Penury repress'd their noble rage,
And froze the genial current of the soul.

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An elegy is a form of a poem which is usually written to mourn the dead or renowned people. It does not tell a story but expresses feelings of sorrow. It admires the deceased person and describes the implications of his death on his loved ones. However, in *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*, Gray mourns the death of common people. It puts common people on pedestal and applauds them. The poet believes that death does not differentiate between renowned and common people. He wonders if there are any ordinary people buried in the churchyard whose talents could not be discovered by anyone. This thought encourages the poet to appreciate common people who have lived simple and honest lives.

The poem has the characteristics of Augustan as well as Romantic poetry since it was written towards the end of Augustan age, a period which marked the beginning of Romantic period. The poem exhibits balanced phrasing of Augustan age and emotionalism of Romantic era.

It is believed that Gray began writing this elegy in 1742 in the graveyard of a church in Stoke Poges, Buckinghamshire and completed it in 1751. The poem was first published in 1751 and its improved versions were published in 1753, 1758 and 1768. The poem is written in iambic pentameter and heroic quatrains. It is considered to be one of the masterpieces by Thomas Gray.

In the opening lines of the poem, the poet observes signs which depict that a country day is coming to a close. Some of these signs are a curfew bell knelling, cattle across the field and a farmer going back home. After sometime, the poet feels lonely and thinks about the isolated rural landscape. 'Knell' is a sound of a bell, especially when it is rung solemnly to announce a death or funeral. Thus, the poet uses this word in the first line of the poem deliberately to remind the readers about the mortality of human life.

The sober tone is maintained by the poet even in the second stanza. However, it is important to note that the poet seems to be meditative and not sad at this point. He describes the quiet atmosphere around him after the day has come to a close by using phrases like 'fades the glimmering landscape', 'air a solemn stillness' and 'drowsy tinklings'. Then, an owl's sound breaks the silence of the atmosphere. The owl is sad and complains to the moon. In the first three stanzas, the poet does not make any direct reference to funeral and death but indirectly prepares the atmosphere for funeral by describing some doleful sounds.

In the fourth stanza, the poet draws our attention to the graves in the country churchyard. The poet describes the load of earth and brings out the fact that even the earth has to be disrupted for digging a grave. The poet inverts the sentence from 'Where heaves the turf' to 'Where the turf heaves' in order to depict that the earth has already been disrupted. However, this disruption does not affect 'rude Forefathers' buried beneath the earth. They seem to be unmoved and at peace. The poet tells us that they are in 'cells'. Here the word 'cells' connotes quietness of the graveyard and that they are in deep 'sleep'.

Here the poet reminds us that the forefathers would not rise from their 'lowly beds' even after hearing 'cock's shrill clarion'. The phrase 'lowly beds' connotes humble graves and humble lives that they have lived. The poet also reminds us that they would not be able to hear the satisfying sounds of country life and would not be able to enjoy the joy that family life brings, such as the joy which a father feels when his children 'climb his knees'.

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In addition to this, the poet also states that forefathers lying in the graves would not be able to enjoy the pleasures of working in the fields. A poem that deals with practical aspects of agriculture and rural affairs is called georgic verse. This stanza brings out the element of georgic verse in the poem, a verse that was quite popular in the eighteenth century. This relation of a farmer with soil also brings out the link of a man with nature. The element of nature was one of the major characteristics of Romantic poetry.

Further, the poet warns the rich and powerful people not to scorn the ordinary people just because they are not popular and do not have annals written on their graves. Here he reminds the rich people that they would also die one day irrespective of the fact that they are wealthy and have a respectable position in the society.

He also tells the rich that they should not look down upon the modest graves of the ordinary people. He also implies that even though the powerful people have elaborate graves with profuse memorials and inspiring honours but these do not help in bringing them back to life. Their merits in life would not save them from death. He uses the phrase 'Can Honour's voice provoke the silent dust, Or Flattery soothe the dull cold ear of Death?'. In these lines, Gray personifies flattery and death as if death has a will which cannot be changed even with the help of flattery.

Gray then wonders about the hidden talents and intellectual abilities of the common people. He states that they might have become powerful people or great poets but there was no one to patronize them. Their lack of resources forced them to resort to rustic life and froze all their ambitions.

Full many a gem of purest ray serene
The dark unfathom'd caves of ocean bear:
Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,
And waste its sweetness on the desert air.

Some village-Hampden, that with dauntless breast
The little tyrant of his fields withstood,
Some mute inglorious Milton here may rest,
Some Cromwell, guiltless of his country's blood.

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

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

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

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

Yet e'en these bones from insult to protect
Some frail memorial still erected nigh,
With uncouth rhymes and shapeless sculpture deck'd,
Implores the passing tribute of a sigh.

Their name, their years, spelt by th' unletter'd Muse,
The place of fame and elegy supply:
And many a holy text around she strews,
That teach the rustic moralist to die.

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

On some fond breast the parting soul relies,
Some pious drops the closing eye requires;
E'en from the tomb the voice of Nature cries,
E'en in our ashes live their wonted fires.

For thee, who, mindful of th' unhonour'd dead,
Dost in these lines their artless tale relate;
If chance, by lonely contemplation led,
Some kindred spirit shall inquire thy fate, —

Haply some hoary-headed swain may say,
Oft have we seen him at the peep of dawn
Brushing with hasty steps the dews away,

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

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

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

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

The Epitaph

Here rests his head upon the lap of Earth
A youth to Fortune and to Fame unknown.
Fair Science frowned not on his humble birth,
And Melacholy marked him for her own.

Large was his bounty, and his soul sincere,
Heaven did a recompense as largely send:
He gave to Misery all he had, a tear,
He gained from Heaven ('twas all he wish'd) a friend.
No farther seek his merits to disclose,
Or draw his frailties from their dreaabode
(There they alike in trembling hope repose),
The bosom of his Father and his God.

The poet compares common people to pearls and gems that lay deep down in the oceans and are unseen. He also compares them to flowers in jungles which fade away unnoticed.

In the past, these graveyards gave shelter to Hampden when he faced Charles I. Thus, these graveyards may help such heroes even in the future. He again reminds us of the talents of these common people. He believes that among these graves lay people whose talents might be equivalent to those of Milton and Cromwell. Some of them perhaps deserved to be great legislators and were capable of bringing prosperity to their country. But he is also of the opinion that though their poverty stopped them from prospering but it also helped them by stopping them from committing crimes like killing their own brothers for the throne.

Some ambitious people tried to gain patronage by flattering their patrons. People who did not do such things and died unknown were at least saved from 'killing their conscience' to get patronage. The poet is happy about the fact that villagers are away from the hustle and bustle of city life where people cherish high ambitions and spend their lives hankering for prosperity, power and fame. He is happy that villagers are able to spend a peaceful life.

Though the graves of these people are not elaborately ornamented and are not full of rhymes of praise like the graves of the rich people yet some records of their lives and few sayings from the Bible are written on their graves. These sayings might have been written by some educated people of the village so that other people can praise these deceased people. The Bible inscriptions perhaps help these people embrace death cheerfully.

After this, Gray explains the reasons for raising memorials. He tells us that memorials are raised because people spend their lives struggling therefore they wish to be remembered after death. According to the poet, even parting souls wish their loved ones to cry for them and want praises to be written on their tombs.

Now, the poet wonders about his own death. He wonders what would happen if his loved ones inquire about him from the villagers after he dies. The poet imagines that if this happens then some peasant might tell them that he was usually found walking around this area. He also visualizes that some peasant might tell them that he could not be seen around the hills, trees and lawn, where he was usually found, for two consecutive days and the next day his corpse with lamentation was carried to the church.

Then the peasant might say that he is now in the lap of the earth. He might praise the poet that he was not fortunate enough to get fame and wealth during his lifetime but he was a knowledgeable person in spite of the fact that he was born in a modest family. The peasant might feel sad about the fact that the poet was devoid of happiness during his lifetime. But he might praise him as a sincere soul who was charitable and liberal in approach and helped poor people with his limited resources.

He then says that no one might then even ask about his merits and faults because God is the one who would reward him for his good deeds and punish him for his bad deeds on the Judgment Day. Thus, the elegy ends on a note of contentment.

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3.5 ALEXANDER POPE

Fig. 3.4 Alexander Pope

Alexander Pope was the son of Alexander Pope Senior. He was born in London. His father was a Roman Catholic linen-merchant. Pope spent his childhood at Binfield at the edge of Windsor Forest. He always recalled this period as a golden age in his later life.

Thy forests, Windsor, and thy green retreats,
At once the monarch's and the Muse's seats,
Invite my lays
Be present, sylvan maids!
Unlock your springs,
and open all your shades.

Tales from the life of Pope were thought to be worthy of being collected. According to Joseph Spence, a critic, minor poet and Pope's biographer, Pope was a child of a particularly sweet temper and had a great deal of sweetness in his look when he was a boy'. He was given the nickname of the little nightingale because of his melodious voice.

Pope's father–the son of an Anglican vicar, converted to Catholicism. It led to a lot of problems in the family. During those times, Catholics suffered repressive legislation and prejudices. They did not get entry to any universities nor were they given any kind of public employment. So, Pope had an irregular education that was frequently interrupted. He was expelled from Twyford School as he wrote a satire on one of the teachers. So, his aunt taught him at home how to read. He learned Latin and Greek from a local priest and acquired the knowledge of French and Italian poetry later. He even attended clandestine Catholic schools.

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Most of his time was spent reading books from his father's library. According to his half-sister, at times, he did nothing but write and read. While he was in school, Pope wrote a play that was based on speeches from the *Iliad*. Samuel Johnson describes that Pope's first epic poem, *Alcander*, was burned at the suggestion of Francis Atterbury, who was later exiled for treason as he supported the deposed Stuart monarchy.

In 1700, when his family shifted to Binfield in Windsor Forest, Pope got infected with tuberculosis because of infected milk. It is said that it was possibly Pott's disease, which is a tubercular infection of the bones. He even suffered from asthma and constant headaches and his humpback was a regular target for critics to ridicule him in literary battles. Pope was known as 'hunchbacked toad'. In his middle age, he was only 4ft 6in tall and wore a stiffened canvas bodice for supporting his spine.

After he shifted to London, Pope published his first major work, which was *An Essay on Criticism*. This essay was based on neo-classical doctrines and it derived standards of taste from the order of nature.

Good nature and good sense must ever join;
To err is human, to forgive divine.

Before he became one of the members of Scriblerus Club, Pope was associated with anti-Catholic Whig friends, but by 1713 he was inclined towards the Tories. Some of his Tory friends were Jonathan Swift, Gray, Congreve and Robert Harley, the first Earl of Oxford. In 1712, Pope published an early version of *The Rape of the Lock*. It was an elegant satire regarding the battle between the sexes and follies of a young woman with her puffs, powders, patches, Bibles, billet-doux. The work got expanded in 1714. Its first version had two cantos (1712) and the final version five cantos.

3.5.1 *Rape of the Lock*

Canto I

What dire Offence from am'rous Causes springs,
What mighty Contests rise from trivial Things,
I sing — This Verse to C——, Muse! is due;
This, ev'n Belinda may vouchfafe to view:
Slight is the Subject, but not so the Praise,
If She inspire, and He approve my Lays.
Say what strange Motive, Goddess! cou'd compel
A well-bred Lord t'assault a gentle Belle?
Oh say what stranger Cause, yet unexplor'd,
Cou'd make a gentle Belle reject a Lord? [1.10]
And dwells such Rage in softest Bosoms then?
And lodge such daring Souls in Little Men?
Sol thro' white Curtains shot a tim'rous Ray,
And op'd those Eyes that must eclipse the Day;
Now Lapdogs give themselves the rowzing Shake,

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And sleepless Lovers, just at Twelve, awake:
Thrice rung the Bell, the Slipper knock'd the Ground,
And the press'd Watch return'd a silver Sound.
Belinda still her downy Pillow prest,
Her Guardian Sylph prolong'd the balmy Rest. [1.20]
'Twas he had summon'd to her silent Bed
The Morning-Dream that hover'd o'er her Head.
A Youth more glitt'ring than a Birth-night Beau,
(That ev'n in Slumber caus'd her Cheek to glow)
Seem'd to her Ear his winning Lips to lay,
And thus in Whispers said, or seem'd to say.
Fairest of Mortals, thou distinguish'd Care
Of thousand bright Inhabitants of Air!
If e'er one Vision touch'd thy infant Thought,
Of all the Nurse and all the Priest have taught, [1.30]
Of airy Elves by Moonlight Shadows seen,
The silver Token, and the circled Green,
Or Virgins visited by Angel-Pow'rs,
With Golden Crowns and Wreaths of heav'nly Flowers,
Hear and believe! thy own Importance know,
Nor bound thy narrow Views to Things below.
Some secret Truths from Learned Pride conceal'd,
To Maids alone and Children are reveal'd:
What tho' no Credit doubting Wits may give?
The Fair and Innocent shall still believe. [1.40]
Know then, unnumbered Spirits round thee fly,
The light Militia of the lower Sky;
These, tho' unseen, are ever on the Wing,
Hang o'er the Box, and hover round the Ring.
Think what an Equipage thou hast in Air,
And view with scorn Two Pages and a Chair.
As now your own, our Beings were of old,
And once inclos'd in Woman's beauteous Mold;
Thence, by a soft Transition, we repair
From earthly Vehicles to these of Air. [1.50]
Think not, when Woman's transient Breath is fled,
That all her Vanities at once are dead:
Succeeding Vanities she still regards,

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And tho' she plays no more, o'erlooks the Cards.
Her Joy in gilded Chariots, when alive,
And Love of Ombre, after Death survive.
For when the Fair in all their Pride expire,
To their first Elements the Souls retire:
The Sprights of fiery Termagants in Flame
Mount up, and take a Salamander's Name. [1.60]
Soft yielding Minds to Water glide away,
And sip with Nymphs, their Elemental Tea.
The graver Prude sinks downward to a Gnome,
In search of Mischief still on Earth to roam.
The light Coquettes in Sylphs aloft repair,
And sport and flutter in the Fields of Air.
Know farther yet; Whoever fair and chaste
Rejects Mankind, is by some Sylph embrac'd:
For Spirits, freed from mortal Laws, with ease
Assume what Sexes and what Shapes they please. [1.70]
What guards the Purity of melting Maids,
In Courtly Balls, and Midnight Masquerades,
Safe from the treach'rous Friend, and daring Spark,
The Glance by Day, the Whisper in the Dark;
When kind Occasion prompts their warm Desires,
When Musick softens, and when Dancing fires?
'Tis but their Sylph, the wise Celestials know,
Tho' Honour is the Word with Men below.
Some Nymphs there are, too conscious of their Face,
For Life predestin'd to the Gnomes Embrace. [1.80]
These swell their Prospects and exalt their Pride,
When Offers are disdain'd, and Love deny'd.
Then gay Ideas crowd the vacant Brain;
While Peers and Dukes, and all their sweeping Train,
And Garters, Stars, and Coronets appear,
And in soft Sounds, Your Grace salutes their Ear.
'Tis these that early taint the Female Soul,
Instruct the Eyes of young Coquettes to roll,
Teach Infants Cheeks a bidden Blush to know,
And little Hearts to flutter at a Beau. [1.90]
Oft when the World imagine Women stray,

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The Sylphs thro' mystick Mazes guide their Way,
Thro' all the giddy Circle they pursue,
And old Impertinence expel by new.
What tender Maid but must a Victim fall
To one Man's Treat, but for another's Ball?
When Florio speaks, what Virgin could withstand,
If gentle Damon did not squeeze her Hand?

With varying Vanities, from ev'ry Part,
They shift the moving Toyshopof their Heart; [1.100]
Where Wigs with Wigs, with Sword-knots Sword-knots strive,
Beaus banish Beaus, and Coaches Coaches drive.
This erring Mortals Levity may call,
Oh blind to Truth! the Sylphs contrive it all.
Of these am I, who thy Protection claim,
A watchful Sprite, and Ariel is my Name.
Late, as I rang'd the Crystal Wilds of Air,
In the clear Mirror of thy ruling Star
I saw, alas! some dread Event impend,
E're to the Main this Morning Sun descend. [1.110]
But Heav'n reveals not what, or how, or where:
Warn'd by thy Sylph, oh Pious Maid beware!
This to disclose is all thy Guardian can.
Beware of all, but most beware of Man!
He said; when Shock, who thought she slept too long,
Leapt up, and wak'd his Mistress with his Tongue.
'Twas then Belinda, if Report say true,
Thy Eyes first open'd on a Billet-doux.
Wounds, Charms, and Ardors, were no sooner read,
But all the Vision vanish'd from thy Head. [1.120]
And now, unveil'd, the Toilet stands display'd,
Each Silver Vase in mystic Order laid.
First, rob'd in White, the Nymph intent adores
With Head uncover'd, the cosmetic Pow'rs.
A heav'nly Image in the Glass appears,
To that she bends, to that her Eyes she rears;
Th' inferior Priestess, at her Altar's side,
Trembling, begins the sacred Rites of Pride.

NOTES

Unnumber'd Treasures ope at once, and here
The various Off'rings of the World appear; [1.130]
From each she nicely culls with curious Toil,
And decks the Goddess with the glitt'ring Spoil.
This Casket India's glowing Gems unlocks,
And all Arabia breathes from yonder Box.
The Tortoise here and Elephant unite,
Transform'd to Combs, the speckled and the white.
Here Files of Pins extend their shining Rows,
Puffs, Powders, Patches, Bibles, Billet-doux.
Now awful Beauty puts on all its Arms;
The Fair each moment rises in her Charms, [1.140]
Repairs her Smiles, awakens ev'ry Grace,
And calls forth all the Wonders of her Face;
Sees by Degrees a purer Blush arise,
And keener Lightnings quicken in her Eyes.
The busy Sylphs surround their darling Care;
These set the Head, and those divide the Hair,
Some fold the Sleeve, while others plait the Gown;
And Betty's prais'd for Labours not her own.

Canto I

The Rape of the Lock begins with a passage that describes the subject of the poem. It invokes the blessing of the muse. The sun ('Sol') appears to begin the lazy morning routines of a rich household. The lapdogs shake themselves awake, bells starts to ring and even though it is already noon, Belinda is still asleep. She has been dreaming, and you come to know that the dream has been sent by 'her guardian Sylph,' Ariel. In the dream she sees a handsome youth who tells her that she was protected by 'unnumber'd spirits'. These spirits are an army of supernatural beings who once lived on earth in the form of human women. The youth also explains that these spirits are the invisible guardians of a woman's chastity, even though the credit is generally given to 'Honour' instead of to their divine stewardship. Among these spirits, a particular group—the Sylphs, dwell in the air. They act as Belinda's personal guardians. These sylphs are devoted, almost lover-like, towards any woman who has 'rejects mankind.' These sylphs understand and reward the vanities of an elegant and frivolous lady such as Belinda. Ariel, who is the chief of all Belinda's puckish protectors, gives her warning in the dream that a dreadful event is going to befall her that day, although he can tell her nothing more specific than that that she must be 'beware of Man!' Then Belinda awakes, to the licking tongue of her pet lapdog, Shock. Upon the delivery of a billet-doux, or love-letter, she forgets all about the dream. She then goes towards her dressing table and goes through an elaborate ritual of dressing, in which her image in the mirror looks as a 'heavenly image,' or a 'goddess.' The Sylphs, though unseen, assist their charge as she gets ready for the day's activities.

NOTES

The opening of the poem describes its mock-heroic style. Pope in the beginning itself introduces the epic subjects of love and war. He invokes his muse and writes a dedication to the man (the historical John Caryll) who commissioned him to write the poem.

The second line of the poem confirms in clear terms what the first line already hints at: the 'am'rous causes' the poem talks about cannot be compared to the grand love of Greek heroes but they rather represent a basic version of that emotion. The 'contest' that Pope alludes to proves to be 'mighty' only in an ironic sense. They are just small card-games and flirtatious tussles and not the great battles of epic tradition. Belinda is not, like Helen of Troy, 'the face that launched a thousand ships' but she has a face that although also beautiful leads to a lot of foppish nonsense. The initial two verse-paragraphs describe the comic inappropriateness of the epic style (and corresponding mind-set) towards the subject at hand. Pope gets this discrepancy at the level of the line and half-line; the reader has to dwell on the incompatibility among the two sides of his parallel formulations. So, in this world, it is 'little men' who in 'tasks so bold... engage'; and 'soft bosoms' are the dwelling-place for 'mighty rage'. In this startling juxtaposition of the petty and the grand, the former exists while the latter is ironic. In mock-epic, the high heroic style works not just to dignify the subject but instead to expose and ridicule it. So, the basic irony of the style supports the substance of the poem's satire. It attacks the misguided values of a society, which takes small matters for serious ones while failing to attend to issues of basic importance.

By Belinda's dream, Pope introduces the 'machinery' of the poem–the supernatural powers, which affect the action from behind the scenes. Here, the sprites which guard Belinda are depicted to represent the gods of the Greek and Roman traditions. These gods are at times benevolent and sometimes malicious, but they are always intimately involved in the earthly events. The scheme also makes use of other ancient hierarchies and systems of order. Ariel describes that women's spirits, when they die, return 'to their first elements'. Each female personality type gets converted in a particular kind of sprite. They are gnomes, sylphs, salamanders and nymphs. They in turn, are associated with the four elements of earth, air, fire and water. The ones who were light coquettes in their lives became airy sylphs. These airy sylphs have a particular concern for Belinda as she is their type, and it becomes the characteristic of feminine nature with which the poem is most concerned.

Pope begins to sketch the character of the coquettes in the initial canto. He draws the portrait indirectly, by characteristics of the sylphs instead of Belinda herself. Their priorities describe that the basic concerns of womanhood, particularly for women of Belinda's class, are social ones. Woman's 'joy in gilded Chariots' display an obsession with pomp and superficial splendour, while 'love of Ombre', a fashionable card game, and hints at frivolity. The erotic charge of this social world in turn indicates towards another central concern, i.e., the protection of chastity. These are those women who above all value the prospect of marrying to advantage, and they have learned at an early age how to promote themselves and manipulate their suitors without making any compromises. The sylphs become an allegory for the mannered conventions, which govern female social behaviour. Basic principles like honour and chastity have become a part of conventional interaction. Pope clearly says that these women are not conducting themselves on the basis of abstract moral principles, but rather they are governed by an elaborate social mechanism–of which the sylphs cut a fitting caricature. While Pope's technique of employing supernatural machinery permits him to ridicule

this situation, it also assists to keep the satire light and to exonerate individual women from too severe a judgment. If Belinda has all the typical female foibles, Pope wants us to identify that it is basically because she has been trained and educated to act in this manner. On the whole, the society is as much to blame as she is. Men are also not exempt from this judgment. The competition among the young lords for the attention of beautiful ladies is described as a battle of vanity, as 'wigs with wigs, with sword-knots sword-knots strive'. Pope's phrases here display a strange attention towards pride and ostentation.

Pope's description of Belinda at her dressing table describes mock-heroic motifs, which will run through the poem. The scene of her toilette is talked about as a religious sacrament, in which Belinda is the priestess and her image in the looking glass is the Goddess that she serves. This parody of the religious rites before a battle then leads to another mock-epic scene, which is of the ritualized arming of the hero. The place of weapons is taken by combs, pins and cosmetics as 'the awful Beauty puts on all its arms'.

Canto II

Not with more Glories, in th' Etherial Plain,
The Sun first rises o'er the purpled Main,
Than issuing forth, the Rival of his Beams
Lanch'd on the Bosom of the Silver Thames.
Fair Nymphs, and well-drest Youths around her shone,
But ev'ry Eye was fix'd on her alone.
On her white Breast a sparkling Cross she wore,
Which Jews might kiss, and Infidels adore.
Her lively Looks a sprightly Mind disclose,
Quick as her Eyes, and as unfix'd as those: [2.10]
Favours to none, to all she Smiles extends,
Oft she rejects, but never once offends.
Bright as the Sun, her Eyes the Gazers strike,
And, like the sun, they shine on all alike.
Yet graceful Ease, and Sweetness void of Pride,
Might hide her Faults, if Belles had faults to hide:
If to her share some Female Errors fall,
Look on her Face, and you'll forget 'em all.
This Nymph, to the Destruction of Mankind,
Nourish'd two Locks, which graceful hung behind [2.20]
In equal Curls, and well conspir'd to deck
With shining Ringlets her smooth Iv'ry Neck.
Love in these Labyrinths his Slaves detains,
And mighty Hearts are held in slender Chains.

NOTES

NOTES

With hairy Sprindges we the Birds betray,
Slight Lines of Hair surprize the Finny Prey,
Fair Tresses Man's Imperial Race insnare,
And Beauty draws us with a single Hair.
Th' Adventrous Baron the bright Locks admir'd,
He saw, he wish'd, and to the Prize aspir'd: [2.30]
Resolv'd to win, he meditates the way,
By Force to ravish, or by Fraud betray;
For when Success a Lover's Toil attends,
Few ask, if Fraud or Force attain'd his Ends.
For this, e're Phoebus rose, he had implor'd
Propitious Heav'n, and ev'ry Pow'r ador'd,
But chiefly Love — to Love an Altar built,
Of twelve vast French Romances, neatly gilt.
There lay three Garters, half a Pair of Gloves;
And all the Trophies of his former Loves. [2.40]
With tender Billet-doux he lights the Pyre,
And breathes three am'rous Sighs to raise the Fire.
Then prostrate falls, and begs with ardent Eyes
Soon to obtain, and long possess the Prize:
The Pow'rs gave Ear, and granted half his Pray'r,
The rest, the Winds dispers'd in empty Air.
But now secure the painted Vessel glides,
The Sun-beams trembling on the floating Tydes,
While melting Musick steals upon the Sky,
And soften'd Sounds along the Waters die. [2.50]
Smooth flow the Waves, the Zephyrs gently play,
Belinda smil'd, and all the World was gay.
All but the Sylph — With careful Thoughts opprest,
Th' impending Woe sate heavy on his Breast.
He summons strait his Denizens of Air;
The lucid Squadrons round the Sails repair:
Soft o'er the Shrouds Aerial Whispers breathe,
That seem'd but Zephyrs to the Train beneath.
Some to the Sun their Insect-Wings unfold,
Waft on the Breeze, or sink in Clouds of Gold. [2.60]

NOTES

Transparent Forms, too fine for mortal Sight,
Their fluid Bodies half dissolv'd in Light.
Loose to the Wind their airy Garments flew,
Thin glitt'ring Textures of the filmy Dew;
Dipt in the richest Tincture of the Skies,
Where Light disports in ever-mingling Dies,
While ev'ry Beam new transient Colours flings,
Colours that change whene'er they wave their Wings.
Amid the Circle, on the gilded Mast,
Superior by the Head, was Ariel plac'd; [2.70]
His Purple Pinions opening to the Sun,
He rais'd his Azure Wand, and thus begun.
Ye Sylphs and Sylphids, to your Chief give Ear,
Fays, Fairies, Genii, Elves, and Dæmons hear!
Ye know the Spheres and various Tasks assign'd,
By Laws Eternal, to th' Aerial Kind.
Some in the Fields of purest 'ther play,
And bask and whiten in the Blaze of Day.
Some guide the Course of wandring Orbs on high,
Or roll the Planets thro' the boundless Sky. [2.80]
Some less refin'd, beneath the Moon's pale Light
Hover, and catch the shooting stars by Night;
Or suck the Mists in grosser Air below,
Or dip their Pinions in the painted Bow,
Or brew fierce Tempests on the wintry Main,
Or o'er the Glebe distill the kindly Rain.
Others on Earth o'er human Race preside,
Watch all their Ways, and all their Actions guide:
Of these the Chief the Care of Nations own,
And guard with Arms Divine the British Throne. [2.90]
Our humbler Province is to tend the Fair,
Not a less pleasing, tho' less glorious Care.
To save the Powder from too rude a Gale,
Nor let th' imprison'd Essences exhale,
To draw fresh Colours from the vernal Flow'rs,
To steal from Rainbows ere they drop in Show'rs
A brighter Wash; to curl their waving Hairs,

NOTES

Assist their Blushes, and inspire their Airs;
Nay oft, in Dreams, Invention we bestow,
To change a Flounce, or add a Furbelo. [2.100]
This Day, black Omens threat the brightestFair
That e'er deserv'd a watchful Spirit's Care;
Some dire Disaster, or by Force, or Slight,
But what, or where, the Fates have wrapt in Night.
Whether the Nymph shall break Diana's Law,
Or some frail China Jar receive a Flaw,
Or stain her Honour, or her new Brocade,
Forget her Pray'rs, or miss a Masquerade,
Or lose her Heart, or Necklace, at a Ball;
Or whether Heav'n has doom'd that Shock must fall. [2.110]
Haste then ye Spirits! to your Charge repair;
The flutt'ring Fan be Zephyretta's Care;
The Drops to thee, Brillante, we consign;
And Momentilla, let the Watch be thine;
Do thou, Crispissa, tend her fav'rite Lock;
Ariel himself shall be the Guard of Shock.
To Fifty chosen Sylphs, of special Note,
We trust th' important Charge, the Petticoat.
Oft have we known that sev'nfold Fence to fail;
Tho' stiff with Hoops, and arm'd with Ribs of Whale. [2.120]
Form a strong Line about the Silver Bound,
And guard the wide Circumference around.
Whatever spirit, careless of his Charge,
His Post neglects, or leaves the Fair at large,
Shall feel sharp Vengeance soon o'ertake his Sins,
Be stopt in Vials, or transfixt with Pins.
Or plung'd in Lakes of bitter Washes lie,
Or wedg'd whole Ages in a Bodkin's Eye:
Gums and Pomatums shall his Flight restrain,
While clog'd he beats his silken Wings in vain; [2.130]
Or Alom-Stypticks with contracting Power
Shrink his thin Essence like a rivell'd Flower.
Or as Ixion fix'd, the Wretch shall feel
The giddy Motion of the whirling Mill,

NOTES

In Fumes of burning Chocolate shall glow,
And tremble at the Sea that froaths below!
He spoke; the Spirits from the Sails descend;
Some, Orb in Orb, around the Nymph extend,
Some thrid the mazy Ringlets of her Hair,
Some hang upon the Pendants of her Ear; [2.140]
With beating Hearts the dire Event they wait,
Anxious, and trembling for the Birth of Fate.

Canto II

In that boat was Baron, a young man who cannot help admiring Belinda's locks. He is so attracted to them that he wishes to possess them and is willing to steal them.

He takes this mission up as a serious one and focusses his energies on it. He rises early that morning and constructs an altar at which he prays for the success of the mission. He wishes to succeed in this test of love. He sacrifices everything else that he possesses as tokens of his past love and relationships including gloves, garters and love letters. He builds a pyre with these 'past love tokens' and prostrates before it. He then sets fire to the pyre which he fans with his sighs, heavy with love. Although the gods listen to his prayers, they opt to grant him only half of his wishes.

As the boat continues its journey, all the passengers are happy and without cares except Ariel. His thoughts keep going back to the fact that some bad event is predicted for the day. He gathers an army of sylphs around him and reminds them in a ceremonious manner of their duties and responsibilities. He tells them that other than focussing on the regulation of the weather and celestial bodies and guarding the British Monarch, it is their duty to 'tend the Fair', that is, to watch over fair maidens and ladies. They should be attending to their clothing, curls, perfumes and assisting 'their blushes' and inspiring 'their airs. He tells them that there is some harm waiting to happen to Belinda that her life is under threat. He assigns an army of bodyguards to watch over Belinda.

He orders Brillante to watch over her earrings, Momentiall to guard her watch and Crispissa to watch over her locks. He took it upon himself to watch over the lapdog, Shock. An army of fifty sylphs were told to guard the petticoat. Ariel also announces that anyone who fails to fulfil his duties or responsibilities will receive severe punishment. They all take up their positions and wait.

Pope, from the very start, considers Belinda's beauty to be divine. It is an assessment which Belinda further proves and strengthens by creating an altar to her own image in a metaphorical sense.

This praise is ironical in a way because it reflects negatively on a system of public values where external characteristics are held in high esteem and ranked higher than characteristics pertaining to moral values or the intellect. Pope also reveres the physical charms of his heroine and admits that her charms are capable enough to make an individual forget the errors attributed to the gender.

It is said that Pope tried to flatter Arabella Fermor, the lady on whom the character of Belinda is based. He was determined to achieve the desired effect with his poetry by not offending.

NOTES

Pope praises the ways in which physical attributes of beauty are seen as art. He is in awe of the beauty of Belinda's locks that to him seem to have a natural and spontaneous fall but are actually made to appear so. Here, all that can be achieved at a lady's dressing table or al the mysteries associated with it are similar to Pope's own literary art. He himself describes it as 'nature to advantage dress'd'.

Although he sort of approves of secretly admiring feminine beauty, he also feels that readily worshipping beauty in such a manner will tantamount to sacrilege.

The cross that Belinda wears as a necklace is more an ornamental piece of jewellery than a religious symbol. Therefore, it may receive equal appreciation from the Christians as well as the 'Jews' and 'Infidels'.

It is unclear whether the admirers appreciate the cross itself or the fair bosom on which it rests or the felicitous effect of the whole. The Baron, of course, is the most significant of those who worship at Belinda's beauty altar. He performs a daily ritual sacrifice in the pre-dawn hours. This ritual is yet another mock-heroic element of the poem. It mimics the epic tradition of sacrificing to the gods before any battle or journey, and drapes his project with an absurdly grand import, which actually only exposes its triviality. The basic fact that he discards all his other love tokens in these preparations shows his capriciousness as a lover. Earnest prayer, in this scene gets replaced by the self-indulgent sighs of the lover. When the gods grant only half of what the Baron asks, Pope alludes towards the epic convention by which the favour of the gods is just a mixed blessing for winning the sponsorship of one god. In this poem, the effects of a prayer 'half' granted are negligible instead of being tragic. It just means that he would be able to steal just a lock instead of both of them.

In the first canto, the religious imagery around Belinda's grooming rituals led to a militaristic conceit. Here also, the same pattern holds. Her curls are described as traps that are perfectly calibrated for ensnaring the enemy. Yet the quality of female coyness is so that it seeks simultaneously to attract as well as repel, so that the counterpart of the enticing ringlets is a formidable petticoat. This undergarment is described as a defensive armament, which is comparable to the shield of Achilles. Its basic function is to protect the maiden's chastity by the invisible might of fifty sylphs. The sylphs, Belinda's protectors, have the duty to protect her not from failure but from being too great a success in attracting men. This paradoxical situation dramatizes the contradictory values and motives that were implied in the era's sexual conventions.

In this canto, the sexual allegory of the poem starts to come in fuller view. The name of the poem already associates the cutting of Belinda's hair with a more explicit sexual conquest, and Pope cultivates that suggestion here. He enhances his sexually metaphorical language for the incident, by adding words like 'ravish' and 'betray' to the 'rape' of the title. He also slips in some comments about the implications of his society's sexual mores, as when he remarks that 'when success a Lover's toil attends, / few ask, if fraud or force attain'd his ends.' When Ariel speculates about the possible forms the 'dire disaster' might take, he includes a breach of chastity ('Diana's law'), the breaking of china (another allusion to the loss of virginity) and the staining of honour or a gown (the two incommensurate events could happen equally easily and accidentally). He also describes some pettier social 'disasters' against which the Sylphs are equally prepared to fight, like missing a ball (here, as grave as missing prayers) or losing the lapdog. In the Sylphs' defensive efforts, Belinda's petticoat is the battlefield, which needs the most extensive fortifications. This fact hints at the idea that the rape of the lock stands in for a literal rape or at least represents a threat to her chastity more serious than just a mere theft of a curl.

NOTES

Canto III

Close by those Meads for ever crown'd with Flow'rs,
Where Thames with Pride surveys his rising Tow'rs,
There stands a Structure of Majestick Frame,
Which from the neighb'ring Hampton takes its Name.
Here Britain's Statesmen oft the Fall foredoom
Of Foreign Tyrants, and of Nymphs at home;
Here Thou, great Anna! whom three Realms obey,
Dost sometimes Counsel take — and sometimes Tea.
Hither the Heroes and the Nymphs resort,
To taste awhile the Pleasures of a Court; [3.10]
In various Talk th' instructive hours they past,
Who gave the Ball, or paid the Visit last:
One speaks the Glory of the British Queen,
And one describes a charming Indian Screen.
A third interprets Motions, Looks, and Eyes;
At ev'ry Word a Reputation dies.
Snuff, or the Fan, supply each Pause of Chat,
With singing, laughing, ogling, and all that.
Mean while declining from the Noon of Day,
The Sun obliquely shoots his burning Ray; [3.20]
The hungry Judges soon the Sentence sign,
And Wretches hang that Jury-men may Dine;
The Merchant from th' exchange returns in Peace,
And the long Labours of the Toilette cease—
Belinda now, whom Thirst of Fame invites,
Burns to encounter two adventrous Knights,
At Ombre singly to decide their Doom;
And swells her Breast with Conquests yet to come.
Strait the three Bands prepare in Arms to join,
Each Band the number of the Sacred Nine. [3.30]
Soon as she spreads her Hand, th' Aerial Guard
Descend, and sit on each important Card,
First Ariel perch'd upon a Matadore,
Then each, according to the Rank they bore;
For Sylphs, yet mindful of their ancient Race,
Are, as when Women, wondrous fond of place.

NOTES

Behold, four Kings in Majesty rever'd,
With hoary Whiskers and a forky Beard;
And four fair Queens whose hands sustain a Flow'r,
Th' expressive Emblem of their softer Pow'r; [3.40]
Four Knaves in Garbs succinct, a trusty Band,
Caps on their heads, and Halberds in their hand;
And Particolour'd Troops, a shining Train,
Draw forth to Combat on the Velvet Plain.
The skilful Nymph reviews her Force withCare;
Let Spades be Trumps, she said, and Trumps they were.
Now move to War her Sable Matadores,
In Show like Leaders of the swarthy Moors.
Spadillio first, unconquerable Lord!
Led off two captive Trumps, and swept the Board. [3.50]
As many more Manillio forc'd to yield,
And march'd a Victor from the verdant Field.
Him Basto follow'd, but his Fate more hard
Gain'd but one Trump and one Plebeian Card.
With his broad Sabre next, a Chief in Years,
The hoary Majesty of Spades appears;
Puts forth one manly Leg, to sight reveal'd;
The rest his many-colour'd Robe conceal'd.
The Rebel-Knave, who dares his Prince engage,
Proves the just Victim of his Royal Rage. [3.60]
Ev'n mighty Pam that Kings and Queens o'erthrow,
And mow'd down Armies in the Fights of Lu,
Sad Chance of War! now, destitute of Aid,
Falls undistinguish'd by the Victor Spade.
Thus far both Armies to Belinda yield;
Now to the Baron Fate inclines the Field.
His warlike Amazon her Host invades,
Th' Imperial Consort of the Crown of Spades.
The Club's black Tyrant first her Victim dy'd,
Spite of his haughty Mien, and barb'rous Pride: [3.70]
What boots the Regal Circle on his Head,
His Giant Limbs in State unwieldy spread?
That long behind he trails his pompous Robe,
And of all Monarchs only grasps the Globe?

NOTES

The Baron now his Diamonds pours apace;
Th' embroider'd King who shows but half his Face,
And his refulgent Queen, with Pow'rs combin'd,
Of broken Troops an easie Conquest find.
Clubs, Diamonds, Hearts, in wild Disorder seen,
With Throngs promiscuous strow the level Green. [3.80]
Thus when dispers'd a routed Army runs,
Of Asia's Troops, and Africk's Sable Sons,
With like Confusion different Nations fly,
In various habits and of various Dye,
The pierc'd Battalions dis-united fall,
In Heaps on Heaps; one Fate o'erwhelms them all.
The Knave of Diamonds tries his wily Arts,
And wins (oh shameful Chance!) the Queen of Hearts.
At this, the Blood the Virgin's Cheek forsook,
A livid Paleness spreads o'er all her Look; [3.90]
She sees, and trembles at th' approaching Ill,
Just in the Jaws of Ruin, and Codille.
And now, (as oft in some distemper'd State)
On one nice Trick depends the gen'ral Fate.
An Ace of Hearts steps forth: The King unseen
Lurk'd in her Hand, and mourn'd his captive Queen.
He springs to Vengeance with an eager pace,
And falls like Thunder on the prostrate Ace.
The Nymph exulting fills with Shouts the Sky,
The Walls, the Woods, and long Canals reply. [3.100]
Oh thoughtless Mortals! ever blind to Fate,
Too soon dejected, and too soon elate!
Sudden these Honours shall be snatch'd away,
And curs'd for ever this Victorious Day.
For lo! the Board with Cups and Spoons is crown'd,
The Berries crackle, and the Mill turns round.
On shining Altars of Japan they raise
The silver Lamp; the fiery Spirits blaze.
From silver Spouts the grateful Liquors glide,
And China's Earth receives the smoking Tyde. [3.110]
At once they gratify their Scent and Taste,
While frequent Cups prolong the rich Repast.

NOTES

Strait hover round the Fair her Airy Band;
Some, as she sip'd, the fuming Liquor fann'd,
Some o'er her Lap their careful Plumes display'd,
Trembling, and conscious of the rich Brocade.
Coffee, (which makes the Politician wise,
And see thro' all things with his half shut Eyes)
Sent up in Vapours to the Baron's Brain
New Stratagems, the radiant Lock to gain. [3.120]
Ah cease rash Youth! desist e'er 'tis too late,
Fear the just Gods, and think of Scylla's Fate!
Chang'd to a Bird, and sent to flit in Air,
She dearly pays for Nisus' injur'd Hair!
But when to Mischief Mortals bend their Will,
How soon they find fit Instruments of Ill!
Just then, Clarissa drew with tempting Grace
A two-edg'd Weapon from her shining Case;
So Ladies in Romance assist their Knight,
Present the Spear, and arm him for the Fight. [3.130]
He takes the Gift with rev'rence, and extends
The little Engine on his Finger's Ends:
This just behind Belinda's Neck he spread,
As o'er the fragrant Steams she bends her Head:
Swift to the Lock a thousand Sprights repair,
A thousand Wings, by turns, blow back the Hair,
And thrice they twitch'd the Diamond in her Ear,
Thrice she look'd back, and thrice the Foe drew near.
Just in that instant, anxious Ariel sought
The close Recesses of the Virgin's Thought; [3.140]
As on the Nosegay in her Breast reclin'd,
He watch'd th' Ideas rising in her Mind,
Sudden he view'd, in spite of all her Art,
An Earthly Lover lurking at her Heart.
Amaz'd, confus'd, he found his Pow'r expir'd,
Resign'd to Fate, and with a Sigh retir'd.
The Peer now spreads the glitt'ring Forfex wide,
T'inclose the Lock; now joins it, to divide.
Ev'n then, before the fatal Engine clos'd,
A wretched Sylph too fondly interpos'd; [3.150]

NOTES

Fate urg'd the Sheers, and cut the Sylph in twain,
(But Airy Substance soon unites again)
The meeting Points that sacred Hair dissever
From the fair Head, for ever and for ever!
Then flash'd the living Lightnings from her Eyes,
And Screams of Horror rend th' affrighted Skies.
Not louder Shrieks to pitying Heav'n are cast,
When Husbands or when Lap-dogs breath their last,
Or when rich China Vessels, fal'n from high,
In glittring Dust and painted Fragments lie! [3.160]
Let Wreaths of Triumph now my Temples twine,
(The Victor cry'd) the glorious Prize is mine!
While Fish in Streams, or Birds delight in Air,
Or in a Coach and Six the British Fair,
As long as Atalantis shall be read,
Or the small Pillow grace a Lady's Bed,
While Visits shall be paid on solemn Days,
When numerous Wax-lights in bright Order blaze,
While Nymphs take Treats, or Assignations give,
So long my Honour, Name, and Praise shall live! [3.170]
What Time wou'd spare, from Steel receives its date,
And Monuments, like Men, submit to Fate!
Steel cou'd the Labour of the Gods destroy,
And strike to Dust th' Imperial Tow'rs of Troy.
Steel cou'd the Works of mortal Pride confound,
And hew Triumphal Arches to the Ground.
What Wonder then, fair Nymph! thy Hairs shou'd feel
The conqu'ring Force of unresisted Steel?

When the boat arrives at Hampton Court Palace, the ladies and gentlemen get down for enjoying their courtly entertainments. Belinda sits down with two men to play a game of cards once she finishes a pleasant round of chatting and gossip. All of them play ombre, a three-handed game of tricks and trumps, just like bridge, and it is explained in words of a heroic battle: the cards are called troops that combat on the 'velvet plain' of the card-table. Under Sylphs' watchful care, Belinda starts favourably. Sure about her success, Belinda claims spades as trumps and leads with her highest cards. Quickly, though, the hand takes a turn for the worse when 'to the Baron fate inclines the field': he gets hold of her king of clubs with his queen and then, with his high diamonds, leads back. Belinda, who is in danger of losing the game, recovers in her last trick in order to just barely get back the amount she bid.

The next custom of entertainment is the serving of coffee. The Baron is reminded of his intention to attempt Belinda's lock by the curling vapours of the steaming coffee.

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For his use, Clarissa draws out her scissors, as she arms him, Baron, the knight, during a romance. Getting hold of the scissors, he attempts three times to clip the lock from behind so that Belinda does not see it. The Sylphs endeavours with a great speed in order to intervene, blowing the hair out of harm's way and tweaking her diamond earring to make her turn around. In a last-minute attempt, Ariel successfully accesses her brain, although he is surprised to discover 'an earthly lover lurking at her heart.' Due to this, he does not try to protect her then, as the possible result is that she wants to get violated secretively. In the end, the shears close on the curl. A brave sylph jumps in between the blades and is divided in two pieces; however, because it is a supernatural creature, he is rapidly restored. The deed is completed, and the Baron feels happy over it though screams of Belinda fill the air.

The classic instances of Pope's masterful use of the heroic couplet are plentiful in this canto. While giving an introduction to Hampton Court Palace, he explains it as the place where Queen Anne 'dost sometimes counsel take—and sometimes tea'. This line uses a zeugma, which is a rhetorical device in which a word or phrase changes two other words or phrases in a parallel construction, however changes each in a different way or according to a variable sense. Here, the changing term is 'take'; it applies to the paralleled words 'counsel' and 'tea'. However, nobody 'take'(s) tea in the same manner as one takes counsel, and the impact of the zeugma is to indicate the royal palace as a place that houses both intellectual issues of state and frivolous social occasions. The reader is asked to think that paradox and to reflect on the comparative value and significance of these two variable registers of activity. (For yet another instance of this rhetorical method, see lines 157–8: 'Not louder shrieks to pitying heaven are cast, / when husbands, or when lapdogs breathe their last'.) A same point is emphasized, in a less small and strong phrasing, in the second and third verse-paragraphs of this canto. Here, in opposition to the gossip and chatter of the young ladies and lords, Pope starts a conversation on more serious matters that are occurring 'meanwhile' and elsewhere, such as criminal trials and executions and economic exchange.

The rendering of the card game as a battle comprises an amusing and deft narrative feat. By parodying the battle scenes of the great epic poems, Pope suggests that the energy and passion that was once applied to brave and serious purposes is now wasted on such insignificant trials like games and gambling. These games often become a mere front for flirtation. The structure of 'the three attempts' in which the lock is cut is a convention of heroic challenges, specifically in the romance genre. The romance is then invoked in the image of Clarissa arming the Baron—not with a real weapon, but with a pair of sewing scissors. Belinda is not a real adversary, or course, and Pope makes it plain that her resistance—and, by implication, her subsequent distress—is to a certain degree an affectation. The melodrama of her screams is complemented by the ironic comparison of the Baron's feat to the conquest of nations.

Canto IV

But anxious Cares the pensive Nymph oppress,
And secret Passions labour'd in her Breast.
Not youthful Kings in Battel seiz'd alive,
Not scornful Virgins who their Charms survive,
Not ardent Lovers robb'd of all their Bliss,
Not ancient Ladies when refus'd a Kiss,

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Not Tyrants fierce that unrepenting die,
Not Cynthia when her Manteau's pinn'd awry,
E'er felt such Rage, Resentment and Despair,
As Thou, sad Virgin! for thy ravish'd Hair. [4.10]
For, that sad moment, when the Sylphs withdrew,
And Ariel weeping from Belinda flew,
Umbriel, a dusky melancholy Spright,
As ever sully'd the fair face of Light,
Down to the Central Earth, his proper Scene,
Repairs to search the gloomy Cave of Spleen.
Swift on his sooty Pinions flitts the Gnome,
And in a Vapour reach'd the dismal Dome.
No cheerful Breeze this sullen Region knows,
The dreaded East is all the Wind that blows. [4.20]
Here, in a Grotto, sheltred close from Air,
And screen'd in Shades from Day's detested Glare,
She sighs for ever on her pensive Bed,
Pain at her side, and Megrim at her Head.
Two Handmaids wait the Throne: Alike in Place,
But diff'ring far in Figure and in Face.
Here stood Ill-nature like an ancient Maid,
Her wrinkled Form in Black and White array'd;
With store of Pray'rs, for Mornings, Nights, and Noons,
Her Hand is fill'd; her Bosom with Lampoons. [4.30]
There Affectation with a sickly Mien
Shows in her Cheek the Roses of Eighteen,
Practis'd to Lisp, and hang the Head aside,
Faints into Airs, and languishes with Pride;
On the rich Quilt sinks with becoming Woe,
Wrapt in a Gown, for Sickness, and for Show.
The Fair ones feel such Maladies as these,
When each new Night-Dress gives a new Disease.
A constant Vapour o'er the Palace flies;
Strange Phantoms rising as the Mists arise; [4.40]
Dreadful, as Hermit's Dreams in haunted Shades,
Or bright as Visions of expiring Maids.
Now glaring Fiends, and Snakes on rolling Spires,
Pale Spectres, gaping Tombs, and Purple Fires:

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Now Lakes of liquid Gold, Elysian Scenes,
And Crystal Domes, and Angels in Machines.
Unnumber'd Throngs on ev'ry side are seen
Of Bodies chang'd to various Forms by Spleen.
Here living Teapots stand, one Arm held out,
One bent; the Handle this, and that the Spout: [4.50]
A Pipkin there like Homer's Tripod walks;
Here sighs a Jar, and there a Goose Pie talks;
Men prove with Child, as pow'rful Fancy works,
And Maids turn'd Bottels, call aloud for Corks.
Safe past the Gnome thro' this fantastick Band,
A Branch of healing Spleenwort in his hand.
Then thus addrest the Pow'r — Hail wayward Queen!
Who rule the Sex to Fifty from Fifteen,
Parent of Vapors and of Female Wit,
Who give th' Hysteric or Poetic Fit, [4.60]
On various Tempers act by various ways,
Make some take Physick, others scribble Plays;
Who cause the Proud their Visits to delay,
And send the Godly in a Pett, to pray.
A Nymph there is, that all thy Pow'r disdains,
And thousands more in equal Mirth maintains.
But oh! if e'er thy Gnome could spoil a Grace,
Or raise a Pimple on a beauteous Face,
Like Citron-Waters Matron's Cheeks inflame,
Or change Complexions at a losing Game; [4.70]
If e'er with airy Horns I planted Heads,
Or rumpled Petticoats, or tumbled Beds,
Or caus'd Suspicion when no Soul was rude,
Or discompos'd the Head-dress of a Prude,
Or e'er to costive Lap-Dog gave Disease,
Which not the Tears of brightest Eyes could ease:
Hear me, and touch Belinda with Chagrin;
That single Act gives half the World the Spleen.
The Goddess with a discontented Air
Seems to reject him, tho' she grants his Pray'r. [4.80]
A wondrous Bag with both her Hands she binds,
Like that where once Ulysses held the Winds;

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There she collects the Force of Female Lungs,
Sighs, Sobs, and Passions, and the War of Tongues.
A Vial next she fills with fainting Fears,
Soft Sorrows, melting Griefs, and flowing Tears.
The Gnome rejoicing bears her Gift away,
Spreads his black Wings, and slowly mounts to Day.
Sunk in Thalestris' Arms the Nymph he found,
Her Eyes dejected and her Hair unbound. [4.90]
Full o'er their Heads the swelling Bag he rent,
And all the Furies issued at the Vent.
Belinda burns with more than mortal Ire,
And fierce Thalestris fans the rising Fire.
O wretched Maid! she spread her hands, and cry'd,
(While Hampton's Ecchos, wretched Maid reply'd)
Was it for this you took such constant Care
The Bodkin, Comb, and Essence to prepare;
For this your Locks in Paper-Durance bound,
For this with tort'ring Irons wreath'd around? [4.100]
For this with Fillets strain'd your tender Head,
And bravely bore the double Loads of Lead?
Gods! shall the Ravisher display your Hair,
While the Fops envy, and the Ladies stare!
Honour forbid! at whose unrival'd Shrine
Ease, Pleasure, Virtue, All, our Sex resign.
Methinks already I your Tears survey,
Already hear the horrid things they say,
Already see you a degraded Toast,
And all your Honour in a Whisper lost! [4.110]
How shall I, then, your helpless Fame defend?
'Twill then be Infamy to seem your Friend!
And shall this Prize, th' inestimable Prize,
Expos'd thro' Crystal to the gazing Eyes,
And heighten'd by the Diamond's circling Rays,
On that Rapacious Hand for ever blaze?
Sooner shall Grass in Hide Park Circus grow,
And Wits take Lodgings in the Sound of Bow;
Sooner let Earth, Air, Sea, to Chaos fall,
Men, Monkies, Lap-dogs, Parrots, perish all! [4.120]

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She said; then raging to Sir Plume repairs,
And bids her Beau demand the precious Hairs:
(Sir Plume, of Amber Snuff-box justly vain,
And the nice Conduct of a clouded Cane)
With earnest Eyes, and round unthinking Face,
He first the Snuff-box open'd, then the Case,
And thus broke out — "My Lord, why, what the Devil?
"Z—ds! damn the Lock! 'fore Gad, you must be civil!
"Plague on't! 'tis past a Jest — nay prithee, Pox!
"Give her the Hair — he spoke, and rapp'd his Box. [4.130]
It grieves me much (reply'd the Peer again)
Who speaks so well shou'd ever speak in vain.
But by this Lock, this sacred Lock I swear,
(Which never more shall join its parted Hair,
Which never more its Honours shall renew,
Clipt from the lovely Head where late it grew)
That while my Nostrils draw the vital Air,
This Hand, which won it, shall for ever wear.
He spoke, and speaking, in proud Triumph spread
The long-contended Honours of her Head. [4.140]
But Umbriel, hateful Gnome! forbears not so;
He breaks the Vial whence the Sorrows flow.
Then see! the Nymph in beauteous Grief appears,
Her Eyes half languishing, half drown'd in Tears;
On her heav'd Bosom hung her drooping Head,
Which, with a Sigh, she rais'd; and thus she said.
For ever curs'd be this detested Day,
Which snatch'd my best, my fav'rite Curl away!
Happy! ah ten times happy, had I been,
If Hampton-Court these Eyes had never seen! [4.150]
Yet am not I the first mistaken Maid,
By Love of Courts to num'rous Ills betray'd.
Oh had I rather un-admir'd remain'd
In some lone Isle, or distant Northern Land;
Where the gilt Chariot never marks the way,
Where none learn Ombre, none e'er taste Bohea!
There kept my Charms conceal'd from mortal Eye,
Like Roses that in Desarts bloom and die.

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What mov'd my Mind with youthful Lords to rome?
O had I stay'd, and said my Pray'rs at home! [4.160]
'Twas this, the Morning Omens seem'd to tell;
Thrice from my trembling hand the Patch-box fell;
The tott'ring China shook without a Wind,
Nay, Poll sate mute, and Shock was most Unkind!
A Sylph too warn'd me of the Threats of Fate,
In mystic Visions, now believ'd too late!
See the poor Remnants of these slighted Hairs!
My hands shall rend what ev'n thy Rapine spares:
These, in two sable Ringlets taught to break,
Once gave new Beauties to the snowie Neck. [4.170]
The Sister-Lock now sits uncouth, alone,
And in its Fellow's Fate foresees its own;
Uncurl'd it hangs, the fatal Sheers demands;
And tempts once more thy sacrilegious Hands.
Oh hadst thou, Cruel! been content to seize
Hairs less in sight, or any Hairs but these!

Canto IV

After the loss of her lock, 'anxious cares' and 'secret passions' of Belinda are just like the emotions of those individuals who have undergone through 'rage, resentment and despair'. An earthy gnome named Umbriel flies down to the 'Cave of Spleen' once the disappointed Sylphs moves away from it. (The spleen, which is actually an organ that drains out disease-causing agents present in the bloodstream, was conventionally linked to the passions, especially malaise; 'spleen' and 'ill-temper' are synonyms.) While he was leaving, he passes through the bedroom of Belinda. Here, she lies on the ground and facing downwards due headache and discomfiture. 'Two handmaidens'—Ill-Nature and Affectation are attending her. While holding a sprig of 'spleenwort' before him as a charm Umbriel roams, without being lost or harmed, through this melancholy chamber. He calls upon the 'Goddess of Spleen', and comes back with a bag full of 'sighs, sobs, and passions' and a small glass container (especially for medicine or perfume) of sorrow, tears and grief. He suddenly takes Belinda under the influence of the first bag and thus adds fire to her emotions of ire and despair.

Thalestris, Belinda's friend is there to sympathy to her in her times of disappointment. (According to the Greek mythology, Thalestris is the name of one of the Amazons; it is a race of warrior women who did not include men in their society.) Thalestris delivers such a speech, which make Belinda feel more anger than before and increases her indignation; she also forcefully suggests Belinda to take revenge. After that she approaches Sir Plume, 'her beau,' and asks him to demand so that the Baron returns the hair. In return, Sir Plume delivers a weak speech which is full of slang. The speech does not have any effect of the Baron and he disdainfully refuses to accept the request. Exactly at this moment, Umbriel sets free the contents of the remaining vial, due to which Belinda goes through a fit of sorrow and self-pity. With 'beauteous

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grief' she complaints about her fate, feels sorry about not having paid careful attention to the dream-warning and expresses great sadness about the lonely, pitiful state of her only remaining curl.

In the beginning of the canto, there is a list of examples of 'rage, resentment, and despair.' These states of emotions are compared with the similarities such as the pathos of kings put behind the bars during battle, or women who turn out to be old maids, or evil-doers who die with nobody to save them and a woman whose dress is very untidy. Pope stresses on the absolute requirement of assigning them to some level of moral import by positioning such disparate sorts of aggravation altogether. The point here is to criticize the society that does not make such distinctions.

The journey of Umbriel to the Cave of Spleen symbolizes Odysseus' and Aeneas' journeys to the underworld. Psychological allegory has been used by Pope (as the spleen was considered the seat of malaise or melancholy), as a manner of finding out the sources and nature of Belinda's feelings. The fact that Ill-nature and Affectation are present as handmaidens very well shows that her feeling of great sadness is less than pure ('affected' or put-on), and that her show of temper has secret motives. We come to know that her feeling of great sadness is decorative just like the curl was; it offers her the timeout, such as, to wear a new nightdress.

Thalestris' speech invokes a courtly ethic. She calls on Belinda to make some conclusions about the misdeed carried out by Baron as an affront to her honour, and gives imputes to the ideals of chivalry in demanding that Sir Plume question the Baron in defence of the honour of Belinda. Showing how far from courtly behaviour this generation of gentlemen has fallen, he makes a muddle of the task. The speech of Sir Plume is full of foppish slang and lacks the logical, moral or oratorical authority, which a knight should successfully wield.

This focus on the questions of honour makes us recall the sexual allegory of the poem. The real danger, Thalestris advocates, is that 'the ravisher' might show the lock and thus display it as a source of humiliation to Belinda and to her friends in front of all due to association. Therefore, the actual question is a bit superficial—public reputation—instead of the moral imperative to chastity. This suggestion is further empowered due to Belinda's own words said at the end of the canto; she exclaims, 'Oh, hadst thou, cruel! been content to seize / Hairs less in sight, or any hairs but these!' (The 'hairs less in sight' symbolize her pubic hair). Pope is highlighting the extent to which she values external appearance (whether beauty or reputation) above all else; she would instead undergo a breach to her integrity rather than a breach to her appearance.

Canto V

She said: the pitying Audience melt in Tears,
But Fate and Jove had stopp'd the Baron's Ears.
In vain Thalestris with Reproach assails,
For who can move when fair Belinda fails?
Not half so fixt the Trojan cou'd remain,
While Anna begg'd and Dido rag'd in vain.
Then grave Clarissa graceful wav'd her Fan;
Silence ensu'd, and thus the Nymph began.

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Say, why are Beauties prais'd and honour'd most,
The wise Man's Passion, and the vain Man's Toast? [5.10]
Why deck'd with all that Land and Sea afford,
Why Angels call'd, and Angel-like ador'd?
Why round our Coaches crowd the white-glov'd Beaus,
Why bows the Side-box from its inmost Rows?
How vain are all these Glories, all our Pains,
Unless good Sense preserve what Beauty gains:
That Men may say, when we the Front-box grace,
Behold the first in Virtue, as in Face!
Oh! if to dance all Night, and dress all Day,
Charm'd the Small-pox, or chas'd old Age away; [5.20]
Who would not scorn what Huswife's Cares produce,
Or who would learn one earthly Thing of Use?
To patch, nay ogle, might become a Saint,
Nor could it sure be such a Sin to paint.
But since, alas! frail Beauty must decay,
Curl'd or uncurl'd, since Locks will turn to grey,
Since paint'd, or not paint'd, all shall fade,
And she who scorns a Man, must die a Maid;
What then remains, but well our Pow'r to use,
And keep good Humour still whate'er we lose? [5.30]
And trust me, Dear! good Humour can prevail,
When Airs, and Flights, and Screams, and Scolding fail.
Beauties in vain their pretty Eyes may roll;
Charms strike the Sight, but Merit wins the Soul.
So spake the Dame, but no Applause ensu'd;
Belinda frown'd, Thalestris call'd her Prude.
To Arms, to Arms! the fierce Virago cries,
And swift as Lightning to the Combate flies.
All side in Parties, and begin th' Attack;
Fans clap, Silks russle, and tough Whalebones crack; [5.40]
Heroes and Heroins Shouts confus'dly rise,
And base, and treble Voices strike the Skies.
No common Weapons in their Hands are found,
Like Gods they fight, nor dread a mortal Wound.
So when bold Homer makes the Gods engage,
And heav'nly Breasts with human Passions rage;

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'Gainst Pallas, Mars; Latona, Hermes arms;
And all Olympus rings with loud Alarms.
Jove's Thunder roars, Heav'n trembles all around;
Blue Neptune storms, the bellowing Deeps resound; [5.50]
Earth shakes her nodding Tow'rs, the Ground gives way;
And the pale Ghosts start at the Flash of Day!
Triumphant Umbriel on a Sconce's Height
Clapt his glad Wings, and sate to view the Fight,
Propt on their Bodkin Spears, the Sprights survey
The growing Combat, or assist the Fray.
While thro' the Press enrag'd Thalestris flies,
And scatters Deaths around from both her Eyes,
A Beau and Witling perish'd in the Throng,
One dy'd in Metaphor, and one in Song. [5.60]
O cruel Nymph! a living Death I bear,
Cry'd Dapperwit, and sunk beside his Chair.
A mournful Glance Sir Fopling upwards cast,
Those Eyes are made so killing — was his last:
Thus on Meander's flow'ry Margin lies
Th' expiring Swan, and as he sings he dies.
When bold Sir Plume had drawn Clarissa down,
Chloe stept in, and kill'd him with a Frown;
She smil'd to see the doughty Hero slain,
But at her Smile, the Beau reviv'd again. [5.70]
Now Jove suspends his golden Scales in Air,
Weighs the Mens Wits against the Lady's Hair;
The doubtful Beam long nods from side to side;
At length the Wits mount up, the Hairs subside.
See fierce Belinda on the Baron flies,
With more than usual Lightning in her Eyes;
Nor fear'd the Chief th' unequal Fight to try,
Who sought no more than on his Foe to die.
But this bold Lord, with manly Strength indu'd,
She with one Finger and a Thumb subdu'd, [5.80]
Just where the Breath of Life his Nostrils drew,
A Charge of Snuff the wily Virgin threw;
The Gnomes direct, to ev'ry Atome just,
The pungent Grains of titillating Dust.

Sudden, with starting Tears each Eye o'erflows,
And the high Dome re-ecchoes to his Nose.
Now meet thy Fate, incens'd Belinda cry'd,
And drew a deadly Bodkin from her Side.
(The same, his ancient Personage to deck,
Her great great Grandsire wore about his Neck [5.90]
In three Seal-Rings which after, melted down,
Form'd a vast Buckle for his Widow's Gown:
Her infant Grandame's Whistle next it grew,
The Bells she gingled, and the Whistle blew;
Then in a Bodkin grac'd her Mother's Hairs,
Which long she wore, and now Belinda wears.)
Boast not my Fall (he cry'd) insulting Foe!
Thou by some other shalt be laid as low.
Nor think, to die dejects my lofty Mind;
All that I dread, is leaving you behind! [5.100]
Rather than so, ah let me still survive,
And burn in Cupid's Flames, — but burn alive.
Restore the Lock! she cries; and all around
Restore the Lock! the vaulted Roofs rebound.
Not fierce Othello in so loud a Strain
Roar'd for the Handkerchief that caus'd his Pain.
But see how oft Ambitious Aims are cross'd,
And Chiefs contend 'till all the Prize is lost!
The Lock, obtain'd with Guilt, and kept with Pain,
In ev'ry place is sought, but sought in vain: [5.110]
With such a Prize no Mortal must be blest,
So Heav'n decrees! with Heav'n who can contest?
Some thought it mounted to the Lunar Sphere,
Since all things lost on Earth, are treasur'd there.
There Heroe's Wits are kept in pondrous Vases,
And Beau's in Snuff-boxes and Tweezer-Cases.
There broken Vows, and Death-bed Alms are found,
And Lovers Hearts with Ends of Riband bound;
The Courtiers Promises, and Sick Man's Pray'rs,
The Smiles of Harlots, and the Tears of Heirs, [5.120]
Cages for Gnats, and Chains to Yoak a Flea;
Dry'd Butterflies, and Tomes of Casuistry.

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But trust the Muse — she saw it upward rise,
Tho' mark'd by none but quick Poetic Eyes:
(So Rome's great Founder to the Heav'ns withdrew,
To Proculus alone confess'd in view.)
A sudden Star, it shot thro' liquid Air,
And drew behind a radiant Trail of Hair.
Not Berenice's Locks first rose so bright,
The heav'ns bespangling with dishevel'd light. [5.130]
The Sylphs behold it kindling as it flies,
And pleas'd pursue its Progress thro' the Skies.
This the Beau-monde shall from the Mall survey,
And hail with Musick its propitious Ray.
This, the blest Lover shall for Venus take,
And send up Vows from Rosamonda's Lake.
This Partridge soon shall view in cloudless Skies,
When next he looks thro' Galilæo's Eyes;
And hence th' Egregious Wizard shall foredoom
The Fate of Louis, and the Fall of Rome. [5.140]
Then cease, bright Nymph! to mourn the ravish'd Hair
Which adds new Glory to the shining Sphere!
Not all the Tresses that fair Head can boast
Shall draw such Envy as the Lock you lost.
For, after all the Murders of your Eye,
When, after Millions slain, your self shall die;
When those fair Suns shall sett, as sett they must,
And all those Tresses shall be laid in Dust;
This Lock, the Muse shall consecrate to Fame,
And mid'st the Stars inscribe Belinda's Name!

Canto V

The Baron remains unmoved despite being surrounded by the tears and angry reproaches of the ladies. Clarissa delivers a passionate speech in which she asks why does the society that so looks up to beauty in women does not also accord any importance to 'good sense' and 'good humour'. She claims that women are frequently referred to as angels, but no reference is given to the moral qualities of these 'angels'. Even when beauty is considered so transient, we fail to fall back on something more ever-lasting and tangible. Sadly, this speech that is both lofty in thought as well as shows immense good sense fails to gather any attention and Belinda, Thalestris and the others ignore her and continue to set forth an all-out attack on the annoying Baron. This leads to a confused struggle which is presided over by the gnome Umbriel in a stance of smug self-congratulation. According to the smiles and frowns of the ladies, the gentlemen are either revived or slain. Belinda and the Baron are engaged in a combat from which she emerges victorious after she throws snuff on him. She also takes her ornamental hairpin (bodkin) and holds it to the Baron's throat. Although, she demands her lock back from the Baron, but it has been lost in the fight and cannot be found. Here, Pope declares that the lock has risen to heaven where it becomes a shining star for people to gaze at it for eternity. In this way, Pope reasons that it will attract more envious attention than it ever could on earth.

Clarissa's passionate plea has often been interpreted by readers as the voice of the poet who is expressing the moral of the story. Indeed, the thesis of the speech matches with Pope's responsibility of giving a reasonable perspective to the dispute between the two families – Arabella Fermor and Lord Petre. But his position becomes more complex than the speech purports. This is because the poem is used as a social critique to address issues such as the idleness and vanity of the upper classes to the hypocrisy in expressing women's sexuality. Although Clarissa takes the moral high stand in her speech but it is a sham in the wake of the fact that it was she who had given the scissors to the Baron. Since Clarissa is not able to reconcile with the Baron, the quarrel proves to be yet another enjoyable game of flirtation played by all parties. Thus, Clarissa cannot claim to be morally superior to the others engaged in this 'game'.

Other postures in this poem also assume sexual connotation. The 'battle' between the Baron and Clarissa has been shown to have a distinct erotic quality with the ladies and gentlemen engaged in mock agony. Sir Plume 'draw[s] Clarissa down' in a sexual way, and Belinda 'flies' on her foe with flashing eyes and an erotic ardour. Also, when Pope says that the Baron perseveres in his fight unafraid because all he strives for is the death of his foe, this means that his only goal is sexual consummation.

The final battle brings to an end the long series of mock heroic actions. Pope invokes the Roman gods of warfare. He refers to the *Aeneid*, a Latin epic poem that tells the legendary story of Aeneas, a Trojan who travelled to Italy, where he became the ancestor of the Romans. He compares the apparently indifferent and unaffected Baron to Aeneas, who had to leave his lady love and went on to found Rome.

When Belinda tosses the snuff up the Baron's nose, this moment makes for a perfect turning point which is perfectly suitable to the scale of this mock battle. The snuff makes the Baron sneeze, which is a decidedly comic, unbecoming and unheroic thing to do for a hero. The bodkin, here interpreted as a decorative hairpin and not an ancient weapon, too serves nicely. But Pope presents this pin with an elaborate history in accordance with the conventions of a true epic story.

The poem ends on a mock heroic note and is written such that it pays a compliment to the lady alluded to – Arabella Fermor. It also gives due credit to the poet for being the instrument of her immortality. The ending effectively stokes the vanity of the heroine, despite the fact that it is meant to be a social critique on the vanities of the people of that era. The ending indicates that no real moral development has taken place. Belinda is asked to reconcile with her loss through a type of bribe/ distraction that proves that her basic nature is indeed frivolous. But even when Pope is at his mocking best, he uses a gentle tone to show his basic sympathy with the social world despite its quirks and idiosyncrasies. However, his later works contained searing critiques and were much more stringent and less forgiving.

Check Your Progress

19. Why was Alexander Pope expelled from school?
20. Whom did Alexander Pope attack in his poem *The Rape of the Lock*?
21. Give an example of Pope's use of heroic couplet in the third canto.
22. How does poem *The Rape of the Lock* end?

NOTES

3.6 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt that:

- John Donne was born in the Elizabethan England. He was born into a religious Catholic family in 1572. He was an extremely devout man who was persecuted as he was a Christian.
- Though Donne is reputed for his sonnets and love song, he had, in his early life, written religious poetry as well.
- *The Good Morrow* is a metaphysical poem consisting of twenty-one lines, divided into three stanzas.
- Michael Hall says that *The Good Morrow* is a chronological and spatial poem. It is with the aid of this poem that the orator exposes his increasing maturity and awareness of his love as a reply to his thrilling passion.
- *The Sun Rising* is a witty and amusing poem. It is light verse, but it is also extremely serious. It is, in fact, a good example of the fact that seriousness is different from solemnity and may be accompanied with a good deal of frivolity.
- The poet treats the sun familiarly, colloquially, and irreverently. It is one of the paradoxes of the poem that the poet uses the adjective 'unruly' for the sun when the sun is really the standard of order, regulation, and law.
- The poet and his mistress symbolize the whole world and all its rulers. Those who claim to be the rulers of the world are in fact, merely imitating the lovers. Likewise all honour in the world is a shadow of the true honour which belongs to these lovers.
- The period of 1625 to 1660 is generally known as the age of Milton in English literary history. This period marks the end of the Renaissance.
- John Milton was born on December 9, 1608, in London. He was the second child of John and Sara. John Milton Sr, was a legal secretary and also a composer of church music which was how Milton developed his lifelong love of music.
- Milton begins his great epic with an invocation to the heavenly *Muse*. In this respect he follows the practice of Homer, the Father of epic poetry who started his epics in this manner.
- Milton seeks to describe the cause of the fall of Adam and Eve from Paradise where they were living so comfortably and happily in the company of God.
- Aubrey states that *Paradise Lost* was begun in about 1658. Mason believes that the first two books might have been written before the Restoration.
- *Paradise Lost* is a classical epic. It has all the common features of the epics of Homer and Virgil. Though it is based upon Christian theology, its frame work is classical.
- Milton seems to adopt the view of some tragic poets that even the Gods are subject to the decree of Destiny.
- In portraying the physical action of *Paradise Lost* against the background of Heaven, Hell and Earth, Milton had to visualize the structure of the universe.
- The language of *Paradise Lost* is Latinized. It's characterized by frequent images and antique names. His language is known for its to the point shortness

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- 'The meter of *Paradise Lost* is blank verse, of five accents. This meter was first used by Surrey in his translation of Virgil with nothing to vary it.
- Satan is a classic creation of Milton. From the artistic point of view, he is much more remembered than the heroes of Shakespeare.
- *Paradise Lost* is an epic par excellence. In the English language, besides Sri Aurobindo's Savitri, there is not any other epic that can be compared with it.
- Shakespeare's poetry is characterless, that is, it does not reflect the individual Shakespeare; but John Milton himself is in every line of the *Paradise Lost*.
- In *Paradise Lost*, Milton gives a vivid and effective picture of Hell. Hell is a place of torment, evoking the quality of sinister wilderness.
- Satan makes his first speech to Beelzebub, his closest comrade. Here Satan admits that God proved stronger than his opponents, because of his thunder and that God's true strength became known only in the course of the battle, which Satan and his followers fought against God, 'and till then who knew the force of those dire arms?'
- Thomas Gray was born in Cornhill, London. He was the only son of Philip and Dorothy to survive infancy.
- It is believed that the poet started writing his most popular poem *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard* in 1742 soon after the death of his close friend. However, he completed the poem in 1751 and it was soon published.
- An elegy is a form of a poem which is usually written to mourn the dead of renowned people. It does not tell a story but expresses feelings of sorrow. It admires the deceased person and describes the implications of his death on his loved ones.
- Gray then wonders about the hidden talents and intellectual abilities of the common people. He states that they might have become powerful people or great poets but there was no one to patronize them.
- Alexander Pope was the son of Alexander Pope Senior. He was born in London. His father was a Roman Catholic linen-merchant.
- In 1712, Pope published an early version of *The Rape of the Lock*.
- *The Rape of the Lock* begins with a passage that describes the subject of the poem. It invokes the blessing of the muse. The sun ('Sol') appears to begin the lazy morning routines of a rich household.
- The opening of the poem describes its mock-heroic style. Pope in the beginning itself introduces the epic subjects of love and war. He invokes his muse and writes a dedication to the man (the historical John Caryll) who commissioned him to write the poem.
- Pope's description of Belinda at her dressing table describes mock-heroic motifs, which will run through the poem.
- After the loss of her lock, 'anxious cares' and 'secret passions' of Belinda are just like the emotions of those individuals who have undergone through 'rage, resentment and despair'.
- The Baron remains unmoved despite being surrounded by the tears and angry reproaches of the ladies.

NOTES

- The poem ends on a mock heroic note and is written such that it pays a compliment to the lady alluded to – Arabella Fermor. It also gives due credit to the poet for being the instrument of her immortality.

3.7 KEY TERMS

- **Sublimity**: The quality of greatness, whether moral, physical or intellectual.
- **Muse**: Goddess in Greek mythology who inspire the creation of literature and the arts.
- **Epic:** An epic is a poem of grand scale that celebrates the deeds of some the heroic characters and personages. It is a narrative poem that is organic in structure. Classical examples are the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* of Homer. Epics can be folk epics and literary epics.
- **Hyperbole:** Hyperbole is a figure of speech that is exaggerated description or statement. Such exaggeration is used for vivid impact.
- **Meter:** Meter is the measure of lines of verse, which in English is basically accentual. Each group of syllables (usually two or three) is a foot. These feet of stressed syllables and unstressed syllables are often classified as iambus, trochee, spondee, pyrrhic, anapaest, dactyl and amphibrach.
- **Iamb (Iambic):** A metrical foot of one short or unstressed syllable followed by one long or stressed syllable.

3.8 ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

1. The title *The Good Morrow* represents 'actual sunrise' and 'birth of an awakened person'.
2. The structure of the poem is such that it enhances the poet's message to his beloved. It contains three stanzas, each including seven lines. Besides, every stanza has been further divided into a quatrain and a triplet.
3. The poem seems to conclude on a note of some uncertainty: 'If … or …' Perchance after all Donne cannot any longer keep up the vanity that nothing will come to change their love or encroach upon it.
4. It is possible to interpret the phrase 'seven sleepers den', which is first brought in the poem, in several ways. This phrase may most directly be hinting at a 'Christian and Mohammedan legend of the seven youths of Ephesus who hid in a cave for 187 years so as to avoid pagan persecution during the dawn of Christianity'. Surprisingly, these young people, instead of dying, continued to sleep for the entire period.
5. The poet treats the sun familiarly, colloquially, and irreverently. It is one of the paradoxes of the poem that the poet uses the adjective "unruly" for the sun when the sun is really the standard of order, regulation, and law.
6. Milton appeals to the heavenly Muse who lives on the mountain of Sinai and Horeb who gave inspiration to Moses, the shepherd, who was called by God to deliver Israel from the domination of the Egyptians. Under her inspiration, Moses taught the Israelites who were God's chosen people how the earth rose out of chaos which prevailed everywhere before the creation of the world.

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7. The first rebel angel to be described was Moloch, the horrible, whose altar was covered with the blood of human sacrifice and tears of the parents whose children were sacrificed in this manner in the midst of the deafening noise of drums and tumbrels. He was worshipped especially by the Animoniles. It was he who by deceit persuaded Solomon to build a temple in his honour opposite to the temple of God. He also got a grove of trees grown on a hill, but it looked like Hell.
8. An epic, as *Paradise Lost* is, is an unbiased narrative poem having the unity of theme and treatment; it has a historical theme, that is, the history of human race. Its characters are super-human — First Man and Woman, God, Satan and Angels. It is divided into twelve Books; its subject and manner are lofty and grand. The poem begins with an invocation to the Muse. Its similes are epical. It is full of descriptions of the events like other classical epics.
9. There are four groups of characters in *Paradise Lost*, God His Son and His Angels, including Raphael, Michael, Gabriel and Abidel; the Fallen Angels, Satan and his followers, including Beelzebub, Moloch, Belial, Chemon, etc.; the Allegorical or abstract personages, Sin and Death and finally the Human characters, Adam and Eve.
10. Milton's picture of the universe is that Heaven is placed on top and higher than this is the Holy Mount where God, the Father, and God the Son live under the wings of the Holy Ghost guarded and attended to by Cherubim and Seraphim. The universe and heavens are joined by the golden ladder, yet separated by the river of Hades. In the universe is situated Paradise. Below the universe is Hell, surrounded by chaos. The gates of Hell are guarded by Sin and Death.
11. The criticism levied against *Paradise Lost* is that Milton has freely employed not only the usages of Pagan writers (such as the invocations of the Muse) but also the fiction of Pagan mythology, thus blending the unreal with the real, and so destroying credibility. Milton's geography of the world is also bad and the notes of time are not congruous. There is also constant confusion of material and spiritual in the acts ascribed to the Angels.
12. Satan is huge in size, his shield is as big as the largest round object imaginable and compared with his spear, the mast in the biggest ship of fleet would seem like a mere wand. Also, Satan is described as being like a Tower and like the Sun.
13. Aristotle's condition was that an epic should consist of a beginning, middle and an end. Also, that it should have a lofty motif and be written in a grand style.
14. A few features of Milton's style of writing are: fullness of sound, grandeur in the onward flow of the verse, fitness of words to things, majesty and splendour when high themes are described, use of words in unusual senses, generally as the root meanings in the classical languages and finally the use of foreign (Greek, Latin, Hebrew) idioms.
15. An autobiographical element in the play is Milton's depiction of women. Milton's condemnation of woman is supposed to be the outcome of Milton's own unhappy married life with his first wife. The change in Adam's attitude towards women which makes him admire the nobility and moral beauty of Eve's character, is a change brought about in Milton's own life after his third marriage.
16. Milton's Hell is described partly as the reader might see it, and partly through Satan's eyes. The objective and subjective torments of Hell are thus mingled. We

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view Hell and also experience it from the point of view of Satan who is to dwell in it for ever. That Hell is a place of confusion and contradiction is brought out by the description - it is a place where fire exists without light and darkness is almost tangible and this darkness itself reveals the sights of misery.

17. Thomas Gray completed writing the poem Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard in 1751.
18. An elegy is a form of a poem which is usually written to mourn the dead of renowned people. It does not tell a story but expresses feelings of sorrow. It admires the deceased person and describes the implications of his death on his loved ones.
19. Alexander Pope was expelled from his school, Twyford School, because he wrote a satire on one of the teachers.
20. *The Rape of the Lock* is a satire regarding the battle between the sexes and follies of a young woman who spend most of their times in toiletries and parties.
21. The classic instances of Pope's masterful use of the heroic couplet are plentiful in this canto. While giving an introduction to Hampton Court Palace, he explains it as the place where Queen Anne 'dost sometimes counsel take—and sometimes tea'.
22. The poem ends on a mock heroic note and is written such that it pays a compliment to the lady alluded to – Arabella Fermor.

3.9 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. When and why did Thomas Gray write *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*?
2. Write a short note on Alexander Pope.
3. How does Satan reach Paradise? What does he do on finding Adam and Eve there?
4. What is an elegy? Whom does Gray mourn in *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*?

Long-Answer Questions

1. Discuss the structure of the poem *The Good Morrow.*
2. Discuss the meaning of John Donne's poem *The Good Morrow.*
3. Explain the following passage from John Donne's *The Good Morrow?*

I wonder, by my troth, what thou and I
Did, till we loved? were we not weaned till then,
But sucked on country pleasures, childishly?
Or snorted we in the seven sleepers' den?
'Twas so; but this, all pleasures fancies be.
If ever any beauty I did see,
Which I desired, and got, 'twas but a dream of thee.

4. Critically discuss the writing style of John Milton with reference to *Paradise Lost.*
5. Elucidate the major characters in *Paradise Lost.*
6. Discuss the speech given by Beelzebub — one of the important characters in *Paradise Lost.*
7. Describe the major duty of the sylphs in *The Rape of the Lock.*

3.10 FURTHER READING

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UNIT 4 ROMANTIC POETS

Structure

4.0 INTRODUCTION

In the previous unit, you studied about the Renaissance poets and the Metaphysical poets such as John Donne, John Milton, Thomas Gray and Alexander Pope.

In this unit, we will discuss the poetry in the Romantic Era with special reference to Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley and Keats. Romantics favoured more natural, emotional and personal artistic themes.

Poets such as William Wordsworth were actively engaged in trying to create a new kind of poetry that emphasized intuition over reason and the pastoral over the urban, often eschewing consciously poetic language in an effort to use more colloquial language. This unit gives the text and interpretation of some poems of the well-known poets of the Romantic Era - William Wordsworth, Coleridge, P.B. Shelley and John Keats. Reading their work will enable one to appreciate Wordsworth as a nature poet, examine the development of Shelley's thought, Coleridge's love of nature and evaluate Keats' sensuous imagery.

4.1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

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

- State the life and works of William Wordsworth
- Explain *Ode: Intimations of Immortality*
- List the major poems of Coleridge
- Describe the mystic element in *Kubla Khan*
- Recall the works of Shelley
- Summarize *Ode to the West Wind*
- State the life and works of John Keats
- Interpret *Ode to a Nightingale*

NOTES

4.2 WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

William Wordsworth was born on 7 April 1770 in Cockermouth, Cumberland. His father was a law agent and collected rent. He was financially secure and Wordsworth enjoyed a comfortable childhood. He was admitted to Hawkshead Grammar school near Windermere in 1778. In 1787, he went to Saint John's College, Cambridge. He loved trekking in Cumberland, France, Switzerland, Germany and Wales. He visited France in 1791 during the time of the French Revolution. It was during this time that he met Annette Vallon, a French woman and had a brief affair with her. He returned to England due to the Anglo-French war. In 1794 Dorothy, his sister, became his close companion, friend and housekeeper. In 1795, he met Coleridge. He planned lyrical ballads in 1798. Then he travelled to Germany after which both William and Dorothy settled in their beloved lake district near Grassmere. In 1783, he married Mary Hutchinson. He faced a series of tragedies; death of his brother, death of his two children and alienation from Coleridge. His financial condition was also not stable. In 1830, he was appointed as distributor of stamps for West Mooreland. Gradually he became financially secure. His literary career started with descriptive sketches in 1793. At the peak of his poetic career, he wrote *Poems in Two Volumes* which was published in 1807. In 1828, he reconciled with Coleridge and both toured the Rhineland together. Wordsworth received an honorary Doctor of Civil Law degree in 1838 from Durham University, and the same honour from Oxford University the next year. He became a poet laureate in 1843 and died in 1850.

Fig. 4.1 *William Wordsworth*

He bought a completely new approach to the writing of English poetry. His objections to highly stylized poetic diction, his attitude to nature, his choice of simple incidents and humble people as subjects of his poetry are some his achievements. Poetry for him was primarily the record of a certain kind of state of mind and the value of poetry for him lay in the value of that state of mind that the poet recorded. As a poet, Wordsworth was a man of unusual emotional vitality. The initiation point is the poet's special kind of perception which differed in degree rather than in kind from that of ordinary men. The French Revolution, eighteenth century development of psychological views implicit in Locke's view of perception and knowledge, rational

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and humanitarian principles of enlightenment, his own simple and democratic upbringing, and the countryside of the Lake District were important factors in the development of his poetry. His first poem, *An Evening Walk* (1793), shows the influence of the French poets. Wordsworth was not a dramatic poet. He displayed what Keats called egotistical sublime. He himself had to be implicated in everything he wrote however apparently objective the narrative might be. His greatest poems are those where autobiography, perception and narrative are woven into one texture. Tintern Abbey, 1798, volume shows idiom of poetry where reflection is linked to sensation in new and organic fashion. It shows the development of his attitude towards nature- moving from the animal pleasure of childhood through adolescent passion for wild and gloomy to adult awareness of the relation of one's perception of the natural world to a sense of the human and moral world. In immortality ode, Wordsworth gives us the complete balance of maturity as he saw it. *The Prelude* gives a long autobiographical account of his own development as a poet. *The Recluse* is a 'philosophical poem containing the view of man, nature and society having for its principal subject the sensations and the opinions of a poet living in retirement'. Relationship, love, joy are the key words of Wordsworth. Poems like *Resolution, Independence, The Solitary Reaper and Michael* are some of his most famous poems.

4.2.1 *Ode: Intimations of Immortality*

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

I

There was a time when meadow, grove, and stream,
The earth, and every common sight,
To me did seem
Apparelled in celestial light,
The glory and the freshness of a dream.
It is not now as it hath been of yore;—
Turn wheresoe'er I may,
By night or day,

NOTES

The things which I have seen I now can see no more.

II

The Rainbow comes and goes,
And lovely is the Rose,
The Moon doth with delight
Look round her when the heavens are bare;
Waters on a starry night
Are beautiful and fair;
The sunshine is a glorious birth;
But yet I know, where'er I go,
That there hath past away a glory from the earth

Interpretation

In the above stanzas, the speaker is in a pensive mood. He says that at one time everything around him seemed surreal. There was an otherworldly effect as everything was bathed in celestial light. But things are not as they were before even though the rose is as lovely as ever, the rainbow makes its appearance regularly and on a cloudless night we can see the moon and soak in the beauty of the stars. The water shimmers on a starry night and the sun spreads its glorious brightness around the world. In spite of this, the speaker feels that the magnificence of the earth has lessened in some way.

Text

III

Now, while the birds thus sing a joyous song,
And while the young lambs bound
As to the tabor's sound,
To me alone there came a thought of grief:
A timely utterance gave that thought relief,
And I again am strong:
The cataracts blow their trumpets from the steep;
No more shall grief of mine the season wrong;
I hear the Echoes through the mountains throng,
The Winds come to me from the fields of sleep,
And all the earth is gay;
Land and sea
Give themselves up to jollity,
And with the heart of May
Doth every Beast keep holiday;—
Thou Child of Joy,

NOTES

Shout round me, let me hear thy shouts, thou happy
Shepherd-boy!

IV

Ye blessed Creatures, I have heard the call
Ye to each other make; I see
The heavens laugh with you in your jubilee;
My heart is at your festival,
My head hath its coronal,
The fulness of your bliss, I feel— I feel it all.
Oh evil day! if I were sullen
While the Earth herself is adorning,
This sweet May-morning,
And the Children are culling
On every side,
In a thousand valleys far and wide,
Fresh flowers; while the sun shines warm,
And the Babe leaps up on his Mother's arm:—
I hear, I hear, with joy I hear!
— But there's a Tree, of many, one,
A single Field which I have looked upon,
Both of them speak of something that is gone:
The Pansy at my feet
Doth the same tale repeat:
Whither is fled the visionary gleam?
Where is it now, the glory and the dream?

Interpretation

The speaker was immersed in the joyous song of the birds in the springtime and the playful leaping of the lambs in the meadows when a sad thought crossed his mind. However, that thought did not last for long as he found solace in the sound of the waterfalls, the echoes in the mountains and winds blowing across the fields. All this gave him strength and he decided he would not let his unhappiness mar the enjoyment of spring, the season when everybody around him was happy. He tells a shepherd boy to revel in the joy of the month of May and to shout and play with abandon. Further, addressing the creatures of nature, the speaker says that he is with them in their enjoyment of the season and participates in the gaiety wholly as if in a festival. He says that it is sacrilegious to feel sad on a beautiful May morning when children around him play and laugh. However, the feeling that something is amiss persists as he looks upon a tree and a field. The pansy that grows on the ground also brings forth a similar sentiment. The speaker wonders where the visionary dream has vanished.

Text

NOTES

V

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting:
The Soul that rises with us, our life's Star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting,
And cometh from afar:
Not in entire forgetfulness,
And not in utter nakedness,
But trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God, who is our home:
Heaven lies about us in our infancy!
Shades of the prison-house begin to close
Upon the growing Boy,
But He beholds the light, and whence it flows,
He sees it in his joy;
The Youth, who daily farther from the east
Must travel, still is Nature's Priest,
And by the vision splendid
Is on his way attended;
At length the Man perceives it die away,
And fade into the light of common day.

VI

Earth fills her lap with pleasures of her own;
Yearnings she hath in her own natural kind,
And, even with something of a Mother's mind,
And no unworthy aim,
The homely Nurse doth all she can
To make her Foster-child, her Inmate Man,
Forget the glories he hath known,
And that imperial palace whence he came.

Interpretation

In the fifth stanza, the speaker declares human life as merely 'a sleep and a forgetting'. He says that before entering the earth, humans live in a purer and more majestic kingdom. That kingdom is heaven. Infants have heaven around them and when we look back on childhood memories, we realize that for us everything on earth was suffused with magic. On growing up and moving from babyhood and young adulthood into manhood, our perception of life changes and the magic wears off gradually. The

earth is so unique and its pleasures so different from what man has visualized that he now gradually forgets the glories of the place he had originally come from.

Text

NOTES

VII

Behold the Child among his new-born blisses,
A six years' Darling of a pigmy size!
See, where 'mid work of his own hand he lies,
Fretted by sallies of his mother's kisses,
With light upon him from his father's eyes!
See, at his feet, some little plan or chart,
Some fragment from his dream of human life,
Shaped by himself with newly-learned art;
A wedding or a festival,
A mourning or a funeral;
And this hath now his heart,
And unto this he frames his song:
Then will he fit his tongue
To dialogues of business, love, or strife;
But it will not be long
Ere this be thrown aside,
And with new joy and pride
The little Actor cons another part;
Filling from time to time his 'humorous stage'
With all the Persons, down to palsied Age,
That Life brings with her in her equipage;
As if his whole vocation
Were endless imitation

Interpretation

In the seventh stanza, the speaker observes a six-year-old boy and imagines his life, and the love his parents bestow upon him. He sees the boy playing with some imitated fragment of adult life, 'some little plan or chart,' imitating 'a wedding or a festival' or 'a mourning or a funeral.' The speaker imagines that all human life is a similar replication of this childhood observation.

Text

VIII

Thou, whose exterior semblance doth belie
Thy Soul's immensity;

NOTES

Thou best Philosopher, who yet dost keep
Thy heritage, thou Eye among the blind,
That, deaf and silent, read'st the eternal deep,
Haunted for ever by the eternal mind, —
Mighty Prophet! Seer blest!
On whom those truths do rest,
Which we are toiling all our lives to find,
In darkness lost, the darkness of the grave;
Thou, over whom thy Immortality
Broods like the Day, a Master o'er a Slave,
A Presence which is not to be put by;
To whom the grave
Is but a lonely bed without the sense or sight
Of day or the warm light,
A place of thought where we in waiting lie;
Thou little Child, yet glorious in the might
Of heaven-born freedom on thy being's height,
Why with such earnest pains dost thou provoke
The years to bring the inevitable yoke,
Thus blindly with thy blessedness at strife?
Full soon thy Soul shall have her earthly freight,
And custom lie upon thee with a weight,
Heavy as frost, and deep almost as life!

IX

O joy! that in our embers
Is something that doth live,
That nature yet remembers
What was so fugitive!
The thought of our past years in me doth breed
Perpetual benediction: not indeed
For that which is most worthy to be blest;
Delight and liberty, the simple creed
Of Childhood, whether busy or at rest,
With new-fledged hope still fluttering in his breast: —
Not for these I raise
The song of thanks and praise;
But for those obstinate questionings

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Of sense and outward things,
Fallings from us, vanishings;
Blank misgivings of a Creature
Moving about in worlds not realised,
High instincts before which our mortal Nature
Did tremble like a guilty Thing surprised:
But for those first affections,
Those shadowy recollections,
Which, be they what they may,
Are yet the fountain-light of all our day,
Are yet a master-light of all our seeing;
Uphold us, cherish, and have power to make
Our noisy years seem moments in the being
Of the eternal Silence: truths that wake,
To perish never;
Which neither listlessness, nor mad endeavor,
Nor Man nor Boy,.
Nor all that is at enmity with joy,
Can utterly abolish or destroy!
Hence in a season of calm weather
Though inland far we be,
Our Souls have sight of that immortal sea
Which brought us hither,
Can in a moment travel thither,
And see the Children sport upon the shore,
And hear the mighty waters rolling evermore.

X

Then sing, ye Birds, sing, sing a joyous song!
And let the young Lambs bound
As to the tabor's sound!
We in thought will join your throng,
Ye that pipe and ye that play,
Ye that through your hearts today
Feel the gladness of the May!
What though the radiance which was once so bright
Be now for ever taken from my sight,
Though nothing can bring back the hour

NOTES

Of splendour in the grass, of glory in the flower;
We will grieve not, rather find
Strength in what remains behind;
In the primal sympathy
Which having been must ever be;
In the soothing thoughts that spring
Out of human suffering;
In the faith that looks through death,
In years that bring the philosophic mind.

Interpretation

In the eighth stanza, the speaker addresses the child as though he were a powerful prophet of a lost truth, and asks him when he has all the splendour of his origins and the pure experience of nature why does he still rush toward an adult life of convention and material pleasures.

In the ninth stanza, the speaker is happy that his childhood memories are a link to the world of innocence. In the tenth stanza, reinforced by this pleasure, he implores the birds to sing and he encourages all earthly creatures to join in the happiness of the month of May. Though the speaker says he has lost some part of the glory of nature and experience, he will take comfort in the knowledge that as one grows older, a maturity sets in and a person acquires a philosophical bent of mind. In the last stanza, the speaker says that an adult is aware of the mortality of life as compared to a child for whom life will simply go on hence an adult can well appreciate the beauty of nature, as he knows he has a short life in which to enjoy it. Each object of nature stirs in him a thought process. Even the simplest flower blowing in the wind sets him in a thinking mode and raises in him thoughts that are hidden deep in the crevice of one's mind.

Wordsworth's Immortality Ode, as it is often called, is written in eleven variable ode stanzas with variable rhyme schemes, in iambic lines with anything from two to five stressed syllables. The rhymes occasionally alternate lines, occasionally fall in couplets, and occasionally occur within a single line (as in 'But yet I know, where'er I go' in the second stanza).

In *Tintern Abbey*, Wordsworth discussed how childhood memories of nature influenced the adult mind. The *Imitations of Immortality* ode is his mature masterpiece on the subject. The poem, whose full title is '*Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood*,' makes explicit Wordsworth's belief that life on earth is a dim shadow of an earlier, purer existence, dimly recalled in childhood and then forgotten in the process of growing up.

Though the poem's metaphysical theory can be disagreed upon, one cannot doubt the brilliance of language in this ode. Wordsworth's speaker is consciously at odds with the festive mood of nature all around him. For Wordsworth, this was an

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unusual occurrence considering the fact that he is habitually in unity with nature. The speaker is unhappy because he cannot enjoy and experience the beauty of the May morning as he did in his childhood. He is forcing himself to enjoy the morning but real happiness comes to him when he realizes that 'the philosophic mind' has given him the ability to understand nature in deeper, more human terms—as a source of metaphor and guidance for human life. This is very much the same pattern as *Tintern Abbey*, but whereas in the earlier poem Wordsworth made himself joyful, and referred to the 'music of humanity' only briefly, in the later poem he explicitly proposes that this music is the remedy for his mature grief.

The style of the Immortality Ode is distinctive from Wordsworth's other works. While most of his works are characteristically fluid, naturally spoken monologues, the Ode is written in a lilting, songlike cadence with frequent shifts in rhyme scheme and rhythm. Also, the Ode does not follow one single idea throughout but shifts from one idea to the next, reverting repeatedly to the central theme along the way. At times the speaker takes us by surprise. He addresses the Mighty Prophet in the eighth stanza and it is only revealed later that the mighty prophet is a six-year-old boy.

Wordsworth's linguistic approach in this Ode is sophisticated and complex. The use of metaphor and image shifts from lost childhood to a philosophic mind. The main ploy used here is that when the speaker is melancholy, to offer happy pastoral images which are more than often personified, e.g., the lambs dancing as to the tabor, the moon looking about her in the sky. When the poet achieves the philosophic mind and his fullest realization about memory and imagination, he begins to employ far more subtle descriptions of nature that, rather than jauntily imposing humanity upon natural objects, simply draw human characteristics out of their natural presences, referring back to human qualities from earlier in the poem.

Text

XI

And O, ye Fountains, Meadows, Hills, and Groves,
Forebode not any severing of our loves!
Yet in my heart of hearts I feel your might;
I only have relinquished one delight
To live beneath your more habitual sway.
I love the Brooks which down their channels fret,
Even more than when I tripped lightly as they;
The innocent brightness of a new-born Day
Is lovely yet;
The Clouds that gather round the setting sun
Do take a sober colouring from an eye
That hath kept watch o'er man's mortality;
Another race hath been, and other palms are won.

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Thanks to the human heart by which we live,
Thanks to its tenderness, its joys, and fears,
To me the meanest flower that blows can give
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.

Interpretation

In the final stanza, the brooks 'fret' down their channels, just as the child's mother 'fretted' him with kisses earlier in the poem; they trip lightly just as the speaker 'tripped lightly' as a child; the Day is new-born, innocent, and bright, just as a child would be; the clouds 'gather round the setting sun' and 'take a sober coloring,' just as mourners at a funeral might gather soberly around a grave. The effect is to illustrate how, in the process of imaginative creativity possible to the mature mind, the shapes of humanity can be found in nature and vice-versa. A flower can summon thoughts too deep for tears because a flower can embody the shape of human life, and it is the mind of maturity combined with the memory of childhood that enables the poet to make that vital and moving connection.

4.3 SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE

Coleridge was born in 1772 and studied in Jesus College between 1791 and 1794. Sarah Fricker became his wife in 1797 who was the sister of Southey's wife. He was greatly influenced by his friend, Wordsworth and his sister Dorothy on poetry. Coleridge and De Quincey have several similarities in their career path, notably were their failures in the sanctuary of home and opium addiction. Coleridge later got attracted towards German Metaphysics which converted the poet in him to a philosopher. As a result he becomes a wonderful critic. His years full of poetic inspiration were few; two at the most (1797-98) as a result the quantum of his best work is conversely proportionate to its quality.

His aim in writing poetry was to reveal the unknown aspects of the soul.

His emphasis on music was an example of his efforts that he put across in going beyond the limitations of literature to make the words bring out as much as they could, but he could not reach the stature that of Shakespeare. Another reason why Coleridge could not achieve great heights in writing could be attributed to his lack of self-confidence, which could be due to the fact that he was a narcotic and which left him in great frustration. Consequently, he did not succeed in finishing the long and ambitious work he undertook.

In broad terms his poetic career can be classified into the following four periods:

First Period (1794-1796)

- *The Song of the Pisies*
- *Lines on an Auturmnal Evening and Lewti (1794)* and
- *Religious Musings (1795-96)*

Second Period (1796-97)

- *Ode on the Departing Year*
- *This Lime Tree Bower My Prison*

Check Your Progress

1. In which year did Wordsworth receive an honorary Doctor of Civil Law Degree from Durham University?
2. What were the special characteristics of Wordsworth as a poet?
3. Name few of Wordsworth's famous poems.

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- *Frost at Midnight*
- *Fears in solitude*

Third Period

- *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*
- *Christable and*
- *Kubla Khan*

Fourth Period

- *Dejection: an Ode*
- *Love*

The fourth period was the last phase of his career when a great decline started coming in his inspirations and achievements.

***Fig. 4.2** Samuel Taylor Coleridge*

(a) Coleridge as a critic

Coleridge is recognized largely as a critic rather than as a poet for his great work by the name of *Biographia Literaria* which revealed strong theories of criticism for the first time. Coleridge started with Wordsworth's preface to the *Lyrical Ballads* and continued later on to observe Wordsworth's poems and as Cazamian says 'Certain intentions, as well as certain successes or failings of Wordsworth are caught and illuminated to their depths; so searching is the light, that it is even cruel.'

Despite his liking towards the aspect of romance, he maintained objectivity in his criticism and looked at facts with an unbiased outlook. Even T. S. Eliot's criticisms were greatly influenced by Coleridge's perspective. Coleridge with his perceptions could have reached any depth in art and discover the corresponding force underneath. Cazamian revealed his observations regarding Coleridge's Shakespeare Criticism, that – 'His remarks on Shakespeare show a sound intuition of the profound unit of dramatic art. His imaginative perception seldom fails him and so his famous distinction between fancy and imagination, despite its mysticism is so convincing and revealing. Fancy, according to Coleridge is the mechanical joining of impressions stored in memory whereas imagination is an organic development of the mind which has the power to reveal the essential and even the ultimate truth of life.'

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Coleridge's inclination towards German Metaphysics converted him into a philosopher as well. This amalgamation of his poetic self with that of philosophical nuance turned him into a wonderful critic.

(b) Coleridge as a poet

Coleridge was born during the period when poetic age was at its peak and continued to exhibit his creativity for almost three decades. Every great writer is inextricably linked with the life and thought of people in the contemporary world. The Renaissance was the originating point. It was an age of questioning, self-awareness and self-discovery and in fact the need and the demand were for something that is 'new'. Man had started exploring great potentials of human mind.

Logical reasoning was put into proper perspectives in the seventeenth century. This century also witnessed the invention of science and made the world incline towards materialism. Sir Isaac Newton overturned human behaviour while Locke's philosophy attempted to explain the universe in logical and materialistic manner. The eighteenth century reinstated 'society' on these postulates and brought forth the Industrial Revolution that provided for assured comfort and prosperity. 'Norms' in literature carried infringes from ancient classics but the 'content' was restrained to be immediate and tangible. The main focus was on the form and the logical substance was inadequate. There were certain writers like Blake, Gray etc., who raised their voices but to be overheard until a powerful fresh wind that has blown to overturn everything completely. A fresh wind of 'freedom' started blowing in the air. Wordsworth says 'it was the freedom of going into Nature and breathing to one's fill her pure and purifying air.' While Coleridge says 'it was the freedom of entering the strange and mysterious zone of the supernatural.' Byron and Shelley desired an innovative social order i.e. grounded upon intellectual freedom, scientific reasoning and impartial political system and Keats sang – 'Ever let the fancy roam/pleasure never is at home.'

Although there was a major influence of native factors yet an emphasis on pattern, order and on the concept of 'totality' within measurable terms came from continents mainly France and Germany. German philosophers of the eighteenth century were trying to explore emotional patterns of behaviour in man, the world of mental imagery and hidden areas of cognizance which can be seen in the German Literature of the time which considered supernatural as an extension of the known world of nature often strange and mysterious. Coleridge was influenced with it during his short visit to Germany which was reinforced further with his inclination towards German Literature. French Revolution also was another factor that greatly influenced the poetic mind of Britishers.

The French Revolution rose with a sudden and aggressive outbreak to attain freedom – freedom from tyranny of dominion, from dictates of the Church, from superstitious notion and public traditions. In fact, England became the pioneer in the world of thoughts and systematic development of ideas however England's freedom battle goes back to the times of Medieval History which continued till Renaissance. Reformation, Civil War, Commonwealth etc., were the source of inspiration for many countries. Though French insurgence can be quoted to be an outcome of the writings of Voltaire and Rousseau but their influences are sourced mainly from English proponents of Political and Social independence. What became the undertone of poetic

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subtlety and ethnical expansion in England became an aggressive and armed uprising in France against kingdoms and other institutions associated with it. The initial upbringing was attractive for the English poets and artists even Wordsworth and Coleridge visited France to become an active participant of French Revolution, but, seeing it taking a bloody and blind turn they withdrew. However, the fundamental basics of the uprising had taken deep roots in the English mind and caused a major change in their lives, thoughts and attitude.

In his early young days, Wordsworth was over enthusiastic about the French upheaval and he participated in it, but he was disappointed when the uprising became violent, people lost their lives, and the authority went out of control. French atmosphere was surrounded with greed, opportunism, deception and hostility which was witnessed by Coleridge as well. Wordsworth opined that the French stay was a 'waste of years', Coleridge also shared the same opinion.

But they, despite their disliking for the revolution, carried along the fundamental thoughts that had provoked the happening. They felt the dignity of human soul which the romantic poets of England now feel and it was in sharp contrast to the people and their attitude in the eighteenth century that men must be rich with morals and not with materialism.. Economic prosperity or high social ranking should not decide for a person to be good or great in fact it should be the soul that should decide upon the category. This idea gave a strong feeling to them to perform a moral role for Wordsworth being the 'teacher' and Coleridge like an oriental 'guru' and to take the readers to a visionary world where astonishment becomes a precondition.

Regardless of their affinity towards peace, conservatism, pride in English tradition, mental imagery, interest in the soul of nature, unusual and spooky and in this humanitarian zeal; it is easy to understand the basic feelings that lead to the great revolution of France.

Hence, being influenced by different exotic sources, Coleridge penned down three meritorious lyrics namely: *Kubla Khan; The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* and *Christabel*. His works displayed the following basic qualities:

- Artistic treatment of the supernatural
- Medievalism
- Herman nature and external nature: relationship in reciprocity
- Creation of a dream-world authenticated by psychoanalysis
- Imaginative flights
- Lyricism

4.3.1 *Kubla Khan*

Kubla Khan was one of the best works of Coleridge which he wrote in 1797. It was published first on the insistence of Lord Byron in 1816. The introduction focuses upon circumstances which prompted him to write the poem:

'In summer days of 1797, the ailing Author, retiring into an abandoned farmhouse between Porlock and Lintan, on the Exmoor margins of Somerset and Devonshire fell asleep in his chair under the effects of an analgesic prescribed resulting out of indisposition. At the very moment he was reading the following sentence or words of the same substance, in "purchase" *pilgrimage:* "Here the Khan Kubla commanded a

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palace to be built and a stately garden thereunto and thus ten miles in a fertile land were covered with a wall." The author kept on sleeping unsounded for almost 3 hours, in this duration he had the most vivid confidence of having composed around 200 – 300 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. As he awoke he appeared to himself to recollect the whole, arranged pen, ink and paper instantly to write down the lines that are here conserved. Suddenly a person from Porlock came for business and detained him for more than an hour, as he returned back he could still recollect some vague and dim images of the purpose of the vision while the rest have fade away.'

Coleridge therefore states that it is a 'fragment' and moreover 'of a dream', we seem to be apologetic about it. This poem does not relate to any statement or message derived from an idea but simply an imaginative exploration of the invention of rudiments of art and the relation between the natural and supernatural. It is similarly powerful in its literal and symbolic means differentiating the common and the strange, the immediate and the remote, the worldly and the other-worldly.

Structure

The poem is divided into three parts first of which is the elaborative one which describes the pleasure palace of Kubla Khan in 36 lines. Three stanzas in an order of 10, 20 and 6 lines correspondingly constitute the total of the first part. The art lies in the nature and the quality of the work that reflects life and its unique and unintelligible ramifications. The second part has only 5 lines while the rest of the 13 lines are the third and cover both the second and third part in one stanza only.

The poet has discussed an Abyssinian singing girl in the second part of the poem whom he had seen in a 'vision' and this is an art that even surpasses life. The final part draws the picture of an inspired poet who can bring radical changes to the world, a yogi who has the potential to alter the terms of life.

The story goes around Kubla Khan who was a powerful king in ancient China. He once ordered a building to be constructed of majestic pleasure – house in Xanadu which was covered by the sacred river Alph. Alph made Xanadu fertile in the circumference of ten miles which was surrounded by walls and towers. Its land was flourished with dazzling floras, snaky streams and odiferous flowers on the aromatic trees. It was also covered with old mountains and forests having greeny patches of grass in the middle which grows bright with sunshine. The river passes through the dark and immeasurable caves before falling into a dark Sea.

Its mysterious chasm was most incredible and deep going down the hill that was surrounded with cedar trees. It was a brutal and barren place like one we would imagine to be the haunt of a woman madly in love with a demon, coming here in the light of a declining moon and waiting for his arrival while he has left her after making love.

A strong outflow of water was spurting out of this gorge and deep below there was an uninterrupted chaos, the earth there seems to breath fast and this heaving of the earth consequently throws out water carrying along large and small chunk of stone like rebounding hail or scattered grain when thrashed. Fountain coming out of these rocks and stones turns into a sacred river, Alps, the river that follow the twisty

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path all through wood arid valley and reach the bottomless and mysterious caves before it makes a piercing fall into the 'lifeless' ocean. Kubla Khan in this state of tumultuousness heard the voices of ancestors foretelling war (i.e. destruction of this idyllic place and palace).

The pleasure house had its shadows fall onto the river waves in its middle. The falling fountain and the caves also were raising noises and mixing with each other thus creating musical notes. Not only the orchestra was astounding but the very sight of the pleasure dome that stood on the caves of ice and flooded with sunshine, was also amazing.

Coleridge was prompted with a vision that he once had of an Abyssinian maid who played on her dulcimer and sang of Mount Abora. Her music and the song were melodious enough to make the poet think of reviving it in his poetry and by doing so he would enjoy blissful delight and craft an art as amiable as Kubla Khan's Palace.

The music then would epithet the mysteries of universe created by God, the mystery of contraries woven together, the dichotomy of light and darkness, life and death, the 'sunny dome' and 'caves of ice'. A great poetry like this would make great changes in human behaviour; Great Poets are true subversives, they deliver the messages of change and rebirth.

Interpretation

This poem of Coleridge seems to be a fragment or a sequence of fragments. At first it brings forth a palace that the poet had heard of and then it talks about the singer which the poet had dreamt of. In the end, it touches on a poet that he had wistfully envisaged. Overall the poem is most consistent, methodical and one of the most focused poems in English Literature. The simplest answer to many questions for what this poem is all about is that 'it is about poetry'. The first part of course requires symbolic interpretation while the second part clearly signifies the purpose.

Kubla Khan wanted a pleasure house to be constructed in Xanadu. Abrupt introduction of the names in the work makes the memories of John Donne live in our minds; Coleridge also with the same unabashed deftness paves our way to the centre of the theme. The reader is quickly taken to the strange complexities of the world of creative imagination.

The word 'decree' is important; it signifies desire, order, determination, the name 'Xanadu' which in itself denotes isolation, something that is exotic, cryptic, desire-evoking, provocative in life. Alph which is a river of holistic values covers Xanadu in ten miles of circumference. Its flow passes through the garden which in itself is a pursuit for the ultimate reality, 'the desire of the moth for the star' in art and finally ends up into a great fall that meets the dark or the Sunless Sea in the other end. The area is fenced with walls and towers in its surrounding often in miles and covers gardens and small winding rivers also. The garden is bloomed with trees bearing odorous flowers. It has forests which are as old as the hills holding the roots; this refers to the beauty of ageless art, its widespread validity and charisma. However, its ravine is the most astonishing and mysterious thing that goes down the slope of a green hill across a wood of cedar trees. The poet in it has beautifully created the

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mystical world to evoke mysterious depths of art which steers us in a horrified and benumbed environment. The gorge perhaps is the immeasurable, unconscious reservoir of human memories, impressions and dreams, a barbarous place beyond the reach of knowledge or science to be explored.

At the bottom of the gorge there was continuous upheaval going on appearing like boiling of a thick liquid and resounds like the earth is taking a breath, 'Fast thick pants' suggest the sexual act reflecting the creative processes of the earth. Water is ejected out of the earth's belly in the form of a fountain and along with it comes out massive boulders like pitter-pattering hailstones or scattered grain when processed in the thresher to split it from the husk. The fountain takes the form of the sacred river Alph. Pure poetry is something divine that routes through the deep recesses of the human mind to heavenly bliss. It comes into existence from the panting tumult (the creative urge) and courses via a fertile land (the creative process), it is holy (purifying) and ends up in oblivion (lifeless ocean). The entire process delivers us an important message that every art however, beautiful and heavenly it may be, is susceptible to destruction because wars are inevitable. The ancestral voice is the voice of human experience. The weird dichotomy of man lies in the fact that he creates the art 'par excellence' on one hand and fights like his prehistoric antecedent with neighbour and fellowman causes destruction on the other hand. In intellect he can rise very high but in morality he can stoop to the lowest. He has raised great monuments and he has also felled them. Wars have razed beautiful civilizations to dust.

The shadow of the pleasure dome falling on the waves covering half of its breadth created a beautiful view. The intermingling sounds that come out from the depth of caves and seconds of the gurgling sound of the fountain were mixing with the sound of waves and creating melodious notes of the music. The Palace was a miraculous structure of mixed opposites; the top of it was flooded with sunshine while its foundation is laid in the caves of ice. This resembles the great art that substantiates the spirit of life where as life is a composite of contradictory experiences.

The poet then proceeds to the second part which he has dedicated to his vision of an Abyssinian damsel playing on her dulcimer and singing of Mount Abora in the first few lines. In the remaining portion of the second part the poet has expressed his wish to relive the perfection of the Abyssinian maid's song in his own poetry.

The poet has visualized a saga-like mental image of an inspiring medieval singer of the Middle East whose song would revolutionize people, their stale customs and dead habits and usher them into a new life. The poet has portrayed the pied piper of Hamelin with 'flashing eyes' and 'floating hair' whose flute would attract children to the extent that they leave their homes to follow his path, however unknown and adventurous it might be. Like his contemporaries Coleridge also wants to be a revolutionary, a preacher, a Messiah.

The poet was aware of the fact that people are conservative and fear to undergo a big change; in fact they would prefer to live in 'pig satisfaction'. Hence, they would restrain the person who dares to bring about change and would cease his functionality via the magical means of threading a circle three times around him. Poets for them are divinely inspired and immortal just as Keat's nightingale who is 'not born for death'.

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Overall Coleridge visualizes the perfection of art in all the three pictures i.e. Kubla Khan, Abyssinian Maid and the Visionary Poet. The first picture ponders over the complexities and contradictions of life; second is the art that goes beyond life and grow heavenly while the third is the picture of an art that transforms life by impregnating new dreams and optimism in human beings. Hence, it is a well-knit, highly concentrated poem about the nature and function of art.

As a Romantic Poem

'Romanticism in an extraordinary development of imaginative sensibility' – if what C. H. Herford claims is true about Romanticism then Kubla Khan is amongst the most romantic poems in English Literature. It is perhaps the most extreme end of imaginative aesthesia, Xanadu is an imaginary place and Kubla Khan, more than being a character of history, has been treated imaginatively as being a fantasist designer. The 'Romantic Chasm', Savage Place', 'Woman Wailing', 'Demon Lover', 'complex model of the palace, 'Sunny Dome founded on the Caves of Ice', 'amalgamation of Natural and Supernatural' – all of them are the creation of extreme imagination, the poem reaches to even greater heights of idealism when Kubla Khan heard Ancestral Voices prophesying war. Everything is in the romantic spirit and the palace is exactly what he had in his dreams.

Inaccessibility in time and space are the attributes of romanticism. Kubla Khan is not only an ancient king but has also portrayed a pre-historic mythological character in the poem. Xanadu, just as 'Lilliput' and 'Brobdingnag', the name itself suggests the sound of isolation. Alph and Mount Abora are also distinct words. Proper names provide an exciting and illuminated platform for the poet to take an imaginative free flight. The supernatural portrayal of the women wailing for her demon lover was another romantic attribute of Coleridge in the poem.

The mental imagery of nature and its incarnation as seen in the poem is a typical characteristic of romantic poetry. Nature appears to reflect human experience, wish and ambition. We derive the actual meaning through our imagination as we reach deep into the poem to discover the harmony.

The Supernatural Element

Coleridge's influences of German Poetry of eighteenth century are predictable in extensive use of supernatural in his work. His work appears to be excellent despite their supernatural element for some and for their supernatural element for the others. Supernaturalism is so powerful a component in his rhymes and he made it so natural for the readers that it appears an essential component of the entire theme. Supernaturalism is even more powerful in 'Christable' and 'The Rime' of the 'Ancient Mariner.' Kubla Khan is a bit different yet it appears to have oscillated all over right from the advert of Xanadu to the mysterious weaving of a circle round the 'troubadour' to restrict him from his function of leading the world to a new vision. The description of the palace makes it another -worldly construction; the Abyssinian maid singing of Mount Abora is a dream vision and the poet with ebullient wildness appears to be the one who visits the one in dreams and becomes invisible in the real world.

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But the supernatural is specifically mentioned when the 'Savage Place' is described as 'Holy and Enchanted': 'As e'er beneath a waning moon was haunted, by woman wailing for her demon lover.'

Supernaturalism is not ornamentation in Coleridge's verse; it is an organic component of the entire theme. The natural and the supernatural are coalesced into one entity, in fact it is his imaginability that has made this miracle possible.

In Xanadu did Kublai 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 was girdled 'round,
And there were gardens bright with sinuous rills,
Where blossomed many an incense-bearing tree;
And here were forests ancient as the hills,
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 the 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 'midst these dancing rocks at once and ever,
It flung up momently the sacred river!
Five miles meandering with ever 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, Kublai heard from far
Ancestral voices prophesying war!
The shadow of the Dome of Pleasure
Floated midway on the waves,

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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!
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 within me
Her symphony and song,
To such deep delight 'twould win me
That with music loud and long,
I would build that dome within the 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 in holy dread:
For he on honeydew hath fed,
And drunk the milk of Paradise!"

4.4 PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

P.B. Shelley was born on 4 August 1792. His father was a country squire. He was sent to Sion House Academy in 1802. Shelley later went to study in Eton. For him, school had always been a prison. In1810 he enrolled himself in University College, Oxford but was expelled for writing a controversial pamphlet 'the necessity of atheism'. He was influenced by his friends Thomas Jefferson Hogg and his ideas of atheism, vegetarianism, free love and political radicalism. He eloped with Harriet Westbrook to Ireland and campaigned for political reforms. Shelley was a radical and idealist. He met his hero William Godwin in 1814 and his daughter Mary (the famous writer of Frankenstein and the Last man) with whom he went to Switzerland in 1814. He later married Mary but suffered the loss of his son and daughter from his first marriage to Harriet as the courts did not grant him custody of his children. He was drowned at sea while returning from a peacemaking mission.

He was a true revolutionary poet in rebellion against the political, religious institutions of his country and was influenced in his youth by the rationalist utopianism of Godwin's political gestures. He was of that second generation of romantic poets that did not live to be old and respectable. He was a romantic poet par excellence. His

Check Your Progress

4. Name the two persons who greatly influenced Coleridge.
5. What are some of the reasons due to which Coleridge could not attain greater height as a poet?
6. What were some of the important characteristics of the Renaissance period?
7. What was the impact of the French Revolution on Coleridge and Wordsworth?
8. Name somed the important poems of Coleridge.

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poem '*Queen Mab*' tells of the corruption of man by institutions and his subsequent regeneration. His poem '*Alastor*' or the *Spirit of Solitude* is long poem in blank verse which has the Shelleyan theme in its mixture of abstraction and passion. '*Prometheus Unbound'* is poetic drama in which Shelley develops the Greek Prometheus myth-the ultimate victory of love over hate and revenge. *Adonaïs: An Elegy on the Death of John Keats,* marshals his new platonic symbols with splendid poetic energy. Shelley's final unfinished poem *The Triumph of Life* features those who have been destroyed by worldliness following life's triumphs. His sonnet *Ozymandias* has intense power and imagery. His poem '*Ode to the West Wind*' is both self-pitying and apocalyptic but ends on a note of exaltation. Shelley's poems are not built on dialectic patterns. The images change with turns of mood and each has its direct relation to the moment of emotion rather than to a total pattern woven by preceding and succeeding images. Shelley wrote *A Defence of Poetry* in 1821 which is theoretical statement of the nature and value of poetry.

Fig. 4.3 *Percy Bysshe Shelley*

4.4.1 Ode to the West Wind

O wild West Wind, thou breath of Autumn's being,
Thou, from whose unseen presence the leaves dead
Are driven, like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing,
Yellow, and black, and pale, and hectic red,
Pestilence-stricken multitudes: O thou,
Who chariotest to their dark 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

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(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, oh, hear!
Thou on whose stream, mid the steep sky's commotion,
Loose clouds like earth's decaying leaves are shed,
Shook from the tangled boughs of Heaven and Ocean,
Angels of rain and lightning: there are spread
On the blue surface of thine aery surge,
Like the bright hair uplifted from the head
Of some fierce Maenad, even from the dim verge
Of the horizon to the zenith's height,
The locks of the approaching storm. Thou dirge
Of the dying year, to which this closing night
Will be the dome of a vast sepulchre,
Vaulted with all thy congregated might
Of vapours, from whose solid atmosphere
Black rain, and fire, and hail will burst: oh, hear!
Thou who didst waken from his summer dreams
The blue Mediterranean, where he lay,
Lulled by the coil of his crystalline streams,
Beside a pumice isle in Baiae's bay,
And saw in sleep old palaces and towers
Quivering within the wave's intenser day,
All overgrown with azure moss and flowers
So sweet, the sense faints picturing them! Thou
For whose path the Atlantic's level powers
Cleave themselves into chasms, while far below
The sea-blooms and the oozy woods which wear
The sapless foliage of the ocean, know
Thy voice, and suddenly grow gray with fear,
And tremble and despoil themselves: oh, hear!
If I were a dead leaf thou mightest bear;
If I were a swift cloud to fly with thee;
A wave to pant beneath thy power, and share
The impulse of thy strength, only less free

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Than thou, O uncontrollable! If even
I were as in my boyhood, and could be
The comrade of thy wanderings over Heaven,
As then, when to outstrip thy skiey speed
Scarce seemed a vision; I would ne'er have striven
As thus with thee in prayer in my sore need.
Oh, lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud!
I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!
A heavy weight of hours has chained and bowed
One too like thee: tameless, and swift, and proud.
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!
Drive my dead thoughts over the universe
Like withered leaves to quicken a new birth!
And, by the incantation of this verse,
Scatter, as from an unextinguished hearth
Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind!
Be through my lips to unawakened earth
The trumpet of a prophecy! O, Wind,
If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?

Interpretation

Referring to his 'Ode to the West Wind', Shelley himself tells us that 'this poem was chiefly written in a wood that skirts the Arno, near Florence on a day when that tempestuous wind, whose temperature is at once mild and animating, was collecting the vapours which pour down the autumnal rains. They began, as I foresaw, at sunset with a violent tempest of hail and rain, attended by the magnificent thunder and lightning peculiar to the Cisalpine regions'.

The Ode is charged with speed, force and energy like the tempestuous wind itself. The powerful movement of the verse is carried on by use of a series of images thrown up in rapid succession. The movement is not just confined to the elemental forces of nature; it is also to be seen in the emotions roused in the poet's mind by his contemplation of the wind. The movement slows down in Section 3 and then gains rapidity in line with the poet's impetuous spirit, as he drives to the close.

There is, in this poem, a blend of natural and spiritual forces. The West Wind is a force of Nature, but it also symbolizes the free spirit of man untamed and proud.

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Shelley's great passion for the regeneration of mankind and rebirth of a new world finds a fitting symbol in the West Wind, which destroys and preserves, sweeps away the old and obsolete ideas and fosters fresh and new ones.

The Ode has five sections, each depicting one aspect of the autumn scene.

Section I

It depicts the wind in its dual aspect of destroyer and preserver. It opens with the customary invocation or address to the West Wind which blows in autumn. But here, autumn is not mellow and fruitful as in Keats' 'Ode to Autumn'. The poet calls the West Wind, the breath of autumn; it is a wild spirit ('unseen presence') invisible like an enchanter. The dead leaves fallen from trees are compared to ghosts that fly before the magical powers of an enchanter. The inversion of 'leaves dead' insists on fatality by posing 'dead' as a rhyme-word at the end of the line. Even though the wind is seen as a destroyer, the West Wind destroys to preserve. Shelley uses colours that suggest disease, decay and death such as 'yellow', 'black', 'pale' and 'hectic red'. Death and life, however, are simultaneously discussed. The seeds scattered by the West Wind are only seemingly dead till the warm Spring breeze blows thawing the ground, so that the seeds can sprout through the softened earth and spring flowers quickly bloom everywhere. The 'corpse within its grave' is juxtaposed with the lyrically literary and azure sister of the spring, whose 'living hues' are an absolute contrast to the death-evoking colours of line 4. What provides unity to the 14 lines stanza is the invocation to, that stimulating force 'moving everywhere', which can blast out the promise of new life from even the most apparently decayed context.

The imagery in line 11 demands the reader's own creative contribution. The flocks of sheep come out of their folds (like buds opening out), and 'feed-in air', with warm weather summoning them higher and higher up the mountainside. The elemental force by which the dead leaves 'are driven' is the same force which, with the benign protectiveness of a shepherd, is later 'driving...flocks to feed'. Thus, imagery contributes to the dynamic emotiveness of a force which is moving everywhere.

Section II

The setting shifts from the land to the sky. The sky's clouds' are 'like Earth's decaying leaves'. They are 'shook from the tangled boughs of Heaven and Ocean'. However, there may be more accurate geography behind this scene. Shelley's poems are far better informed about science, than those of any other Romantic poet. So a term like 'uplifted' (line 20), though lodged in a classical context, may have a literal application: moisture is, of course, lifted by evaporation into the sky, where it forms the clouds of future rainstorms.

The force of the West Wind causing commotion in the sky is depicted with the help of three images. First is the image of the sky filled with storm clouds which the wind shakes as it shakes the trees on earth. The second image describes the sky as a Maenad whose hair shakes in the wind. The third image is connected with death and the tomb. What is dying is the old year, symbolically, the old forms; the sky, now completely overcast and black, is like the vault of a dark tomb, in which the year will be buried. The wind is both dirge of the dying year, and a prophet of regeneration. The 'vast sepulchre' is not only the burial-ground of the past; it is also the significant 'congregated might' of the future.

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Section III

Presents a picture of the calm Mediterranean Sea, dazzlingly blue and crystal clear, as it is in summer and early autumn. Old Italian villas, moss-grown palaces, ruined castles with gardens full of bright flowers line the shores, and the calm sea reflects all this beauty on its glassy surface. The concentration here on the wind-swept ocean perhaps leads to the poem's most fluidly suggestive gestures. The underwater city seems unstable and elusive. The illusion would be the product of the wind. Even if the city does seem to be there, it is less significant to the poem's more significant purpose of suggesting creative, swirling energy in the form of West Wind.

Section IV

Stanza 4 sounds like the beginning of some new work. The poet discusses himself. The first-person pronoun or adjective, varying through 'I', 'me', 'my' appears nine times within fourteen lines. The poet dramatizes his own situation by carefully controlled use of the earlier sections. For instance, his longing to respond as 'leaf' 'cloud' and 'wave'. We have, here, implications of romantic melancholy. The poet is reminded of his former vigour, which is now lost and which distracts him into talking more to himself and less to the forces of the future. The poet lifts himself out of his dejection and goes on to a triumphant close. He prays to the West Wind to lift him out of the bondage of ties, responsibilities and claims in a suffering society. The poet chafes against the bonds of human existence that tie him down, weak and helpless, when his spirit, like that of the West Wind, desires to accomplish the great task of the regeneration of humanity by destroying away all that is decayed and evil in life. A strong personal note is evident in this stanza. If the poem had ended on this note, it would not have been a great poem, because art or literature that is escapist, that rejects life and cannot or does not face up to the problems of life, cannot be great.

Section V

The concluding lines are magnificent expressions of hope and exultation, 'tameless, swift and proud'. As Shelley's spirit is like the spirit of the West Wind, he cannot despair. The imagery, which in earlier sections is confined to earth, air, and water, now aspires to the fourth element of fire. Certainly first person pronouns and adjectives are frequent here but they are more positively linked to the second person pronouns and adjectives of the larger forces to which the poem addresses itself. One can observe the juxtapositions of 'me thy' in line 57 and 'thou me' in line 62. Stanza 4 had articulated the self as essentially singular: 'a leaf, 'a cloud', 'a wave', which led to painful doubt ('I fall-I bleed') and to a despair which allowed the once 'tameless and proud' mind to imagine itself as powerfully chained and bowed'. By contrast, in stanza 5, the recovery of freedom and pride is sought through a redefinition of the self in plural terms ('my thoughts', 'my words') as one component in a mass movement. The Wild West Wind inspires Shelley to write poetry and this poetry, in turn, serves as an inspiring message to humanity. This message would fire human hearts kindling the desire for progress and a better world. Thus, the poem closes on a note of ardent hope.

The poem is rich in poetic devices. Rich elemental imagery is its most striking feature. The imagery relates to earth, air, water and fire. The imagery is suggestive of swirling energy. The West Wind drives the leaves as 'ghosts' fleeing from an enchanter.

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As a preserver, the wind 'chariotest' the light seeds to the place where they would blossom forth. Yellow, black and pale are hues associated with death or dying. Thus, opposing moods and different conventions in language are colliding with each other as a single vocative that invokes the stimulating force 'moving everywhere' which can blast out the promise of life from even the most deadly context. The elusive imagery of line 11 discussed earlier is also suggestive of motion. Similarly, the image of the sky filled with storm clouds and the ocean with high waves, the image of the sky as a Maenad whose hair streams in the wind and sky as a tomb is highly suggestive. The poem is rich in metaphors such as pestilence-stricken multitude, azure sister, wild spirit, night the dame of a vast sepulcher, oozy woods, sapless foliage, etc.

The poem is also rich in similes such as; 'leaves dead are driven like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing'. The winged seeds are like 'a corpse within its grave' 'Loose clouds like earth's decaying leaves are shed. 'Angles of rain and lightning' are 'like the bright hair uplifted from the head of some fierce Maenad'.

The whole poem is based on personification. Wind is presented in its dual aspects of Destroyer and Preserver. The poet calls the West Wind 'unseen presence, an enchanter'. Shelley personifies the leaves that are 'pestilence-stricken multitudes, yellow, black and pale'. Spring is seen blowing her clarion over the dreaming earth. The sky looks fierce like a Maenad whose hair streams in the wind. In the third section, the blue Mediterranean is like a person sleeping peacefully dreaming sweet dreams.

Alliteration in the opening phrase makes the wind invigorating. Inversions such as 'leaves dead' insist on fatality by posting dead as a rhyme word. Qualifying adjectives, 'living hues', 'clarion call', 'winged seeds', 'wild spirit', 'oozy woods' are vocative, suggestive of that stimulating 'force', 'moving everywhere'. In lines 24-42 the wind which swept oceans lead to the same suggestive gestures. The subject of saw in line 33 could be the Mediterranean; this could also be the West Wind itself. However, what is important is the creative energy of the elemental forces.

The opening phrase of stanza 4 focuses not on the object of the poet's address but on the subjective speaker 'If I …

The first person pronoun or adjective varying through 'I', 'one', 'my' help the poet to dramatize his own situation. In stanza 4 the pronouns and adjectives are linked to the second person pronouns and adjectives. Consider the juxtapositions of 'me thy' in line 57 and 'thou me' in line 62. A way is found of dedicating such terminology to more communal values. The recovery of freedom and pride is sought through a redefinition of the self in plural terms ('my.... thoughts', 'my words'). The use of future tense 'will' reminds us that this ode is indeed a 'prophecy'.

Did You Know

In 1814 Shelley fell in love and eloped with Mary, the sixteen-year-old daughter of William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft.

Check Your Progress

9. Who were the major influences on Shelley?
10. Name some of the poems of Shelley.

NOTES

4.5 JOHN KEATS

Fig. 4.4 John Keats

John Keats was born on 31st October 1795 in London. After his father's death, his mother had started to live with his grandmother. It was here that his love for literature developed. Soon his mother also died and his grandmother had to employ two guardians to take care of him. They pulled him out of school and instead sent him to surgeons' apprenticeship but he left that and after he was introduced to the works of Edmund Spenser's poem 'Faerie Queen' with which he was inspired, he wrote his first poem *Imitations of Spenser* which was published by his friend Leigh Hunt in1816. In 1817, he wrote his first volume of poetry entitled *Poems*, this was, however, not well received. His epic poem *Endymion* received bad reviews in Blackwood magazine. Keats was labelled as being a part of Leigh Hunt's Cockney School of poetry. After his brother's death in 1880 he moved to London where he met Fenny Brawne and fell in love. They spend beautiful days together. The following spring and summer of 1890 he wrote some of finest poems- *Ode to Psyche, Grecian Urn, Nightingale, Autumn*. He left London for Italy. Here Keats suffered severe cold and tuberculosis. After publishing his famous poems *Isabella, Lamia* and *The Eve of Saint Agnes,* he died in Rome in 1821. The epitaph on his grave reads as 'Here lies the One whose name was writ in Water'.

He is perhaps the greatest member of that group of second generation of romantic poets who blossomed early and died young. He has worn better than Shelley because for all the indulgent luxury of his imagery, he developed a self discipline in both feelings and craftsmanship which Shelley never attained. He is romantic in his relish of sensation, his feeling for the middle ages, his Hellenism, his conception of the role of the poet, but the synthesis he made of these elements was his own.

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4.5.1 *Ode to a Nightingale*

My heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains
My sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk,
Or emptied some dull opiate to the drains
One minute past, and Lethe-wards had sunk:
'Tis not through envy of thy happy lot,
But being too happy in thy happiness,—
That thou, light-winged Dryad of the trees,
In some melodious plot
Of beechen green, and shadows numberless,
Singest of summer in full-throated ease.
O for a draught of vintage, that hath been
Cooled a long age in the deep-delved earth,
Tasting of Flora and the country green,
Dance, and Provencal song, and sun-burnt mirth!
O for a beaker full of the warm South,
Full of the true, the blushful Hippocrene,
With beaded bubbles winking at the brim,
And purple-stained mouth;
That I might drink, and leave the world unseen,
And with thee fade away into the forest dim:
Fade far away, dissolve, and quite forget
What thou among the leaves hast never known,
The weariness, the fever, and the fret
Here, where men sit and hear each other groan;
Where palsy shakes a few, sad, last gray hairs,
Where youth grows pale, and spectre-thin, and dies;
Where but to think is to be full of sorrow
And leaden-eyed despairs;
Where beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes,
Or new love pine at them beyond tomorrow.
Away! away! for I will fly to thee,
Not charioted by Bacchus and his pards,
But on the viewless wings of Poesy,
Though the dull brain perplexes and retards:
Already with thee! tender is the night,

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And haply the Queen-Moon is on her throne,
Clustered around by all her starry fays;
But here there is no light,
Save what from heaven is with the breezes blown
Through verdurous glooms and winding mossy ways.
I cannot see what flowers are at my feet,
Nor what soft incense hangs upon the boughs,
But, in embalmed darkness, guess each sweet
Wherewith the seasonable month endows
The grass, the thicket, and the fruit-tree wild;
White hawthorn, and the pastoral eglantine;
Fast-fading violets covered up in leaves;
And mid-May's eldest child,
The coming musk-rose, full of dewy wine,
The murmurous haunt of flies on summer eves.
Darkling I listen; and for many a time
I have been half in love with easeful Death,
Called him soft names in many a mused rhyme,
To take into the air my quiet breath;
Now more than ever seems it rich to die,
To cease upon the midnight with no pain,
While thou art pouring forth thy soul abroad
In such an ecstasy!
Still wouldst thou sing, and I have ears in vain—
To thy high requiem become a sod
Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird!
No hungry generations tread thee down;
The voice I hear this passing night was heard
In ancient days by emperor and clown:
Perhaps the self-same song that found a path
Through the sad heart of Ruth, when, sick for home,
She stood in tears amid the alien corn;
The same that oft-times hath
Charmed magic casements, opening on the foam
Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.
Forlorn! the very word is like a bell
To toll me back from thee to my sole self!

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Adieu! the fancy cannot cheat so well
As she is famed to do, deceiving elf.
Adieu! adieu! thy plaintive anthem fades
Past the near meadows, over the still stream,
Up the hill-side; and now 'tis buried deep
In the next valley-glades:
Was it a vision, or a waking dream?
Fled is that music:—do I wake or sleep?

Interpretation

In *The Ode to Psyche* Keats was shaping the rhythm and stanza which were to carry the subsequent odes. The Ode shows him tinkering with the possibilities of the Shakespearean sonnet; stanza three reads like an incomplete sonnet, stanza five like a sonnet with a misplaced couplet and an extra four lines. But the exercise leads him to the ten-line stanza of the next three odes; for *To Autumn* he adds an eleventh. In all four poems, the predominant line is the traditional iambic pentameter, shaped to his own needs and in his hands still marvelously supple, rich and sweet.

The *Ode to a Nightingale* is generally taken as being the next in sequence and written in early May, 1819. It is the longest of the odes, but Charles Brown described its composition in the first draft as lasting only 'two or three hours', written in the garden behind his house in Hampstead 'on the grass-plot under the plum-tree (where) a nightingale had build her nest'. Before beginning a consideration of the poem, and as a possible corrective to treating it with too great solemnity, these entertaining and ribald comments of D.H. Lawrence seem to deserve a place.

He (the nightingale) is the noisiest, most inconsiderate, most obstreperous and jaunty bird in the whole kingdom of birds. How John Keats managed to begin his Ode to a Nightingale with: 'My heart aches and a drowsy numbness pains my sense', is a mystery to anybody acquainted with the actual song. You hear the nightingale silverily shouting: 'What? What? What, John? Heart aches and a drowsy numbness pains? Tra-la-la! Tri-li-lilylilylilylily!'.... the nightingale never made any man in love with easeful death, except by contrast. Contrast is presented between the bright flame of positive, pure, self-aliveness, in the bird, and the uneasy flickering of yearning selflessness, forever yearning for something outside himself which is Keats.

The exasperation has its relevance in discussion of Keats; however, just how Lawrence is unfair to Keats will emerge as we go along.

In fact, 'selflessness' is just what we think of in connection with Keats, but not 'yearning', not at least in his greatest poetry. There, selflessness becomes involuntary as he moves outward into his environment and is absorbed by it. We remember the note in a letter, '... if a sparrow comes before my window I take part in its existence and pick about the Gravel'. Yet in this poem there is a contrast. The personal pronoun is insisted upon much more than in the other odes, and it becomes clear that this time Keats longs for the irresponsible, flaming assertions of the nightingale, while he cannot disencumber himself of suffering, however much he wishes to. This is his honesty and the moral discovery of the poem: he is tempted to escape from the busy, painful

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world by the ineffable 'requiem' of the nightingale, but he wryly recognizes that he has been trying to hypnotize himself, and abandons the fantasy. It is notable that the decadent poets at the end of the last century, the Swinburnes and Walter Paters, looking for poetry which exquisitely cultivated and tingled the senses, lighted enthusiastically on Keats, and misread him for their own purposes. It is important that the same misreading is not repeated.

In the first stanza the poet moves with heavy inertia towards oblivion. The vowel-sounds and blunt consonants in 'numbness', 'drunk', 'dull', 'sunk' – pull our voice and feeling down towards the black Lethe, river of forgetfulness. The poet is not envious of the bird's jauntiness, he assures us, but he is paradoxically made too happy and therefore in pain. The opposition of the first four lines against the last may seen too violent to some readers. Certainly both conditions that of drugged dullness and of jauntiness, are beautifully realized. 'Full-throated ease' concludes a mounting movement towards exuberance and springtime freshness. The exuberance carried him on to 'O, for a draught of vintage', though it is not fanciful to detect a pleading note there. But the rhythm of feeling carries us forward to the drink; the long slow line-cool'd a long age…' – is boldly contrasted against the colour and gaiety of:

Dance, and Provencal song, and sunburnt mirth.

But the rich, thrilling taste of the cold wine curves back towards the initial awareness of suffering, and the longing to escape, to:

Fade far away, dissolve, and quite forget.

The line has a plaintive, falling cadence which perfectly reflects its meaning; every stress is softened towards dissolution, and therefore the bluntness of the next line is profoundly startling:

What thou among the leaves hast never known…

There's a fine truculence in his voice which, after the weak fourth line, turns to a clear –sighted brave compassion. 'Spectre thin' is a terribly haunting phrase; it has a prickly, jerky and yet shadowy sound which prompts images of dreadful illness and waste. We are 'Where but to think is to be full of sorrows'. We are in this world, 'here', the adverb insists, and this is to be one with Moneta, to whom 'The miseries of the world are miseries'.

The fourth stanza serves only as a link in the argument, and lacks the solidly grasped reality and relevance of the rest. In it, however, he invokes a release from this pain which is not merely an escape – 'On the viewless wings of Poesy' where as his letter said, 'all disagreeables evaporate from their being in a close relationship with Beauty and Truth' (although it is a pity he still uses the tiresome word 'Poesy'). In the fifth stanza Keats, with his characteristic outgoing sympathy, moves towards the stuff of poetry, that which consoles by its positive beauty, not that which invites voluptuous fantasy. It is a lovely stanza. The plenty and freshness are evoked by scent and touch at first. Sometimes both senses mingle to beautiful effect, as in 'What soft incense hangs upon the boughs' and 'embalmed darkness'. As before, the mingling intensifies each sense and adds to the plenty of the 'seasonable month'. Seasonable' is a nice, delicate adjective, full of mild restraint. After all, this is mid –May', and though he looks forward to the massed, drenched, richness of late June humming faintly along the m's of the last line, 'the grass' and the 'White hawthorn' keep the air fresh.

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Yet, in stanza six, the lush darkness makes the poet regress again. Although he is only 'half' in love with easeful Death, yet:

Now more than ever seems it rich to die

To cease upon the midnight with no pain....

These lines get undue attention in talking about Keats. Biographically, it is easy for us to see the justice of the remark; but that is not the point. The point is that it seems rich to die, merely 'to cease', but the seeming is only temporary. Again, as he wrote in his letters, 'Life must be undergone'. In any case, death is a matter of becoming, unglamorously, 'a sod'. The heavy, uncompromising syllable ends four lines celebrating, as Lawrence would wish, the bird 'pouring forth' its soul 'in such an ecstasy' and 'high requiem'. In this context 'sod' is both brutal and ironic. It qualifies the whole stanza, for death is recognized as not just a matter of 'ceasing'. By contrast, the nightingale seems immortal. It is idle to object that the individual.

ACTIVITY

Compare Shelley's *Ode to the West Wind* with Keats *Ode to a Nightingale*.

4.6 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt that:

- William Wordsworth was born on 7 April 1770 in Cockermouth, Cumberland. His father was a law agent and collected rent. He was financially secure and Wordsworth enjoyed a comfortable childhood.
- Wordsworth received an honorary Doctor of Civil Law degree in 1838 from Durham University and the same honour from Oxford University the next year. He became a poet laureate in 1843 and died in 1850.
- Tintern Abbey, 1798, volume shows idiom of poetry where reflection is linked to sensation in new and organic fashion.
- Poems like *Resolution*, *Independence, The Solitary Reaper and Michael* are some of his most famous poems.
- The style of the Immortality Ode is distinctive from Wordsworth's other works.
- Wordsworth's linguistic approach in this Ode is sophisticated and complex. The use of metaphor and image shifts from lost childhood to a philosophic mind.
- The speaker was immersed in the joyous song of the birds in the springtime and the playful leaping of the lambs in the meadows when a sad thought crossed his mind.
- Wordsworth's Immortality Ode, as it is often called, is written in eleven variable ode stanzas with variable rhyme schemes, in iambic lines with anything from two to five stressed syllables.

Check Your Progress

11. Name some of the important poems written by John Keats?
12. When was *Ode to a Nightingale* written by John Keats?

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- Wordsworth's linguistic approach in this Ode is sophisticated and complex. The use of metaphor and image shifts from lost childhood to a philosophic mind.
- In the final stanza, the brooks 'fret' down their channels, just as the child's mother 'fretted' him with kisses earlier in the poem; they trip lightly just as the speaker 'tripped lightly' as a child; the Day is new-born, innocent, and bright, just as a child would be; the clouds 'gather round the setting sun' and 'take a sober coloring,' just as mourners at a funeral might gather soberly around a grave.
- Coleridge was born in 1772 and studied in Jesus College between 1791 and 1794. Sarah Fricker became his wife in 1797 who was the sister of Southey's wife.
- Coleridge is recognized largely as a critic rather than as a poet for his great work by the name of *Biographia Literaria* which revealed strong theories of criticism for the first time.
- Even T. S. Eliot's criticisms were greatly influenced by Coleridge's perspective. Coleridge with his perceptions could have reached any depth in art and discover the corresponding force underneath.
  - Coleridge's inclination towards German Metaphysics converted him into a philosopher as well. This amalgamation of his poetic self with that of philosophical nuance turned him into a wonderful critic.
- In his early young days, Wordsworth was over enthusiastic about the French upheaval and he participated in it, but he was disappointed when the uprising became violent, people lost their lives, and the authority went out of control.
- Hence, being influenced by different exotic sources, Coleridge penned down three meritorious lyrics namely: *Kubla Khan; The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* and *Christabel*.
- KKubla Khan was one of the best works of Coleridge which he wrote in 1797. It was published first on the insistence of Lord Byron in 1816.
- The poem is divided into three parts first of which is the elaborative one which describes the pleasure palace of Kubla Khan in 36 lines. Three stanzas in an order of 10, 20 and 6 lines correspondingly constitute the total of the first part.
- The story goes around Kubla Khan who was a powerful king in ancient China. He once ordered a building to be constructed of majestic pleasure – house in Xanadu which was covered by the sacred river Alph. Alph made Xanadu fertile in the circumference of ten miles which was surrounded by walls and towers.
- Coleridge was prompted with a vision that he once had of an Abyssinian maid who played on her dulcimer and sang of Mount Abora.
- This poem of Coleridge seems to be a fragment or a sequence of fragments. At first it brings forth a palace that the poet had heard of and then it talks about the singer which the poet had dreamt of. In the end, it touches on a poet that he had wistfully envisaged.

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- The poet has visualized a saga-like mental image of an inspiring medieval singer of the Middle East whose song would revolutionize people, their stale customs and dead habits and usher them into a new life.
- The mental imagery of nature and its incarnation as seen in the poem is a typical characteristic of romantic poetry.
- Coleridge's influences of German Poetry of eighteenth century are predictable in extensive use of supernatural in his work.
- Shelley later went to study in Eton. For him, school had always been a prison. In1810 he enrolled himself in University College, Oxford but was expelled for writing a controversial pamphlet 'the necessity of atheism'.
- He was a true revolutionary poet in rebellion against the political, religious institutions of his country and was influenced in his youth by the rationalist utopianism of Godwin's political gestures. He was of that second generation of romantic poets that did not live to be old and respectable.
- Shelley wrote *A Defence of Poetry* in 1821 which is theoretical statement of the nature and value of poetry.
- The Ode has five sections, each depicting one aspect of the autumn scene.
- The poet calls the West Wind, the breath of autumn; it is a wild spirit ('unseen presence') invisible like an enchanter. The dead leaves fallen from trees are compared to ghosts that fly before the magical powers of an enchanter.
- The force of the West Wind causing commotion in the sky is depicted with the help of three images. First is the image of the sky filled with storm clouds which the wind shakes as it shakes the trees on earth.
- The poem is rich in poetic devices. Rich elemental imagery is its most striking feature. The imagery relates to earth, air, water and fire. The imagery is suggestive of swirling energy. The West Wind drives the leaves as 'ghosts' fleeing from an enchanter.
- The whole poem is based on personification. Wind is presented in its dual aspects of Destroyer and Preserver. The poet calls the West Wind 'unseen presence, an enchanter'.
- Alliteration in the opening phrase makes the wind invigorating. Inversions such as 'leaves dead' insist on fatality by posting dead as a rhyme word. Qualifying adjectives, 'living hues', 'clarion call', 'winged seeds', 'wild spirit', 'oozy woods' are vocative, suggestive of that stimulating 'force', 'moving everywhere'.

4.7 KEY TERMS

- **Autobiography:** The biography of a person written by that person.
- **Apocalyptic:** It means an allusion to an impending doom or devastation.
- **Dialectic:** The art or practice of arriving at the truth by the exchange of logical arguments.
- **Tempestuous:** It means stormy or tumultuous.

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- **Commotion:** It means an agitation or disturbance.
- **Alliteration:** The repetition of the same sounds or of the same kinds of sounds at the beginning of words or in stressed syllables.
- **Xanadu:** Name of a city. It corresponds to modem Shantung in China.
- **Kubla Khan:** The grandson of Chingiz Khan. He was the founder of the Moghul Dynasty in China. He built the city of Beijing and made it his capital.
- **Alph:** An imaginary river, not traceable in geography.
- **Demon-lover:** A supernatural being, and the lover of a mortal woman.
- **Ancestral Voices:** Voices as if corning from a distance, and warning and educating Kubla Khan. These are the voices of hundreds of years of experience and wisdom, voices of racial unconscious.
- **Abyssinian Maid:** An unmarried girl of Abyssinia. To a European of Coleridge's time Abyssinia, an African country, was a far-off land. The word 'Abyssinia' has also its musical effect.
- **Mount Abora:** The reading source of this word is Milton's Mount Arnara in 'Paradise Lost,' Book IV. Were it stands for heavenly bliss.
- **Holy dread:** Dread for something which is divine, holy. Greatness causes awe.
- **Honey dew:** Divine honey. It was believed that divine honey Cell in small particles with the dew drops at night and if one could take a few drops of it one would turn immortal. Poetic inspiration is like that: it can make a man immortal.
- **Milk of Paradise:** It is also 'nectar'. Adarn and Eve lived on this milk before they were banished from heaven to the mortal world.

4.8 ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

1. Wordsworth received an honorary Doctor of Civil Law Degree in 1838 from Durham University.
2. Wordsworth as a poet was a man of unusual emotional vitality. Wordsworth was not a dramatic poet. He displayed what Keats called egotistical sublime.
3. Some of Wordsworth's famous poems are *The Prelude, The Recluse, Resolution, Independence, The Solitary Reaper and Michael.*
4. Coleridge was greatly influenced by his friend Wordsworth and his sister Dorothy on poetry.
5. Another reason why Coleridge could not achieve great heights in writing could be attributed to his lack of self-confidence, which could be due to the fact that he was a narcotic and which left him in great frustration. Consequently, he did not succeed in finishing the long and ambitious work he undertook.
6. Some of the important characteristics of the Renaissance period were the emergence of logical reasoning, invention of science, inclination towards materialism among others.

NOTES

7. In his early young days, Wordsworth was over enthusiastic about the French upheaval and he participated in it, but he was disappointed when the uprising became violent, people lost their lives, and the authority went out of control. French atmosphere was surrounded with greed, opportunism, deception and hostility which was witnessed by Coleridge as well. Wordsworth opined that the French stay was a 'waste of years', Coleridge also shared the same opinion.
8. Some important poems of Coleridge are *Kubla Khan; The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* and *Christabel* among others.
9. Shelley was largely influenced by his friends Thomas Jefferson Hogg and his ideas of atheism, vegetarianism, free love and political radicalism. He was of that second generation of romantic poets that did not live to be old and respectable. He was a romantic poet par excellence.
10. Some of the poems of Shelley are *Queen Mab, Alastor, Prometheus Unbound* among others.
11. Some of the important poems written by John Keats are *Ode to Psyche, Grecian Urn, Nightingale* and *Autumn* among others.
12. The *Ode to a Nightingale* is generally taken as being the next in sequence and written in early May, 1819.

4.9 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. What is the style used in *Ode: Intimations of Immortality.*
2. What is the structure of *Ode: Intimations of Immortality.*
3. Write a short note on Coleridge as a critic.
4. What does the West Wind symbolize?
5. Identify the imagery used in the West Wind.

Long- Answer Questions

1. Compare *Ode: Intimations of Immortality* to *Tintern Abbey.*
2. Would it be correct to describe 'Kubla Khan' as a finished fragment? Give reasons for your answer.
3. Discuss 'Kubla Khan' as an allegorical poem.
4. Kubla Khan's palace, as Coleridge describes it, best represents the strangeness, mystery and contradictions in life. Do you agree?
5. Do you think it is impossible to enjoy Coleridge's poetry without 'willing suspension of disbelief?

NOTES

4.10 FURTHER READING

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NOTES

UNIT 5 VICTORIAN AND MODERN POETS

Structure

5.0 INTRODUCTION

In the previous unit, you studied the poems of the Romantic poets namely, William Wordsworth, S.T. Coleridge, P.B. Shelley and John Keats.

Coming down in the history of English literature from the Romantic age of idealism to the Victorian era of Realism, one experiences the feeling of a return from solitude to society, from nature to industry, from concepts to issues, from spiritualism to pragmatism, from optimism to agnosticism, from lyricism to criticism and from organicism to compromise.

The movement of Realism is an integral part of Victorian Age. Although the literary scene during the Victorian period was dominated by novel, its achievement in poetry was not less significant.

Although the period may not have produced as great 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 contributions to it. Just as in the Romantic period, there were two distinct generations of poets, in the Victorian period too, there were the early Victorians (ending around 1870) and the late Victorians.

Among the early Victorians, the most prominent poets were Alfred Lord Tennyson, Robert Browning, Emily Bronte, Matthew Arnold, Christina Rossetti, George Eliot among others. Writers associated with the late Victorian Period include Oscar Wilde, Thomas Hardy, Robert Louis Stevenson among others. Eliot was one

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of the leading poets of the avant-garde. His literary writings established him as one of the leading poets of the twentieth century. Similarly, W.B.Yeats was one of the foremost figures of the twentieth century.

5.1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

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

- Describe the contribution of T.S. Eliot to English poetry
- Discuss the various themes that have been used by Eliot in his poems
- Analyse Eliot's poems–*The Waste Land* and *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*

5.2 ALFRED LORD TENNYSON

Tennyson was born on 6 August 1809 in Somersby, Lincolnshire in England. Since childhood, he suffered a keen sense of 'want of money' and lifelong fear of mental disease- epilepsy. In 1827, he took admission in Trinity College, Cambridge. In 1829, he became a part of the Apostolic and became a part of undergraduate club to discuss major philosophical issues of the day. The members of the club were famous thinkers like Arthur Henry Hallam, James Spedding, Edward Lushington and Richard Monckton Milnes. Although Tennyson's relationship with Arthur lasted four years but it was an intense friendship. Hallam was engaged to Alfred Tennyson's sister, Emile Tennyson. But in 1833, Hallam died and Tennyson produced his best poetry in memory of Hallam - *In Memoriam A.H.H.* (1849), *Ulysses* (1833), *Tithonus* (1842) and *The Passing of Arthur* (1859). Tennyson was quite sensitive and got hurt easily by criticism. For nine years, he did not write just because he received criticism in a quarterly review. In 1850, he was honoured with Poet Laureate. He was the most popular poet of Victorian era. He dedicated *Idylls of the King* to Prince Albert in his memory. Queen Victoria offered him the title of the 'Lord'. In his last years, he suffered extreme short sightedness and faced difficulties in reading and writing, and died on 6 October 1892 at the age of eighty-three.

Fig. 5.1 *Alfred Lord Tennyson*

NOTES

The Victorian poets, like the romantic poets, were adventurous in stanza forms in the eighteenth century. Tennyson liked to use fairly elaborate stanzas in which he could swing his lines with the mood. Tennyson sometimes copied Keats' heraldic use of colour, but generally his use of colour images was simply for the mood or atmosphere. The opening of Part IV of *The Lady of Shalott* (published in poems of 1833) is a good example. His turning of Marloy's stern story of Arthur's death into the muted melancholy of *Morte D'Arthur* is technical achievement of a high order. The heroic theme of *Ulysses*, one of Tennyson's most controlled and perfectly wrought dramatic monologues, which presents the voice of the aged Ulysses planning a final voyage, is similarly presented in a context of musical sadness. Like so many of his time, Tennyson was a warrier. He worried about God and Nature and man; about modern science and its effect on belief; about Darwin and the significance of his theory of evolution; and about the meaning of life. The death of his close friend, Arthur Henry Hallam in 1833, added an abiding sense of personal loss to his basic worries and the grief and the worries came together over the years to produce slowly the series of linked lyrics he called *In Memoriam* (1850).

5.2.1 *Ulysses*

It little profits that an idle king,
By this still hearth, among these barren crags,
Match'd with an aged wife, I mete and dole
Unequal laws unto a savage race,
That hoard, and sleep, and feed, and know not me.
I cannot rest from travel; I will drink
Life to the lees. All times I have enjoy'd
Greatly, have suffer'd greatly, both with those
That loved me, and alone; on shore, and when
Thro' scudding drifts the rainy Hyades
Vext the dim sea. I am become a name;
For always roaming with a hungry heart
Much have I seen and known,— cities of men
And manners, climates, councils, governments,
Myself not least, but honor'd of them all,—
And drunk delight of battle with my peers,
Far on the ringing plains of windy Troy.
I am a part of all that I have met;
Yet all experience is an arch wherethro'
Gleams that untravell'd world whose margin fades
For ever and for ever when I move.
How dull it is to pause, to make an end,
To rust unburnish'd, not to shine in use!
As tho' to breathe were life! Life piled on life

NOTES

Were all too little, and of one to me
Little remains; but every hour is saved
From that eternal silence, something more,
A bringer of new things; and vile it were
For some three suns to store and hoard myself,
And this gray spirit yearning in desire
To follow knowledge like a sinking star,
Beyond the utmost bound of human thought.

Interpretation

Ulysses, the legendary Greek hero was the king of Ithaca, who, after the siege of Troy, set sail for home. On his way home, he was subjected to many storms and obstacles because of the wrath of the sea god (Poseidon). He was forced to wander for another ten years before he reached Ithaca, his wife Penelope and son Telemachus. But a sedentary life was not what he wanted and desired to travel again to 'follow virtue and knowledge' (Dante). In this poem, Ulysses is about to set sail on a final voyage from which he will never return.

Tennyson wrote this poem in a single day on 20 October, three weeks after he heard the news of Hallam's death in 1833. Tennyson said that the poem 'was written under the sense of loss and that all had gone by, but that still life must be fought out to the end'. This is Tennyson's best poem in which there seems to be a balance between melancholy on one hand and a sense of living life actively on the other.

Having wandered on many adventures, Ulysses returns to his island home of Ithaca to resume his life as a ruler. But he finds himself bored with the commonplace activities of daily life and longs to 'sail beyond the sunset' in search of more fulfilling life.

Where is Ulysses standing during his speech?

The clue to this lies in 'By this still hearth, among these barren crags, Match'd with an aged wife'. He is probably close to his home near some barren rocks. His dissatisfaction with his unexciting home, the surrounding area and his not-so-young wife is clear. This restlessness is further increased when Ulysses thinks about his own enviable role of doling out justice to his subjects whose principal aim in life is to eat, sleep and hoard material things. Their preoccupation with the mundane prevents them from understanding the real nature of their ruler, who cannot lead a similar life. He craves for an intense life full of excitement. Ulysses does not know the simple passions of the common man. His joys and sorrows have been equally tensed.

Both on the stormy sea or the shore, Ulysses is now famous with a great thirst for adventure, and for his travel far and wide. He has faced excitement of battles on the troubled plains of Troy. He has absorbed what he has experienced. Yet experience is like an arch through which the world that he has not yet travelled to, is visibly bright and shining. The more he sees, the more is there to see. To breathe is merely to exist but to act is to live. He has lived a full life but it was not enough and he feels that he has not many years to live. He would like to do something new. So, it would be evil to waste time in Ithaca. His desire is to seek knowledge which even human mind cannot perceive of.

NOTES

Text

This is my son, mine own Telemachus,
to whom I leave the sceptre and the isle,—
Well-loved of me, discerning to fulfill
This labor, by slow prudence to make mild
A rugged people, and thro' soft degrees
Subdue them to the useful and the good.
Most blameless is he, centred in the sphere
Of common duties, decent not to fail
In offices of tenderness, and pay
Meet adoration to my household gods,
When I am gone. He works his work, I mine.

Interpretation

The above stanza is spoken in praise of his son Telemachus. He bequeaths his kingdom and royal powers to him. He has great affection for his son and expects him to hold the same for his subjects. He wants him to make them know as to what is good for them. He assigns him duties and responsibilities, and himself takes up the pursuit of knowledge.

Text

There lies the port; the vessel puffs her sail;
There gloom the dark, broad seas. My mariners,
Souls that have toil'd, and wrought, and thought with me,—
That ever with a frolic welcome took
The thunder and the sunshine, and opposed
Free hearts, free foreheads,— you and I are old;
Old age hath yet his honor and his toil.
Death closes all; but something ere the end,
Some work of noble note, may yet be done,
Not unbecoming men that strove with Gods.
The lights begin to twinkle from the rocks;
The long day wanes; the slow moon climbs; the deep
Moans round with many voices. Come, my friends.
'T is not too late to seek a newer world.
Push off, and sitting well in order smite
The sounding furrows; for my purpose holds

Interpretation

Addressing his mariners, he points to port and ship and dark blue sky. Ulysses and his mariners have lived their joys and sorrows together and grown old together. Knowing

NOTES

that death will put an end to everything, they can together strive to achieve some noble task that befits men who have worked with their trust in the Gods. It is now evening as the day begins to end and the moon rises to the sky and the sound of the sea can be heard all around. He urges his men that it is never too late to discover a new world and orders them to plough through the noisy waves.

Text

To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths
Of all the western stars, until I die.
It may be that the gulfs will wash us down;
It may be we shall touch the Happy Isles,
And see the great Achilles, whom we knew.
Tho' much is taken, much abides; and tho'
We are not now that strength which in old days
Moved earth and heaven, that which we are, we are,—
One equal temper of heroic hearts,
Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.

Interpretation

Ulysses wishes to sail beyond the sunset i.e., west. Their destination would be bottom of the sea or paradise where all of them would be happy to meet Achilles, the Greek hero of the Trojan War. Ulysses says that although they are not that strong like the way they use to be in their younger days, they still have the strong will 'To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield'.

Ulysses represents the human desire to strive beyond human limits to achieve something great and noble.

DID YOU KNOW

Alfred Lord Tennyson was hired by the Victorian Government as the official poetic spokesman.

5.3 ROBERT BROWNING

Robert Browning was a renowned English poet and playwright of the nineteenth century, whose mastery of dramatic verse, especially dramatic monologues, made him one of the foremost Victorian poets.

Browning was born on 7 May 1812 in Camberwell - a district now forming part of the borough of Southwark in South London, England. He received most of his education at home. He was a bright child and voracious reader, and he learned Latin, Greek, French and Italian. He enrolled himself in the University of London. However,

Check Your Progress

1. Name some of the famous poems of Tennyson.
2. Who was Ulysses?
3. What does Ulysses expect from his son?

NOTES

he left the university to pursue his own interest, thereby dedicating himself to poetry. His poetries are difficult to understand since there are lot of obscure ideas in it. He met actor William Macready in 1830. He tried his hand at writing verse drama. But there were lot of complaints of obscurity in his short and long poems. However, he soon discovered his talent in writing about a single character and discovering him through these speeches, characteristics of dramatic monologues. He married Elizabeth Barrett, one of the most prominent poets of the Victorian era, in 1846 and eloped to Italy and lived there until her death in1861. Elizabeth was much more popular than Browning in her life time. She wrote *Sonnets from the Portuguese* (1850) for Browning and in turn he dedicated *Men and Women* (1855) to her. After her death, he wrote many successful volumes of verses. In 1881, Browning society was established. He died in 1889, the day when his last volume of verse, *Asolnado*, was published. Browning was buried in Westminster's Abbey.

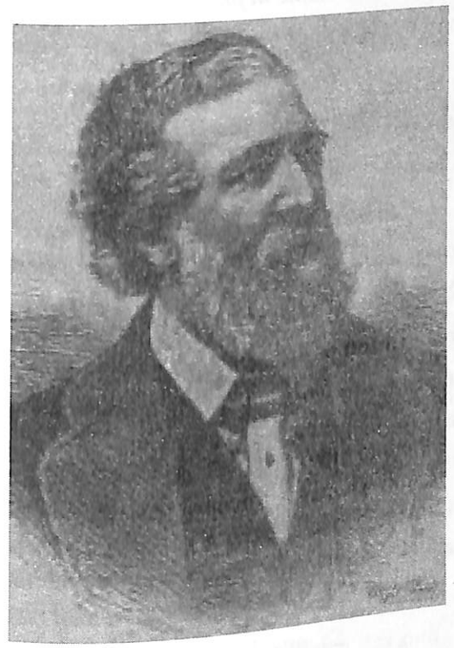

Fig. 5.2 *Robert Browning*

Browning's great achievement was to break away from the post Keatsian handling of sensory images and bring back a colloquial vigour to English poetry. He explored the characters argumentatively. Browning's dramatic monologues project certain kind of personality, a certain temperament, a way of looking at life, even a moment of history. The method is not impressionistic or symbolic, nor is it exploratory. For example in *My Last Duchess* (1842), *Fra Lippo Lippi* (1855) and *Andrea Del Sarto* (1855), Browning's tremendous interest is reflected in his dramatic monologues, particularly in dealing with painters. The period which most intrigued him was Renaissance with its lush paganising of a nominally Christian civilization. *The Bishop Orders His Tomb at Saint Praxed's Church* (1845) was praised by John Ruskin, a leading English art critic of the Victorian era, in his *Modern Painters* (1843) as evoking a Renaissance spirit. The volume *The Men and Women* is based on his own experience as lover and husband of Elizabeth Barrett. Browning's robust optimism and enormous vitality enabled him to live his life independently in Victorian England.

NOTES

5.3.1 *The Last Ride Together*

Text

I

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

II

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

Interpretation

The poem is a monologue of a rejected lover who expresses his eternal love for his beloved. As can be seen from the title, we can assume that this is their last ride together. The lover discovers the sufficient glory of love in itself for him.

To some extent, it is difficult to understand Robert Browning as a poet, as understanding his creativity and the depth in his poems requires a degree of intellectual exertion on the part of the reader. A certain intentional roughness, which is reminiscent of the metaphysical poets, is strongly present in his poems. His poems primarily focus on the human character and reflect an attraction towards the unusual, the extraordinary and the eccentric. His poems are also dramatic and are concerned with Renaissance themes. The most significant characteristics encompassing Browning's works are his strong optimism and spiritual courage.

NOTES

In this poem, the narrator told his lover now at length that he knows his fate, nothing to all his love avails and his life is meant to accept failure. This was written in his destiny and now his whole heart rises up to bless her 'name in pride and thankfulness'. The lover is requesting his beloved to take back the hope which she had given him as now he claims only the memory of the same that inspired him to go on. Besides this, he is also asking her for one more last ride with him, which would endow him with a joy of a lifetime. At this appeal, his mistress bent her brows; her dark eyes were filled with pity, which had smoothened the pride. The moment of her decision was a very crucial point for the poet, as if he was hanging between life and death. However, on getting a positive signal from her, his blood replenished and revitalized him again, and his last thoughts was at least not in vain. In the lines, 'I and my mistress, side by side/Shall be together, breathe and ride', we can see that the poet subsequently refers to the physical closeness between him and his mistress. We can also infer that the word 'ride' has sexual connotations.

Text

III

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

IV

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

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V

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

Interpretation

In the above stanzas, the poet goes on to say that if his beloved observed some western cloud with its bosom filled with blessings, or if she comes across the sun's, moon's and evening stars immediately, it is because the heaven has descended upon them. The lover requests his mistress to leave her consciousness aside, and allow her passion to draw 'Cloud, sunset, moonrise, star-shine too'. He asks her to let these rise above the mortal flesh to a spiritual union. The beloved comes closer to the lover with mixed emotions of joy and fear, resting for a moment on his breast.

The lover dwells on the importance of the present as he concentrates on the ride. He thinks about why people focus so much on the past and the future, rather than concentrating on the present. His soul, which was once 'a long-cramped scroll', has smoothened now. This signifies that one should live every single moment of life to the fullest in ecstasy and happiness. The scroll freshens and flutters in the wind in intense euphoria. The poet also questions as to why people get carried away by their past actions. He also contemplates on why people leave space for suspicions, distrust, doubts, failures or misgivings that haunt the present instead of protecting it. One should breathe each moment as though there is no room for regret.

The lover does not expect any 'real' love from his beloved, as he believes that he had failed in his words and deeds. He, therefore, consoles himself that all men, who strive for success, do not achieve it. Despite this, the speaker is full of spirit regarding the present, as they encountered unknown avenues during the course of their ride. The speaker asserts that 'the world rushed by on either side'. However, the poet temporarily goes against his own saying, suddenly wishing that if his beloved would ever love him back. Thus, he contradicts himself proving that hope is intuitive and universal. It cannot be traded for anything in the world, in spite of ourselves.

Text

VI

What hand and brain went ever paired?
What heart alike conceived and dared?
What act proved all its thought had been?

NOTES

What will but felt the fleshly screen?
We ride and I see her bosom heave.
There's many a crown for who can reach.
Ten lines, a statesman's life in each!
The flag stuck on a heap of bones,
A soldier's doing! what atones?
They scratch his name on the Abbey-stones.
My riding is better, by their leave.

VII

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

Interpretation

In the lines, 'What hand and brain went ever paired? /What heart alike conceived and dared? the poet emphasizes that hand (practice) and brain (thought) never went together hand in hand. Moreover, the heart never dared to express the true emotions and feelings that it fostered. He considers himself to be in no way lesser to the statesman, soldier, sculptor and musician. In fact, his riding is superior to all the above-mentioned acts.

In the next stanza, the speaker compares the ride to the act of composing poetry. However, the difference lay in the fact that the poet expressed what was felt by a normal person. Generally, poets idealize certain things, which are then placed by them into rhyme, the image and the rhyme existing side-by-side. Nevertheless, the speaker taunts whether the poet's own life was beautiful as he depicted in his poetry. Ironically, the speaker is a poet himself in reality.

Text

VIII

And you, great sculptor—so, you gave
A score of years to Art, her slave,
And that's your Venus, whence we turn
To yonder girl that fords the burn!

NOTES

You acquiesce, and shall I repine?
What, man of music, you grown grey
With notes and nothing else to say,
Is this your sole praise from a friend,
"Greatly his opera's strains intend,
Put in music we know how fashions end!"
I gave my youth; but we ride, in fine.

IX

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

X

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

Interpretation

In the eighth stanza, we see the speaker personifying art, and the sculptor as the slave of art. Here, we see that it took years for a sculptor to lock the beauty Venus into his artistic creation. All this servility comes to nothing as a person is more attracted towards domestic reality. Therefore, his attention turns towards a dame that waddles ('fords') through a spring of water ('burn'). The sculptor agrees to this, accepting fate unwillingly but without protesting. In the same way, the significance of music also becomes pale. The musician spends his best years in music, while music too has its own styles and

one kind of music may not be attractive to another generation. The only reward for a musician is praise from a friend. Even though the speaker, like the sculptor and the musician, has sacrificed his youth, he rides fine because it endows upon him the happiness and pleasure of a lifetime.

The speaker thinks that had he resigned himself to fate, and fate had proposed happiness, he would not have found himself in a lofty position. Nonetheless, one has to live a life beyond this 'destined' life and have his own share of ecstasy. Therefore, one should discover the unexplored opportunities of happiness and ecstasy. The speaker implies that had earth been as good as described by the people, then how was it that heaven was the superlative?

In the last stanza, we see that the speaker realizes that his beloved has not spoken to him, throughout the ride. The lover contemplates what if heaven is what life is at best, what if they ride on, old with experience, but ever-new in essence. In such an instance, a single instant is transformed into eternity. And lastly, the speaker thinks what if he and his beloved could 'ride' forever without worrying about action, intention or inclination.

5.4 MATTHEW ARNOLD

Matthew Arnold was born in 1822 at Laleham in England. He was educated in Winchester and Oxford. In 1841, he won an open scholarship to Balliol College, Oxford. His poem *Cromwell* won the Newdigate prize in 1843. In 1845, he started teaching at Rugby. In the same year, after a short interlude of teaching at Rugby, he was elected as the Fellow of Oriel College, distinction at Oxford. In 1847, he became private secretary to Lord Lansdowne, Lord President of the Council of U.K. He remained loyal to France and French connection throughout his life. He died in 1888.

Fig. 5.3 Matthew Arnold

Check Your Progress

4. List some of the works of Robert Browning.
5. What does the title *The Last Ride Together* signify?
6. With whom is the speaker in the poem compared with?

NOTES

He represented his age in a profound manner by being the true voice of sensitive Victorian intellectual brooding over inevitable loss of faith and the meaning of life. Nineteenth century Hellenism, romantic interest in folk tales and legends, the preference for solitary mediation in evocative surroundings- these elements give distinctive character to his poetry. His first volume was *The Strayed Reveller and Other Poems*, which was published in 1849 anonymously but was immediately withdrawn from circulation. In 1852, Arnold published his second volume of poems, *Empedocles on Etna, and Other Poems*. But he did not reprint the long title poem because situations 'in which suffering finds no vent in action, in which a continuous state of mental distress is prolonged, unrelieved by incident, hope or resistance, in which there is everything to be endured, nothing to be done' are not fit subjects for poetry. 'What are the eternal objects of poetry and at all times?' Arnold asked in his 1853 preface and he replied, 'they are actions, human actions, possessing an inherent interest in themselves and which are to be communicated in an interesting manner by the art of the poet'. Arnold is as great an exponent of Victorian elegiac as Tennyson. According to him, main duty of a writer is to present his criticism of life in whatever medium he can as richly, luminously and broadly as possible. In his poem *Dover Beach*, he reflects the Victorian problems. Loss of faith is given its most memorable utterance; public values have disappeared and all that is left are the private affections, little society of love and friendship. His two best known poems are *The Scholar Gipsy* (1853), which is about the poet himself and his generations, and *Thyrsis* (1866), which is an elegy to Arthur Hugh Clough who died in 1861.

5.4.1 *Dover Beach*

Text

The sea is calm tonight.
The tide is full, the moon lies fair
Upon the straits; on the French coast the light
Gleams and is gone; the cliffs of England stand,
Glimmering and vast, out in the tranquil bay.
Come to the window, sweet is the night air!
Only, from the long line of spray
Where the sea meets the moon-blanched land,
Listen! you hear the grating roar
Of pebbles which the waves draw back, and fling,
At their return, up the high strand,
Begin, and cease, and then again begin,
With tremulous cadence slow, and bring
The eternal note of sadness in.

Interpretation

Dover Beach is one of the most admired of Arnold's poems today. *Dover Beach* is the Victorian lyric of painful doubt and disorientation. First published in 1867, this poem has always been regarded as a representative poem of Arnold, typical of his outlook on life. The general decline of faith and melancholy constitute the theme of the poem. Samuel Barber, an American composer of orchestral, opera, choral, and piano music, composed a musical setting to it which has been recorded.

Arnold tries to show the lack of faith and certitude in a world which is materially expanding. The poem opens with an image of the sea, which is a recurring feature in most English Literature. As we know that England is an island, the sea is never far away. But the sea can mean different things to different poets and writers. For Byron, in his poem 'Ocean', the sea is an angry potent force that punishes man for his pettiness. The sea can be bountiful; it can be benevolent as it brings 'the sailor home from the sea'. It can also separate lovers as it does in the context of Arnold's poem *To Marguerite*. Let us now see how sea is handled in *Dover Beach*.

Although Arnold completed the poem *Dover Beach* in 1851 or 1852, it only appeared in a collection entitled *New Poems*, published in London. In fact, a manuscript of part of *Dover Beach* dates back to June 1851 when Arnold went on his honeymoon with his wife Lucy, after they were married on 10 June 1851. Nature is at its best as Lucy and Arnold look at the moon and the calm sea, and on this clear night can see the light on the French coast. Yet this perfect setting does not evoke any romantic feelings in the poet. On the other hand, the mood is of melancholy and nostalgia for the loss of faith. Once again, Arnold outlines the human condition and feels that love alone can somewhat lessen the pain of isolation and suffering.

One of Arnold's most celebrated lyrics, the tone of this poem is almost conversational.

According to literary critic J.D. Jump, *Dover Beach* 'is a short poem, but it embraces a great range and depth of significance'. What is Arnold's main pre-occupation in this poem? He ruminates on the loss of religious faith and the subsequent vulnerability of human beings to the sufferings and pains of life. It is only through a satisfying love-relationship that one can wrest a meaningful existence in an otherwise meaningless and hostile universe.

Arnold spent a night in Dover while on his honeymoon trip with Lucy. Here, he is standing at the window with Lucy by his side on exceptionally clear night looking at the sea. Not only is it clear but Arnold's opening lines suggest calmness and stability: a kind of poise that Arnold desires for himself.

Arnold observes that the sea is calm, the tide is high and the moon is shinning on the English Channel. On the distant French coast, he can see a slight flicker of light, which shines briefly and then disappears. The white cliffs of Dover can be seen large and shinning in the curve of shore. The poet tenderly beckons his wife to the window where she too can enjoy the pleasant breeze. Up to this point, nature is calm, beautiful and soothing. But from here on, the poet discerns the underlying grating sound, which he describes at some length till the end of the first stanza. The poet draws his wife's attention to the moonlit beach and to the point where the waves lap the shore and the sound of the pebbles as they are dragged along the beach by the receding waves. These pebbles are once again pushed up the sloping beach as the tide returns. Thus, there is constant sound and motion that begins and ceases, and begins again. The trembling rhythm seems to symbolize some kind of unending sorrow.

Text

Sophocles long ago
Heard it on the Aegean, and it brought

NOTES

Into his mind the turbid ebb and flow
Of human misery; we
Find also in the sound a thought,
Hearing it by this distant northern sea.

Interpretation

Lines 14-20 carry forward this notion of eternity by harking back to the time of Sophocles. This 'grating roar' was probably also heard by Sophocles long ago on the shores of the Aegean sea, and it was this that perhaps induced in his mind the sense of miseries in human life, which are reflected in his great tragedies. Just as the sound of the ebb and flow of the waves was able to evoke the feeling of human miseries in Sophocles' mind, so also it evokes similar thoughts in the mind of Arnold and his wife who stand much further north, separated from him by time and space.

Text

The Sea of Faith
Was once, too, at the full, and round earth's shore
Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furled.
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.

Interpretations

From this reference to Sophocles and the past, Arnold returns to the immediate present ruminating philosophically on the spiritual decline that had besieged human beings. But this thinking is done in the shape of images. Arnold explains that at one time religious faith supported and helped mankind, and was at its strongest. This religious faith was like a beautiful garment that engirdled the earth. In short, this faith was universal. But now the poet can only hear the receding tide, which draws back with a sad sound to the music of the night winds leaving the beach exposed and uncovered. Similarly, the poet is aware of the fact that people have lost faith in religion, which has withdrawn from everywhere like the outgoing tide. This spiritual decline has left human beings vulnerable and exposed to the sorrows of life.

Text

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 for pain;
And we are here as on a darkling plain

NOTES

Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,
Where ignorant armies clash by night.

Interpretation

What can one do in such a situation? The poet appeals to Lucy once more. He believes that if they love each other truly, they will be able to discover some value in life. Loss of religious faith had made it impossible to believe that the universe was to some extent adjusted to human needs. He says that the world they can see before them is beautiful like a dream. But in spite of its varied beauty, it cannot offer joy, love, hope or certainty to anyone. People can have no peace and continue to suffer pain.

From the image of the sea, the poet moves in the final lines to a startling new image – that of a field with the battle raging in the dark where it is not clear who is the friend or who is the enemy or why they are fighting at all.

The melancholy tone of the poem arises from a feeling of deep despair. The stanzas are of different length and the lines move with a steady and poised rhythm.

The sea is calm tonight
The tide is full...

The ebbing and flowing of the waves and the consequent 'grating roar' is evoked vividly in 'draw back', 'fling', and 'begin and cease, and then again begin'. J.D. Jump calls this 'a combination of metrical and syntactical means', a combination of sound and sense to present this wonderfully rich image.

But now I only hear
Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar
Retreating, to the breath
Of the night- wind....

According to literary critic Miriam Allot, the above lines are 'probably the most musically expressive passage in all of Arnold's poetry and a valid poetic equivalent for his feelings of loss, exposure and dismay'.

The image of the sea is present throughout the poem. But in the last three lines, we are taken to a 'darkling plain'. The sea is calm at the outset. Slowly a 'grating roar' is discernable, an ebb and flow that turns the poet's thoughts to meditate on the loss of faith with which humanity is now beset. This loss of religion is depicted by the image of the receding tide with 'its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar'. What is the result of the loss of faith? Without religious faith, which invests in life with some meaning and sense of value, the world is like an anarchic battlefield in the dark where people ignorant of their friends and foes are engaged in a hideous clash. As we know, poems with philosophic meditations are usually not very lyrical or appealing. However, *Dover Beach* is both. How has Arnold succeeded in creating this rich lyric? He has worked in images which have given a concrete aspect to his thought. These images then evoke delightful feelings in the reader who responds to the sheer visual power of the metaphors used.

In most of Arnold's poems, we have noticed a melancholy strain. Arnold's poetry appeals primarily to the intellect but it also appeals to our senses through the use of power images, chief of which is the sea.

Check Your Progress

7. Which are the best known poems of Matthew Arnold?
8. What is the theme of the poem Dover Beach?
9. Which imagery is present throughout the poem?

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5.5 W.B. YEATS

William Butler Yeats (1865-1939) came at a time when the Victorian Era was at variance with Modernism. The currents of this are reflected in his poetry. Yeats was born in Dublin but spent a considerable part of his childhood in London where his family moved when he was two. He lived in London till the age of sixteen. Yeats however remained connected with Ireland through his mother's Irish songs and stories and holiday visits to Co. Sligo.

Yeats studied at the Dublin Metropolitan School of Art. In 1889, he published his first collection of poetry. The themes that his writings centred on were Ireland, spiritualism and love and these were reflected in *The Wanderings of Oisin* and other poems. His earliest books draw on the romantics and pre-Raphaelite ideals and mythologize a 'Celtic Twilight'.

His poetic style was considerably influenced by his increased involvement with nationalist politics. His diction became simpler, the syntax grew rigid and the verse structures became better developed at the same time preserving their traditional form.

To this middle period belongs his failed courtship of the beautiful nationalist, Maud Gonne and his founding in 1899 of the Abbey Theatre in Dublin, which became a focus for many of the writers of the Irish Revival of which Yeats was a key figure. Though Yeats wrote prolifically for the stage, he also continued with his poetry. Yeats was also influenced by Modernism. Ezra Pound, especially, was a great influence. He introduced Yeats to the principles of Japanese Noh theatre. Political events saw their way into Yeats writings. As events in Ireland become laced with violence, Yeats' poems dealt with public themes. *Easter 1916* is his troubled tribute of the Easter uprising.

Yeats also dabbled in politics. He was elected to the Senate, the upper house of the new Free State, in 1922. On the personal front too his life underwent many changes. Being finally rejected by Maud Gonne and subsequently by her daughter, Yeats married Georgie Hyde Lees with whom he was very happy. They had a shared interest in spiritualism and Yeats' investigation in this area led to some of his powerful visionary poems.

Yeats had now matured as a poet. This led to his development of a symbolism to mediate between the demands of art and life. His later collections ***The Tower*** and *The Winding Stair* are often considered his best. Yeats had made a name for himself as a poet par excellence. He was honoured with the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1923. He died in France in 1939 and as per his wish, was buried in Drumcliffe Church, Co. Sligo.

Works

Fiction

The Celtic Twilight

Non-Fiction

Four Years

Plays

The Countess Cathleen

The Hour Glass

The Land Of Heart's Desire

Short Stories

Rosa Alchèmica

Stories of Red Hanrahan

Synge And The Ireland Of His Time

Out of the Rose

The Heart of the Spring

The Curse of the Fires and of the Shadows

The Old Men of the Twilight

Where There is Nothing, There is God

Of Costello the Proud

Poetry

A Prayer For My Daughter

Aedh Wishes For The Clothes Of Heaven

Against Unworthy Praise

Baile And Aillinn

Broken Dreams

Easter, 1916

He Wishes For The Cloths Of Heaven

Her Praise

In the Seven Woods

King And No King

Lapis Lazuli

Leda And The Swan

No Second Troy

O Do Not Love Too Long

Politics

Sailing to Byzantium

Swift's Epitaph

The Arrow

The Black Tower

The Crucifixion Of The Outcast

The Dolls

The Everlasting Voices

The Fish

The Harp of Aengus

The Host Of The Air

The Hosting Of The Sidhe

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The Lake Isle Of Innisfree
The Lover Tells Of The Rose In His Heart
The Mask
The Moods
The Old Age Of Queen Maeve
The Rose Tree
The Second Coming
The Secret Rose
The Seven Sages
The Shadowy Waters
The Song of the Happy Shepherd
The Stolen Child
The Three Beggars
The Tower
The Two Trees
The Wheel
The Wild Swans At Coole
The Wisdom Of The King
To A Young Beauty
To A Young Girl
To The Rose Upon The Rood Of Time
Towards Break Of Day
What Was Lost
When You Are Old

Fig. 5.4 *W.B. Yeats*

5.5.1 *Byzantium*

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THE unpurged images of day recede;
The Emperor's drunken soldiery are abed;
Night resonance recedes, night walkers' song
After great cathedral gong;
A starlit or a moonlit dome disdains
All that man is,
All mere complexities,
The fury and the mire of human veins.
Before me floats an image, man or shade,
Shade more than man, more image than a shade;
For Hades' bobbin bound in mummy-cloth
May unwind the winding path;
A mouth that has no moisture and no breath
Breathless mouths may summon;
I hail the superhuman;
I call it death-in-life and life-in-death.
Miracle, bird or golden handiwork,
More miracle than bird or handiwork,
Planted on the star-lit golden bough,
Can like the cocks of Hades crow,
Or, by the moon embittered, scorn aloud
In glory of changeless metal
Common bird or petal
And all complexities of mire or blood.
At midnight on the Emperor's pavement flit
Flames that no faggot feeds, nor steel has lit,
Nor storm disturbs, flames begotten of flame,
Where blood-begotten spirits come
And all complexities of fury leave,
Dying into a dance,
An agony of trance,
An agony of flame that cannot singe a sleeve.
Astraddle on the dolphin's mire and blood,
Spirit after Spirit! The smithies break the flood.
The golden smithies of the Emperor!
Marbles of the dancing floor
Break bitter furies of complexity,

Those images that yet
Fresh images beget,
That dolphin-torn, that gong-tormented sea.

NOTES

Explanation

The theme discussed in *Byzantium* is a follow up of the theme in *Sailing to Byzantium.* The reader in Byzantium is given exposure to the eternal city to get familiar with its reality for the first time. In the first stanza of *Sailing to Byzantium,* there is remoteness between the speaker and the place from where he came; similarly a distance is disclosed between the speaker and place where he desires to move. On the other hand, in *Sailing to Byzantium,* there is no such distance between the speaker and the subject, as the poem describes the events as they happen inside the city. Hence, in *Byzantium,* the speaker becomes aware of the reality since the events happening inside the city are revealed to him in present tense.

The speaker in *Byzantium* is the poet who observes the city's eternal reality. The speaker has expressed his views in the second stanza. 'Before me floats an image,' and ending emphatically, 'I hail the superhuman; / I call it death-in-life and life-in-death.' Furthermore, as the speaker is a witness to the events of the city he is never influenced or transformed by the city itself. The speaker is the visionary poet who is able to witness the reality of *Byzantium* as only human souls enter the city. ('Astraddle on the dolphin's mire and blood, / Spirit after spirit! . . .'). Also no other than the author could speak to the readers from inside the reality of this eternal city.

In *Sailing to Byzantium,* the old man visualizes the city's power as being able to 'gather' him into 'the artifice of eternity.' In *Byzantium,* Yeats makes real what was previously imagined to be perfect. The speaker envisages an actual artifice of eternity and not eternal artifice. The city generates eternal images, motionless and everlasting realities which finally overtake or devour all 'complexities,' all individual souls, all art and all forms of temporal life. *Byzantium* explains what eternity actually is rather than some apparently material, everlasting matter which, while being feasible to the human mind, would essentially entail shape and substance and therefore the entrapping of change and finity. As in a continuous furnace or procedure beyond all time, substance, and human notion, in *Byzantium* we observe not a predetermined structure and substance which can excel and eternalize the temporal, but eternally immortal everlasting images, the act or temperament of which devours and invalidates all artifice, all things real or imagined.

ACTIVITY

Compare *Byzantium* and *Sailing to Byzantium.*

Check Your Progress

10. What were the major influences on W.B. Yeats?
11. List some of the important works of W.B. Yeats.

5.6 T.S. ELIOT

Thomas Stearns Eliot has been a popular name in English poetry since the early 1920s. He had ruled the age in which he lived with absolute authority. The twentieth century cannot be signalled by a single voice or authority. Still, T.S. Eliot might be considered as its best spokesperson in English literature, probably more than any other literary figure. Amongst the post-war poets, playwrights as well as critics, who have enjoyed honour and prestige, Eliot can be seen as a towering celebrity. He alone could face and enjoy the life of austere and harsh realities. He would never sit back and ignore the complicated and confusing problems being faced by people of his time. He always wanted to come forward as one of us and give a first-hand report on the difficult issues of the age.

***Fig. 5.5** T.S. Eliot*

As a poet, Eliot drew from many different sources to gather his material. He was deeply influenced by some famous personalities of the past and of the modern scene. Shakespeare, Milton, Dryden, Ben Jonson, Arnold, etc., in general, and Donne and the metaphysical poets particularly added up in shaping Eliot's mind. Many French symbolists such as Laforgue and Gautier, German philosophers such as Hegel, Meinong and Bradley and the Indian religions and philosophies also influenced him. By accepting the influences so wide and varied in nature, Eliot significantly increased his knowledge and augmented his susceptibility. This is also why he is a universal poet.

Eliot was a versatile genius. He was a very talented man. His appeal was not just limited to the English or to the European tradition. Instead, he was a rather universal poet.

Therefore, it might be correct to say that Eliot was aware of a vastly rich tradition that was not just English or European, but had a wider application. He derives knowledge not just from the best that is known and thought in the Bible, or Christian theology, but also from Buddhism and Hinduism and many other religions. That is the reason why Eliot's outlook was neither just catholic, nor insular and neither national; his outlook was international to all tribes and peoples. For him creed and caste did not matter; he was only concerned with the best. This also explains another stand taken by him, that of a classicist in literature.

T.S. Eliot was born in 1888 in St. Louis, Missouri (the USA). His family was of Devonshire origin, traditionally interested in trade and commerce and academics. He was an undergraduate at Harvard during 1906–1909. Here, he came under the influence of the symbolists and Laforgue. During 1909–1910 he was a graduate student at Harvard and completed his early poems, including *Portrait of a Lady* and began *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock.* In the years 1910 and 1911 he went to France and Germany and spent a year at Oxford reading Greek philosophy. Again he was back to Harvard University as a graduate student. It is then that he started work on the

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philosophy of Francis Herbert Bradley, whose *Appearance and Reality* influenced him a lot. During 1914–1915 he resumed his study in Germany, which was cut off by the First World War. After this, he took his residence at Oxford, and worked on some short satiric poems. *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* was published in Chicago in June 1915 and his marriage to Vivienne Haigh-Wood took place in July 1915.

After a brief experience of teaching at Highgate School, Eliot entered business in 1916. He also completed his thesis in that year. Then he spent eight years as an employee of Lloyd's Bank. He took up various reviewing and editorial assignments. During 1917–1920 he wrote many poems in quatrains after the French fashion. *Gerontion* deserves special mention in this connection. He was an assistant editor of *The Egoist* (1917–1919) and also published a collection of poems and *The Sacred Wood* in 1920.

Eliot was the London correspondent for *The Deal* during 1921–1922 and *La-Nouvelle Revue Trancaise* during 1922–1923. In October 1923, he began his career as an editor of *'The Criterion*. His epoch-making poem, *The Waste Land*, appeared in public in 1922. It is a much discussed poem with five movements. In it, the poet has displayed fears, doubts and distrust of the post-war generation. The poem won for him the Dial Award. In 1925, his many poems appeared which included *The Hollow Men* that was written in the spirit of *The Waste land*.

During 1926–1927 came out his satiric pieces *Fragment of a Prologue* and *Fragment of an Agon*. In 1927, Eliot declared himself to be an Anglo-Catholic and assumed British citizenship.

The year 1934 saw a huge change in the poet's attitude. He had now sided with the poetic drama, which he renovated and energized during the later years of his life. Eliot's first work in this direction was *The Rock* (1934). Since then a wave of publications flooded the dramatic field. *Murder in the Cathedral* appeared in 1935. *The Family Reunion* in 1939 was a stage failure, but the dramatist remained unshaken. During the years 1940–1942 appeared *East Coker*, *The Dry Salvages* and *Little Gidding*. These three and *Burnt Norton* were combined together to form *Four Quartets* (1943).

The year 1947 brought a disaster for Eliot. His first wife died after a long illness. In 1948 he wrote *Notes towards the Definition of Culture*. Till now he had been honoured by his fellow poets, writers, literary associations and clubs on many occasions. Among the many literary honours bestowed upon him, the main ones include the following:

- Charles Eliot Norton Professor of Poetry at Harvard (1932–1933)
- Classical Association
- Nobel Prize for Literature (1948)
- Order of Merit (1948)

He also received honorary degrees from twelve universities in Europe as well as America.

T.S. Eliot wrote *The Cocktail Party* in 1950, *The Confidential Clerk* in 1955 and *The Elder Statesman* in 1959. After *Four Quartets* poetry was almost untouched by him, though poetic element was indisputably retained in all his dramas. Eliot's chaotic literary life came to an end on January 4, 1965, and the news of his death was received by the world with a sense of deep loss and sorrow.

With the passing away of T.S. Eliot an age of Masters of English literature got over. However, he will be forever remembered by people.

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Eliot: A Prophet of Chaos?

The twentieth century is quite a complex and problematic age. It cannot be represented by a single voice or character. You cannot call it the Age of Science as it is not even humanistic, nor classical, nor scientific, nor romantic and nor one of the compromise. You cannot just sum up an age by a single charming description, as was the case with the previous eras, such as the Age of Chaucer, the Age of Milton, the Age of Dryden, the Age of Pope, the Age of Wordsworth and so on and so forth.

Surrounded by a hostile world, Eliot became impatient to form new devices of speech and rhythm in English poetry. When he began writing verses, at that time Georgian poetry was in progress and the poets had forgotten their declared aims and had begun doing the same as the romantic corrupts against whom they had risen in revolt.

In order to understand the greatness of T.S. Eliot, it is important to throw light on the Georgian school of poetry, as it was this school against which he stood firmly and contributed something concrete to the growth of English poetry. The Georgian school of poets published five volume of *Georgian Poetry* between 1912 and 1922.

In these volumes appeared the poems of the following poets:

- R. Brooke
- E. Blunden
- W.H. Davies
- Walter de la Mare
- L.A. Bercrombie
- Gordon Bottomley
- John Drinkwater
- J.E. Flecker
- John Freeman
- W.W. Gibson
- Ralph Hodgson
- Edward Shanks
- Sir John Squire
- Alfred Noyes
- G.K. Chesterton
- Hilaire Bellock

These poets had recognizable features, but they were alike in the rejection of the decadent ideals of art and literature. They cultivated such qualities as reality, simplicity, love of natural beauty and adherence to the main traditions of English poetry in form and technique. With the passage of time, they turned away from real life and, like the Romantics, sought shelter in old, unhappy, far-off things and in old battles. Hence, their revolt against the decadents proved to be no more than a re-statement of 'what had already been said perfectly'. They wrote for the popular taste and their 'exoteric' poetry tended to be 'flat and thin, or shallow and shadow less… an evasion like the phrase, 'Not at Home'. This is the reason that led Roy Campbell and others to attack their poetic practice.

T.E. Hulme (1883–1917) led the reaction against the Georgian poetry. Through his impressive lectures and five short poems, Hulme stressed that poetry should solely confine itself to the world perceived by the senses, and to the presentation of its themes in a succession of concise, clearly visualized, concrete images, accurate in

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detail and precise in significance. He also stressed the employment of *vers libre* with its unlimited freedom of expression and its rhythms approaching those of everyday speech. Hilda Doolittle and Ezra Pound offered their generous support to Hulme, and they jointly launched an attack on Georgian poetry and brought into being the literary movement, known as imagism. In 1914 appeared *The Egoist* and *Des Imagistes*. The imagist poets went on with their job with a missionary zeal and succeeded in producing three collections of poems under the title *Some Imagist Poets* (1915–1917) and the final *Imagist Anthology* (1930). Although the imagist movement grew weak by the neglect of certain members and by the fixation of its practitioners to follow the sequence of very exact and concise images but the movement was in full swing after the first Great War. It exerted deep influence upon Eliot and Richard Alidington. Eliot could never shake off its collision and it made sure to him the use of real images.

When Eliot came from the New England to Europe, the condition of the English poetry was not very bright, American poetry was defunct and French poetry had begun to draw inspiration from Symbolism, which influenced writers like Arthur Symons and W.B. Yeats in its wake.

Two eminent poets of Eliot's time were Yeats and Ezra Pound. While Yeats was devoted whole-heartedly to 'the stuff of dreams' and to the Irish questions and Pound was devoted to his idiosyncrasies about art and politics, Eliot alone showed in poetry the 'complex intensities of concern about soul and body'. Yeats could only be a realist and an over-all metaphysical seer towards the close of his career. Moreover, the best utterance of Yeats philosophy is *A Vision* (1925 and 1937), which is in itself an obscure work of prose and not of poetry.

Eliot's best religious and philosophical work is *Four Quartets*. This book describes the poet's genius. Despite Eliot's proclaimed gratefulness to Pound, who was his technical adviser and to whom he dedicated *The Waste Land*, 'the influence of Mr. Pound that can be observed from outside is secondary to Mr. Eliot's. So, it can be safely assumed that Eliot is the truest poet of his time, only next to none.

Being conscious of the 'failings' of the Georgians, Eliot set out to introduce new ways of thought, new modes of approach, new patterns of expression and new rhythms. He succeeded wonderfully in his job as a poet for that simple reason that he had the modesty to admit the great value of tradition. It indeed is the permanent mark of a true genius as a true genius does not invent or discover so much as he creates or changes the borrowed material. In Shakespeare's hands the material drawn from other sources suffered a major change.

Eliot wanted to evolve and practice certain standards; he was a traditionalist through and through. He wanted to absorb in his works the best of the European tradition, of which the British was a part. Even though he was a poet of the English language, Eliot was first and foremost a European poet. He went towards Christianity in order to satisfy his longing for European tradition and culture, as Christianity was 'the most effective measure against the corruption of totalitarianism' and could 'save the modern man from being completely atomized and becoming aimless.

Correlated to this traditionalism was Eliot's concept of art. His most remarkable contribution to modern literature is the impersonal theory of poetry. *Tradition and the Individual Talent* is a very good essay in which Eliot says that the poet and the poem are two separate things. He elucidates the matter by examining the relation of the poem to the past and then the relation of the poem to its author. He thinks that the past is never dead as it lives in the present. The poet should draw his model and ideas from the past to shape the future. He takes much from the stored wisdom of the ancients and gives comparatively less to the tradition. In this usual barter system, he has to eliminate himself greatly or undergo the process of a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality. Personality, therefore, finds no room in his theory of poetry. In this respect, he is very different from the romantic conception of art, and his declaration in 1928 that he was classicist in literature, Anglo-Catholic in religion, royalist in politics is fully vindicated.

Thus, you see that Eliot was not only an innovator in poetry but also in criticism. His multi-pronged genius indicated the dawn of a new era in the field of English poetic drama too. As Eliot thought, certain emotions and feelings visit us only in moments of inaction, the moments frequently symbolized in Eliot's work by a scene in a rose-garden or apple orchard. These can only be expressed in the language of poetry. But at the same time the contact with the ordinary, everyday world must be organically related to each other. They should look as the integral products of an act of imagination.

Eliot, beyond doubt, was 'an integral poet' who had been searching for a form of poetry as well as for a form of life. He could make the search easy by means of symbols and images, which synthesized his disparate experiences, and which came up to fill in the gap created by the absence of connections and transitions. However, if 'he omits the grammatical signs of connection and order, he preserves the psychological or poetic signs.' Eliot's employment of 'broken images', his abrupt transitions from one thought to another, his wit-flashes, his over implication, his allusiveness, his elliptical style that are so evident in his works are all indicative of his permanent concern to convey the genuine whole of tangled feelings.

Some critics have charged Eliot of being unclear and indirect in his poetry, particularly so in *The Waste Land* and *Four Quartets*. Though the charge may not be rejected totally, the age itself he was living in was such. Eliot did not believe in producing work haphazardly; he worked with thoroughness and artistry. In one of his essays he tried to clarify his stand in the matter:

> We can only say that it appears likely that poets in our civilization, as it exists at present, must be difficult. Our civilization comprehends great variety and complexity, and this variety and complexity, playing upon a refined sensibility, must produce various and complex results. The poet must become more and more comprehensive, more allusive, more indirect, in order to force, to dislocate if necessary, language into his meaning.

Eliot was fully convinced of 'the uselessness of wide appeal to an audience incapable of full appreciation.' He was also fully convinced of the demands of our civilization being much more complex than in any previous era. As art is the reflection of the spirit of the age, it requires the rebirth of the lost and the development of new artistic devices. Esotericism, as opposed to exotericism of the Georgian poetry, was at once 'a discipline for the easier desires of the artist and of the audience' and 'a necessary result of the conditions in which the poet's sensibility had to operate.' The esoteric poet aims at 'cultivating all the possibilities of words as a medium' and 'when the speech of one sense is insufficient to convey (the) entire meaning, (using) the language of another'.

Paul Elmer More labeled Eliot as a lyric prophet of chaos. When he attributed this epithet to him, he simply meant that Eliot had dealt with 'the confusion of life' in

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his poetry. In 1922, a new star became lord of the ascendant. Eliot's *The Waste Land* was hailed by the literary world as a landmark in the English poetry as comparable to the *Lyrical Ballads*. The poem was written under the shadow of post-war horror and despair. *The Waste Land*, in method as well as in mood, is a continuation of *Gerontion*; it is in genre the same as *The Hollow Men*, which is the next to follow it. This poem has surpassed even Laforgue in technique and symbolic expression.

Most of the 'modernist' trends of poetry – the new psychology, anthropology, symbolism and metaphysics are described in the work of T.S. Eliot and it contributes most towards its surprising success. The years 1919–1929 were 'a confused' and 'a barren decade' but not for Eliot.

Eliot is much loved and liked today due to his flourishing at a time when there was a vacuum in English poetry. Critics like Yvor Winters should have done well for themselves and to the literary world at large by greeting the 'ascendant' star instead of labelling him as one who 'surrenders his form to his subject', and thereby becomes chaotic.

For Eliot, the past or tradition is the best form of the universality. But this past or tradition does not involve the imperfect outlook of the Europeanism. It exceeds the limitations of space and time. Eliot is a 'universal' poet of the first rank. He is not 'the great minor poet of twentieth century as David Daiches characterized him in his Delhi Seminar address. One must bear in mind that 'Eliot's universality is a progression of the concept of Europeanism and not retrogression.' It highlights his readiness to accept the best that is known and thought in the world. Octavio paz has expressed this idea in the following memorable manner:

'Eliot is universal in the sense in which all great poetry, from the funeral chants of the pygmies to the Hai-ku of the Japanese, is the common heritage of all men; and he is universal also because of his influence in world literature of our time, comparable to that of Klee in painting or that of Sxtravinsky in music: an influence which differs from others because it is a critical influence.

As a true 'universal' poet, Eliot included, at least, six foreign languages in his works such as in *The Waste Land*. He would be remembered as a scholar who was totally dedicated to the betterment of English poetry by plumbing new depths and by exploring new prospects. A famous critic has said that Eliot has given English poetry a new intellectual dignity, new forms arising out of sincerity and a new spiritual depth. Just like Dryden after the Restoration age and Wordsworth towards the end of the eighteenth century Eliot has also given English literature a new guideline.

5.6.1 Eliot's Contribution towards English Poetry

As a poet, Eliot belongs to the Classical tradition. He has nothing to do with the Romantic excesses and 'purple patches'. A classicist remains crystal clear and controlled in his expression, and his guiding force is reason. He exalts head over heart, objectivity over subjectivity and reason over emotion. He owes allegiance to an external authority, like that of Plato, Aristotle, Horace, Homer, Virgil or the three great tragedians of Greek literature, whereas a Romantic listens to his own 'inner voice'. No one can make such a threadbare distinction between 'classicism' and 'Romanticism' as R.A. Scott – James has done in his brilliant book, *The Making of Literature*.

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Form is the first distinctive element in classicism, and it helps in increasing the beauty of the outwards appearance, with its attributes towards symmetry, balance, order, proportion and reserve. As opposed to this, the romantic tends to focus on the spirit behind the form. Spirit does not imply the formless. It implies the freedom that is not content with any one form, but experiments and expresses itself in different ways as the spirit dictates. The former tends to emphasize the 'this – worldliness' of the beauty that we know; the latter, it's 'other – worldliness'.... While the form always seeks a mean; the spirit seeks an extremity.

Form satisfies the Classic whereas the spirit attracts the Romantic. Form appeals to tradition while the spirit demands the novel. On the one side you may range the virtues and defects that go with the notion of fitness, propriety, measure, restraint, conservatism, authority, calm, experience, comeliness on the other, those that are suggested by excitement, energy, restlessness, spirituality, curiosity, troublessness, progress, liberty, experiment and provocativeness.

Eliot has paid utmost attention to verbal precision, which demands a conscious choice of words and phrases and a thoughtful construction of sentences. The verbal precision needs the utmost care in making use of words and the placing of words flawlessly. Eliot has hinted at it in the following lines:

(Where every word is at home,
Taking its place to support the others,
The word neither diffident nor ostentations,
An easy commerce of the old and the new,
The common word exact without vulgarity,
The formal word precise but not pedantic,
The complete consort dancing together)
Every phrase and every sentence is an end and a beginning,
Every poem an epitaph.
('Little Gidding,' Four Quartets).

The poet's emphasis here is on verbal precision, which must not give the impression of stiffness or inaccuracy.

Eliot's search for precision and accuracy makes room for clarity and propriety in poetry. You have already seen that in Eliot's concept of poetry—which is the classical concept—the poet is a mere medium of expression. Eliot has also given his views about the role of emotion and the role of thought in the poetic process.

Eliot emphasizes the role of emotion in poetry. But how should it be expressed? It cannot be simply transmitted from the mind of the poet to the mind of the reader. It has to turn itself into something concrete—the picture of a person, place or thing—in order to convey effectively the same emotion in the reader.

Eliot makes use of the phrase 'objective correlative' in his famous essay, *Hamlet and His problems*. He clarifies how an emotion can be best expressed through poetry. He remarks that 'The only way of expressing emotion in the form of art is by finding an 'objective correlative' in other words, a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events that shall be the formula of that emotion such that even the external facts that must terminate in sensory experience are given, the emotion immediately evoked.'

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In Eliot's view, Shakespeare was though a consummate artist in his plays; he failed in finding an 'objective correlative' to express the tortuous emotions of Hamlet. Eliot thinks that Shakespeare has superbly succeeded conveying the raging malady in Lady Macbeth's mind by making her repeat the past actions in the sleep-walking scene in *Macbeth*.

Critics like Eliseo and Vincent Buckley have found fault with Eliot's theory of objective correlative for conveying emotion in poetry. They say that Eliot develops the formula of an objective correlative in order to avoid a direct utterance of emotion, but he makes the issue difficult by praising Dante for his view of life and Shakespeare for his emotional maturity.

What Eliot is concerned with is the expression of emotion in an objective way. He is opposed to the direct expression of emotion, and hence he propounds the theory of 'objective correlative'. He is concerned with art–emotion, not with raw emotion that bursts forth spontaneously. Eliot also gives his mind to the question of the role of 'thought' in poetry. The poet confronts a thought in the same way as you confront a man; he accepts or rejects it to build his artifice, to suit his poetic purpose. What comes to us is the semblance of thought, not thought at first hand, but the result of his conscious selection or rejection.

According to Eliot, the poet who thinks is merely the poet who can express 'the emotional equivalent of thought'. Thus, what Eliot means by thought is its 'emotional equivalent'. Like 'significant emotion' serving the poetic purpose, 'significant thought' (or 'art – thought') is the objective of Eliot as a poet. If a distinction could be drawn between 'imaginal thinking' and 'conceptual thinking,' you can say that the former is the privilege of a poet while the latter is that of a philosopher or scientist. In imaginable thinking the poet expresses his ideas in a state of illumined consciousness.

Further, Eliot maintains that a synchronization of emotion and thought affects the poetic sensibility. In his well-known essay, *The Metaphysical Poets*, Eliot is clutched with this matter. In this essay, he speaks of the dissociation of sensibility as well as of the unification of sensibility. By the latter phrase Eliot means 'a direct sensuous apprehension of thought, or a recreation of thought into feeling'. When the unification of sensibility is found, as in the poetry of Chapman and Donne, the result is good poetry. Then, thought is transformed into feeling to steal its way into the reader's heart. It is the union of thought and feeling that constitutes poetic sensibility. But when the poet's thought is unable to transform itself into feeling, the result is the dissociation of sensibility. For good poetry, it is essential that thought must issue forth as sensation. According to Eliot, the Victorian poets Tennyson and Browning do not pass this test, as 'they think, but they do not feel their thought as immediately as the odour of a rose'. The poet's function is not to versify ideas but to convert them into sensations.

As Eliot imagines susceptibility, it is the faculty that enables a poet to respond to diverse experiences in a unified manner. In its function, it is close to Coleridge's concept of 'Secondary Imagination', which also gives form to the shrubby undergrowth of experiences in life. The noted critic, F.W. Bateson, subjects Eliot's concept of sensibility to a strict inspection. He opines that Eliot's concept of sensibility is a synonym for sensation, and if it is so how can it contain the element of thought? He sees a paradox in Eliot's concept of sensibility.

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It would be, perhaps, in pace to draw a distinction between 'sensibility' and 'imagination'. For one thing, the faculty that shapes experience is sensibility and not imagination. Eliot's sensibility is a unifying faculty for disparate experiences. For Coleridge, imagination is a reconciling agent aiming at 'recreation' after dissolving, diffusing and dissipating the material at hand. Imagination does not allow a place to memory that plays a vital role in Eliot's poetry. Eliot speaks of 'mixing memory and desire' in the beginning of *The Waste Land*.

Eliot's poetic technique is compatible with the spirit of his time. Like the time itself, his technique is bare and stark, direct and unadorned. Eliot was highly impressed by the technical discoveries of John Donne. He thought that Donne's greatest achievement lay in his ability to convey 'his genuine whole of tangled feelings'. Like Donne and his school of poets, Eliot aimed at the 'alliance of levity and seriousness.' The use of irregular rhyme, which was to Eliot's taste, was actually inspired by Donne. Eliot largely used free verse in his practice, instead of conventional metric verse; his versification is essentially 'a disturbance of the conventional'. His technique is, for the most part, allusive and suggestive. This sort of technique suits a poet of scholarly temperament.

One can easily understand it when one keeps in mind the vast number of allusions and references used by Eliot in *The Waste Land*. No fewer than thirty five authors and six foreign languages have been alluded to or used by him in this difficult poem. Such a technique lends obscurity and complexity to the poem. According to Eliot, this kind of technique suits the temper of the age. In his brilliant essay on the metaphysical poets, Eliot remarks that 'Our civilization comprehends great variety and complexity', and he tailors his technique to catch up this great variety and complexity of the modern age. The employment of apt images and suggestive symbols by Eliot in his poetry consolidates his technique to a great extent. Eliot had learnt a good deal from the French symbolists, and shaped his symbolist and allusive technique under their irresistible influence.

5.6.2 Themes, Motifs and Symbols in Eliot's Poetry

Eliot is a representative poet of the twentieth century and hence he has voiced forcefully the moral and spiritual degradation of modern man, the loss of human values and the prevalence of chaos, confusion and tension in the human world. His poetry is an expression of the age in which he lived. It does not take recourse to the past or the medieval age. It tries to feel the pulse of man and articulate his problems and tensions in a touching way.

A critic has rightly pointed out that Eliot's early poetry is the poetry of suffering and tension. As you know, he began his poetic career with *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*, and this poem brings to the fore the dilemma and the pangs of a middle aged man in the presence of beautiful movement. The question that haunts him incessantly is: 'Do I dare disturb the universe?' Similarly, the poem *Portrait of a Lady* highlights the same kind of dilemma and sense of futility in the life of a lady advancing in years 'I shall sit here, serving tea to friends.' In fact, all the protagonists of Eliot-Prufrock, the Lady, Gerontion, Mr. Apollinax, Tiresias, etc. are great sufferers in the drama of life.

In his early poetry, Eliot portrays persons and scenes full of disillusionment, repulsion and horror. His awareness of 'the universe panorama of futility and anarchy' in the human world is quite acute and intense. The imagery of the poems prior to *The*

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Waste Land is modern, urban and even cosmopolitan and it habitually tends to highlight the boredom of modern urban life. The boredom of life, even the meaninglessness of existence, may be marked in the following extract from *Rhapsody on a Windy Night*:

So the hand of the child, automatic,

Slipped out and pocketed a toy that was summering along the quay. I could see nothing behind that child's eye.

Here, you have a glimpse of the utter emptiness and the lack of fulfillment in the child life. A grown-up man's or woman's life is no better in any way. The life of the middle-aged lady is painted as a follows:

And I must borrow every changing shape To find expression… dance, dance Life a dancing bear, Cry life a parrot, chatter like an ape. Let us take the air, in a tobacco trance –

Clearly, her life is meaningless and no better than that of an animal. Prufrock is also faced with 'the overwhelming question' of seeking meaning in life. Gerontion, an old man, is also preoccupied with a sense of loss and nostalgia, of failure and frustration:

Here I am, an old man in a dry month, Being read to by a boy, waiting for rain.

The 'sign' of Christ given in the poem is not taken by man. With 'Gerontion' onwards, Eliot's poems deal with the depths of human depravity. In these poems, animal images become frequent, emphasizing thereby the bestiality and immorality of man. There is Princess Volupine, whose name suggests both a consuming wolf and a voluptuary. There is Bleistein, like some creature from a primitive swamp; there is Sweeney, the 'Apeneck', who is 'clawing' at the pillow slip', while a cosmopolitan woman associated with him is –

Rachel nee Rabinovitch

Tears at the grapes with murderous paws.

In *Whispers of Immortality* Grishkin is seen in a drawing soon, distilling a rank 'feline smell'. *The Waste Land* (1922) employs the theme of 'the divitalization of human civilization' and 'the destabilization of human society'. Critics like F.R. Leavis and Paul Elmer More think that the poem begins with a description of a cruel season and a dead land, and that it ends on a chaotic note. But these critics have not been able to grasp the full implication of the Sanskrit words properly. The poem is highly suggestive of the loss of spirituality in the modern world; that is why London is called an 'unreal city' and the London Bridge is depicted as 'falling down'. The poem has a mythical structure.

The Fisher King of the Grail legend suffers from a mysterious sickness, as a result of which the land he rules over becomes a waste land and suffers from infertility. This infertility can be healed and removed by the Deliverer. The subject matter concerns the entire humanity, though the focus is on modern London. The overall mood of the poet is one of despair and not of excitement over the potential dawn of a better future. *The Hollow Men* continues the mood and ironic vision of *The Waste Land*. It is replete with sardonic tone and pessimism. The hollow men are the empty or stuffed men, with no bright hope. The poet's vision comes out vividly in the following lines:

This is the way the world ends

Not with a bang but a whimper.

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Up to *The Hollow Men* the note of suffering and pessimism is predominant, but after this poem the Christian hope returns to the poet. *The Ariel* poems definitely mark the break, and the dark vision of the poet yields place to a brighter vision.

The Ariel poems consist of *Journey of the Magi*, *A Song for Simeon*, *Animula and Marina*. These poems make use of the religious theme connected with the life of Christ. The Magi travel a long way to see the infant Christ. The narrator, who is one of the Magi, is sure that he has seen the saviour. In *A Song for Simeon*, Simeon also has the impression of having seen the saviour, but he feels that he is not to be redeemed. 'Animula' is somewhat gloomy in outlook. It paints a process of degeneration–from innocence to irresolution and selfishness and then to death. This poem asserts that the new life after death is the gift of Christ. The poet is acutely conscious of time here. The fourth of the Ariel poems, *Marima* is based on the reunion of Pericles with his daughter and subtly shows the graceful life leading to salvation through the intervention of Christ.

Thus, you have noticed that Eliot's poetry written since 1927 breathes in fresh air of religious certainty and spiritual discipline. The poem *Ash Wednesday* (1930) is precisely steeped in spiritual atmosphere of self–abnegation. The earlier atmosphere of chaos and confusion, doubt and distrust, has now disappeared. By this time, the poet has achieved a new religion and a new hope for the salvation of man.

Four Quartets (1943), which is a bunch of four poems–*Burnt Norton*, *East Coker*, *The Dry Salvages* and *Little Gidding*–is the summit of religious meditation and eventual salvation. The poem combines in its texture the deep reflections on time and eternity, word, speech and silence, attachment and detachment, love, human and divine etc. It achieves a contemplative depth that English poetry has hardly ever witnessed.

Eliot has also written some poems on the political theme. The different themes have surprised many of Eliot's readers, as they deviate from the mainstream of his poetry of the two fragments; the first one exalts the hero of the triumphal march at the expense of the admiring crowds. The second one mocks at the very democratic system. Eliot had announced in 1927 that he was a royalist in politics, and hence his anti-democratic stance should be taken as deliberate and purposive.

The themes mentioned above are all related to human life. Eliot is also a poet of nature, though his treatment of Nature is neither Wordsworthian nor Shelleyan. To him, nature is the bare phenomenon of the human world, as it was to Pope in the eighteenth century. Man is the supreme consideration in Eliot's scheme of things. Eliot describes natural beauties in relation to the urban surroundings rather than to rural countryside. He is concerned with the civilized rather than with the wild aspects of natural beauties. No doubt, he is a poet of towns and cities and of crowds to be seen there. Nature is nothing more to him than a scenery, a mere phenomenon, an object for sensual and concrete imagery–an evening 'spread out against the sky' and an afternoon 'grey and smoky'.

Nature is neither spiritual, nor ethical or metaphysical entity. She lacks any order or plan, which she had in store. Nature contains no 'healing balm' for Eliot; neither does she have a plan or design for man's development. She is no longer a shelter or solace for the afflicted mind, as it is now controlled by the rational man. This idea is clearly ventilated in the following lines of 'The Dry Salvages' *(four quartets)*:

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I do not know much about Gods, but I think that the river Is a strong brown God – sullen, untamed and intractable Patient to some degree.... The problem once solved, the brown God is almost forgotten By the dwellers in the cities – ever....

Thus, nature is harnessed to serve the utilitarian ends of man. In fact, Eliot was so much preoccupied with the problems of life, death, of man's moral and spiritual degradation, of the intersection of tirelessness with time, of God and the Universe, that he had hardly any time to get interested in natural descriptions, in some of his poems, Eliot uses the garden–scene (or, simply the garden) to symbolize the moment/ place of illumination. According to a scholar, A formal garden is an admirable symbol for man's attempt to impose a pattern on his experience and to discipline nature. Eliot's treatment of nature is quite in keeping with his classical leanings.

Motifs and fragmentation

Eliot's poems employ fragmentation and are meant to display the disorganized chaotic lives in the modern times as well as to show contrast among literary texts. According to Eliot, humanity was jolted into adopting this disjointed consciousness as a direct result of World War I and due to the British Empire's losing its earlier power.

Eliot formed brilliant poetry out of fragments of dialogue, imagery, intellectual ideas, words from other languages and formal styles and tones. For Eliot, this kind of a collage represented humanity's hurt psyche and the existentialism in the modern times by the sheer potency of its sensual impact. Critics consider the following line from The Waste Land as the representative of Eliot's poetic work: 'These fragments I have shored against my ruins.' Almost each phrase in The Waste Land is adopted from an existing literary text. For many of these phrases, Eliot has written long footnotes in order to both explain references and to encourage the reader to research deeper into his sources.

Another technique that Eliot uses is that he has used only portions, rather than entire lines or stanzas. These fragments serve to emphasize recurring themes and images in the literary tradition, and canonize his notions about the current state of human beings along the range of history.

Myths and religious references

Reading Eliot's poetry is like shining a light into the extent of his enormous knowledge of myth, religious ritual, academic works and key books in the literary tradition. Almost all poems are full of references to both recognized and largely unknown texts, which also means that the reader can increase his personal wealth of knowledge through Eliot's poetry. *The Waste Land* is similarly embellished with the role of religious symbols and myths. One peculiar feature of his *Waste Land* is frequent references to ancient fertility rituals, where the myth is that the fertility of the land was directly dependent on the health of the Fisher King. The King was wounded and could only be healed by sacrificing an effigy. Interestingly, the Fisher King is linked to the Holy Grail legends, in which a knight is on a crusade to find the grail, which is the only thing that can heal the land. In the end, however, ritual is unable to heal the wasteland, and Eliot brings forth other religious options, such as Hindu chants, Buddhist speeches and pagan ceremonies. In the poems written towards the end of his literary career, images are almost exclusively from Christianity, such as the echoes of the Lord's Prayer in The Hollow Men and the recounting of the story of the wise men in Journey of the Magi (1927).

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Infertility

As per Eliot's vision, the waste land was a place where both the people and the land were infertile and a number of characters are sexually frustrated or dysfunctional. They are also unable to cope with their sexualities— the Fisher King represents damaged sexuality (according to myth, his impotence causes the land to wither and dry up), Tiresias represents confused or ambiguous sexuality and the women chattering in A Game of Chess represent an out-of-control sexuality.

One devastating consequence of World War I was that it wiped out nearly an entire generation of young men in Europe and the constant pounding of guns and bombs ruined the lands, parallely. The plants and trees suffered heavily as a result of trenches being dug and toxic chemicals being used in large quantities. In The Hollow Men, the speaker discusses the dead land, now filled with stone and cacti. Dead men salute the stars with their hands raised, stiff from rigor mortis. In the aftermath of the destruction, the speaker's mind has become infertile and his head is full of straw rather than with productive thoughts or perceptions.

Water as a symbol

For Eliot, water is a symbol of both life and death. Eliot's characters want water to quench their thirst, but can only watch helplessly as rivers overflow their banks. They are desperate for rain but only see stinking pools of dirty water instead. While water has the power to restore life and fertility, it can also cause death by drowning as shown in *The Waste Land*. In Christianity, water is used for baptism, and Eliot uses this imagery of the Christ to depict traditional meanings where water can cleanse, soothe and bring relief from dryness and heat. Prufrock can hear the mermaids calling out to him seductively when he is walking along the shore, but, similar Odysseus in Homer's Odyssey, he recognizes that behind the sweetness is hidden a malicious dark intent. In this way, Eliot asks us to be prudent o obvious simple solutions or tricks because seemingly harmless things may actually hide alarming dangers.

Music and singing

T.S. Eliot was quite interested in the divide between high and low culture, which he symbolized with the help of music. He believed that high culture, which included art, opera as well as drama, was declining where as popular culture was constantly rising.

In his poem, *The Waste Land*, T.S. Eliot merged high culture with low culture by putting together lyrics from an opera by Richard Wagner with some popular songs from pubs, American ragtime and Australian troops.

Eliot merges nursery rhymes with phrases from the Lord's Prayer in *The Hollow Men* and *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* is, as the title describes, a song, with different lines repeated as refrains. It ends with the song of mermaids who lure humans to their deaths by drowning them. It is a scene that hints towards Odysseus's interactions with the Sirens in his book *Odyssey*. Eliot uses lyrics as a type of chorus, seconding and describing the action of the poem, just like the chorus functions in the Greek tragedies.

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5.6.3 *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*

In the drafts, the poem had the subtitle *Prufrock among the Women*. Prufrock may be said to have been derived from Eliot's unconscious memory of the name of a furniture wholesale firm in St. Louis, Missouri, where he was born and bred. But J. Alfred is poet's own invention of a fatuous-sounding prefix. Eliot said The Love Song of portion of the title came from *The Love Song of Har Dyal* a poem by Rudyard Kipling.

In a 1950 letter, Eliot said, 'I did not have, at the time of writing the poem, and have not yet recovered, any recollection of having acquired this name in any way, but I think that it must be assumed that I did, and that the memory has been obliterated.' It has also been suggested that Prufrock came from the German word *Prüfstein* meaning touchstone (cognate to *proof-stone,* with *stone* changed to *rock*).

Maybe, it was the pattern of sound in 'J. Alfred Prufrock' suggesting ridiculousness that appealed to Eliot. The addition of 'Love Song' is full of implications and stirs the whole scope of feelings associated with the theme of love poetry since Spenser.

Thus, an irony already lurks in the title, an irony that comes from the collocation of love song and J. Alfred Prufrock. This irony deepens further when you proceed to read the poem and find that the poem could be anything but a love song. The irony that may appear simplistic in the title turns into a complex one as the poem proceeds.

Epigraph

In context, the epigraph refers to a meeting between Dante and Guido da Montefeltro, who was condemned to the eighth circle of Hell for providing counsel to Pope Boniface VIII, who wished to use Guido's advice for a wicked undertaking. This encounter follows Dante's meeting with Ulysses, who himself is also condemned to the circle of the Fraudulent. According to Ron Banerjee, the epigraph serves to cast ironic light on Prufrock's intent. Like Guido, Prufrock had intended his story never be told, and so by quoting Guido, Eliot reveals his view of Prufrock's love song.

Frederick Locke contends that Prufrock himself is suffering from multiple personalities of sorts, and that he embodies both Guido and Dante in the *Inferno* analogy. One is the storyteller; the other the listener who later reveals the story to the world. He opines, alternatively, that the role of Guido in the analogy is indeed filled by Prufrock, but that the role of Dante is filled by you, the reader, as in 'Let us go then, you and I'. In that, the reader is granted the power to do as he pleases with Prufrock's love song.

Although he finally chose not to use it, the draft version of the epigraph for the poem came from Dante's *Purgatorio* (XXVI, 147-148):

'sovegna vos a temps de ma dolor'.
Poi s'ascose nel foco che gli affina.

Eliot provided this translation in his essay Dante (1929):

'be mindful in due time of my pain'.
Then dived he back into that fire which refines them.

He would eventually use the quotation in the closing lines of his 1925 poem *The Waste Land*. The quotation that Eliot did choose comes from Dante also. *Inferno* (XXVII, 61-66) reads:

S'io credesse che mia risposta fosse
A persona che mai tornasse al mondo,
Questa fiamma staria senza piu scosse.
Ma perciocchè giammai di questo fondo
Non tornò vivo alcun, s'i'odo il vero,
Senza tema d'infamia ti rispondo.

One translation, from the *Princeton Dante Project*, is:

'If I thought my answer were given to anyone who would ever return to the world, this flame would stand still without moving any further.
But since never from this abyss has anyone ever returned alive, if what I hear is true, without fear of infamy I answer you.'

Form

The poem, Prufrock, is a type of dramatic monologue, which was popular with the writers of Eliot's time. A dramatic monologue can be compared in form to soliloquies in drama. The three main characteristics of a dramatic monologue as per M.H. Abrams are as follows:

- It is spoken by an individual other than the poet, at a particular moment.
- It is meant for a particular listener or listeners who are not names in the monologue but there is a suggestion to their identity.
- It focuses on the development and revelation of the speaker's character. In Eliot's poem, there is evolution of the dramatic monologue because he replaces the implication to listeners and focuses instead on Prufrock's interiority and isolation.

Eliot has used a part of Dante's Inferno, as an epigraph, in which he describes Prufrock's ideal listener—someone who can be trusted to keep everything a secret and is someone who shares the same sense of loss and disorientation. However, in Prufrock's real world, there isno such ideal listener and he can only depend on his own silent reflection. This type of characterization and drama is indicative of Eliot's later, dramatic works. While the rhyme scheme is irregular, it is not random. Some sections are like free verse, but actually, 'Prufrock' is a controlled mixture of multiple poetic forms. Reading the poem aloud reveals the bits and pieces of rhyme that are not obvious otherwise. A key characteristic of this work is the use of refrains. Prufrock's continual return to the 'women [who] come and go/Talking of Michelangelo' and his recurrent questionings ('how should I presume?') and pessimistic appraisals ('That is not it, at all.') both refer to an older poetic tradition and assist Eliot in portraying the consciousness of a modern, anxious person. Prufrock's neurosis is essential for the art, but also depicts compulsiveness and loneliness. Eliot has also employed fragments of sonnet form, especially at the end of the poem. The three-line stanzas follow the rhyme scheme similar to that used at the end of a Petrarchan sonnet, but their gloomy, anti-romantic content, paired with the desolate cry, 'I do not think they (the mermaids) would sing to me,' depicts a disparity that is a bitter comment on the harshness of modern life.

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Commentary

In 'Prufrock', one can see the two defining traits of Eliot's early works. The first is that he is deeply influenced by French symbolists, like Mallarmé, Rimbaud and Baudelaire, whose texts he was reading even as he wrote Prufrock. The traits that Eliot takes from the French writers are sensuous language and eye for unsettling or harsh details that ultimately ends up making the poetry beautiful. The symbolists, too, preferred the same kind of individual Eliot has created in Prufrock– the temperamental, urban, lonely-yet-perceptive thinker. One major difference however is that in symbolists' works, the speaker would himself have been an artist or a writer whereas, Eliot's Prufrock is an unrecognized poet, somewhat like an artist for the common man. The second defining trait of this poem is its use of division and combination. Eliot has always used this technique is his poetry, in different forms—in Prufrock, the subjects for division are mental focus and some specific imagery. While fragmentation may provoke a certain anxiety in the reader, it is productive in the sense that it brings alive the scenery of the poem, while free verse would have made the tone of the poem nihilistic. With his imagery, Eliot suggests that ven from ruins, something new can be generated. So, a series of imaginary meetings in the middle of the poem are disjointed and unconnected but lead to a sort of epiphany (even though it is a dark one) rather than being superfluous. Eliot also brings in the image of a searcher, which recurs in many of his later poems. Prufrock feels that he 'should have been a pair of ragged claws/Scuttling across the floors of silent seas.' Crabs are scavengers, garbage-eaters who survive on waste that finds its way to the sea floor. Eliot's discussions of his own poetic technique suggests that making something beautiful out of the refuse of modern life, as a crab sustains and nourishes itself on garbage, may, in fact, be the highest form of art. At the very least, this notion undermines romantic ideals about art. It suggests that fragments may become reintegrated, that art may be in some way therapeutic for a broken modern world. In *The Waste Land,* crabs become rats, and the optimism disappears, but here Eliot seems to assert only the limitless potential of scavenging.

'Prufrock' ends with the hero assigning himself a role in one of Shakespeare's plays: While he is no Hamlet, he may yet be useful and important as 'an attendant lord, one that will do/To swell a progress, start a scene or two...' This implies that there is still continuity between Shakespeare's world and ours, that *Hamlet* is still relevant to us and that we are still part of a world that could produce something like Shakespeare's plays. Implicit in this, of course, is the suggestion that Eliot, who has created an 'attendant lord' may now go on to create another Hamlet. While 'Prufrock' ends with a devaluation of its hero, it exalts its creator. Or does it? The last line of the poem suggests otherwise—that when the world intrudes, when 'human voices wake us,' the dream is shattered 'we drown'. With this single line, Eliot dismantles the romantic notion that poetic genius is all that is needed to triumph over the destructive, impersonal forces of the modern world. In reality, Eliot the poet is little better than his creation: He differs from Prufrock only by retaining a bit of hubris, which shows through from time to time. Eliot's poetic creation, thus, mirrors Prufrock's soliloquy: both are an expression of aesthetic ability and sensitivity that seems to have no place in the modern world. This realistic, anti-romantic outlook sets the stage for Eliot's later works, including *The Waste Land.*

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The character 'Prufrock'

Prufrock's consciousness forms the core of the poem. His consciousness impresses us as a representative consciousness of our time. 'We suspect', as Joseph Margolis says, he is Everyman, and thus his malaise comes to be seen as the affection of everyman in the contemporary society.

But for all that, Prufrock is not an abstract character: he is concretely realized, the product of a felt experience, so much so that many have been inclined to identify Prufrock with Eliot. No doubt, Prufrock is Eliot in a way, for after all he is the latter's creation after his own image. But, at the same time, it must be understood that Prufrock is a person like Pound's Mauberely. As we proceed with the poem, he gradually emerges as a distinct character in his own right revealing a multi-dimensional nature.

Prufrock is a man in his own forties, or rather dressed as a man in the forties. The lines which suggest this are as follows:

Time to turn back and descend the stair,

With a bald spot in the middle of my hair.....

(They all say : 'How his hair is growing thin !')My morning coat, my collar mounting firmly to the chin,

My necktie rich and modest, but asserted by a simple pin.....

The growing baldness suggests the middle-age and the carefully planned dress is designed to conceal the middle-age, though, at the same time, he knows such an effort will be worthless. The parenthetical line,' they will say.....', suggests Prufrock's fear and anxiety but Prufrock is not an hypocrite. He is not trying or posing to be young. He wishes he could behave as a young man, but he knows he cannot. He knows that it is worthless: the memory of youthful days gives him no pleasure at all. He would not be young again, for it will be the repetition of the same cheerless, routine, meaningless relationships with the women. The lines which suggest this boredom of Purfrock's experience with women are to be found in the three stanzas beginning with:

'For I have known them all already.....' It is clear that Prufrock is an extremely sensitive, rather hypersensitive person, given to reflecting, silently debating within him implications of this or that action, this or that word. He is highly cultured and widely read in literature and fine arts, as in obvious from the mention of Michelangelo, Lazarus, Hamlet and so on.

The melody that has afflicted him is not frustration or anger; he is rather bored with life. Hence he considers no action, not even so much as making his proposal of love, worth anything. He has had experiences of action, and they have bred only boredom. So, he flinches from the occasion that will require him to act: that is to make a choice and say it to the women.

Prufrock's melody is not physical, but deeply psychological, or spiritual, like Baudelaire's characterized by total lack of will power and sterility of emotion. Prufrock is hypersensitive both intellectually and emotionally, but the intellectual hypersensitivity has sapped all life out of emotion. Dr. Grover Smith calls him a defeated 'idealist'.

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5.6.4 A Critical Appreciation of the Poem

The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock is a monologue, and as such it owes a good deal to Robert Browning. It has 'you' and 'I' in the very first line. Although it is not needed to assume the presence of a second person and explicate its relationship to Prufrock in order to understand the meaning of the poem, the 'you' is significant in ascribing the character of a monologue to it. For one thing, the 'you' never speaks in the poem ; it is the 'I' who does all the speaking from the beginning of the end. That is why the term 'dramatic monologue's may, strictly speaking, be inappropriate for the poem. In a dramatic monologue, the presence of the other character or characters is always felt: one character is speaking to the other, even though the latter may be silent. In this poem, Prufrock is more speaking to himself than to anyone else. It would, therefore, be more appropriate to call the poem on 'interior' monologue' than a 'dramatic monologue'. Prufrock's consciousness is the focal point here.

The poem consists of a number of sections put together in a manner which looks forward to *The Waste Land.* Sections are rearranged, lines put in, others taken out and yet the poem does not suffer, for its coherence depends on consistency of feeling and not on a fixed sequence of idea or event.

The poem would appear as Eliot's first attempt to explore the nature of the spiritual state of the contemporary man. This is the germinal theme that is developed and presented in a pattern of opposites. In the words of Joseph Margolis, 'And its themes, which are remarkably diverse, are offered in contrary pairs: youth and old age, work and idleness, spiritual life and death, commitment and loneliness, pride and disgust in the self, sincerity and hypocrisy, interest and boredom.' These 'contrary pairs are not stated clearly; nor is one thing of a pair set in apparent conflict with the other.

On the surface level, the entire poem deals with one set of themes associated with the spiritual sickness of Prufrock. Whether he flinches from asking 'the overwhelming question' or escapes into his own fantasy of fog or the party of his own self, he is a man who has totally lost his will to party of his own self, he is a man who has totally lost his will to action, is symbolic of his spiritual sickness. Each image, each picture–fantasy, reiterates with sharper precision, this theme of Prufrock's sterility. Eliot has not described how or why has Prufrock become spiritually sterile, though there are some hints to suggest that the roof of his malaise is his being over intellectualized and hypersensitive to things of emotional life. He is given to analysing too deeply the pros and cons of his actions and others' reactions.

Eliot's diagnosis of the contemporary human personality bears a slender resemblance to D.H. Lawrence's. For Lawrence too believed that the real evil of the contemporary, mechanized, commercialized society was the morbid growth of intellect, which had sapped the vitality out of man–woman, and through it, man–world, relationship.

Though the themes of Eliot's poems are not immediately related to the First World War, the outbreak of war did lend urgency to the poem. Prufrock personified or symbolized a state of mind in which a war could break out. It is significant to note that whenever Prufrock escapes from the monotony and boredom of the human company into fantasy, his mind conjures up scenes or symbols of death or death-like situations. The evening is like a patient etherized for a serious operation struggling between life and death. The nights are restless; the restaurants are cheap where acts of violence

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are common. The cat itself is associated with ferocity and destruction. Prufrock imagines himself 'sprawling on a pin' and 'wriggling on the wall'. He compares or contrasts himself to John the Baptist, Lazarus and Prince Hamlet, who were involved in violent or tragic deaths. Only in the last few lines, his fantasy brings into play the sea image, which is symbolic of life and yet the last line brings in the image of death.

It is evident the Prufrock is fascinated by the idea of death, and this is because he is irreparably bored by the contemporary life. In such a morbid spiritual state, war may even be welcome as it brings death home.

The poem is rich in literary allusions. Michelangelo, for instance, stirs up the rich image of the mediaeval passionate love of God and man, the image of an artist who turned his sufferings into material of great art. But the women talking of him do not properly understand his value as an artist, and they are chattering about him as though he were a detective film hero. The other significant allusions in the poem are: John the Baptist, Lazarus and Hamlet. These allusions tend to highlight certain inherent characteristics of the protagonist.

The drama of the poem is presented through soliloquy, the action being limited to the interplay of impressions, including memories, in Prufrock's mind. By a distinction between 'I' and 'you', he differentiates between his thinking, sensitive character and his outward self. Prufrock is seen addressing, as if looking into a mirror, his whole public personality. His motive seems to reject the motionless self, which cannot act, and to assert his will. The ego alone 'goes' anywhere, even in fantasy, but it cannot survive the disgrace of personality, and at the end of the poem it is 'we' who drown. The personal has become the general.

It is not so much the far-fetchedness of the objects of comparison but their opposition, contrariness, to one another that creates the dramatic tension and communicates the point sharply and precisely. In fact, each image follows the same pattern. In the oft-quoted image: 'I have measured out my life with coffee spoons;' the first part is serious, noble and poetically grand, 'I have measured out my life,' but the other part, 'with coffee spoons' demolishes all the anticipation the first part raised. One would say, 'with coffee spoons' is Eliot's or Prufrock's way of ridiculing of the seriousness of the first part. It is again the same structure in another oft-quoted image:

I grow old.....I grow old.....

I shall wear the bottoms of my trousers rolled.

One common function of all these images is to play down whatever is romantic, serious, noble, extravagant and conservatively attractive. Therefore, the images are wholly functional as they are integrated with the nature of the themes dealt with.

Trivialization is the general feature of all the contemporary culture, trivialization of all values, faiths and beliefs, trivialization of love, passion, sex, art and human relationship. Each image trivializes something considered to be grand and noble valuable.

What remains to be considered is the diction of the poem, for apart from its imagery, much of the novelty of the poem in 1915 or 1917 was seen to lie in the strange use of words and phrases. It was the language of actual everyday conversation which Eliot had used so boldly in the poem. The Georgian poets too had tried to use the real speaking language in their poems. Important contributions in this direction were made by Rupert Brooke, Seigfried Sarseon and Wilfred Owen. But their efforts were limited to using a word here and a phrase there, while by and large the language

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remained conventionally poetic both in the choice of idioms and rhythm. Eliot's revolutionizing contributions lay not in using part or snatches but the whole of the contemporary idioms and speech– rhythm.

It may be noticed clearly that the language of the poem is bare of any symbolic features and devoid of any complicated structures. The words in general are most common, though the objects juxtaposed may be far-fetched. There can hardly be more commonplace language than:

In the room the women come and go
Talking of Michelangelo.

But the effect it exerts is stronger, deeper and at the same time more intimate than any rhetorical or conventionally poetic language is capable of. The complexity of Eliot's does not lie in the language he uses but in the complexity of his feeling the endeavors to communicate. 'Prufrock' is a poem of a feeling, of a mood and all the words and phrases and images are used to create, strengthen and deepen the prevailing feeling or mood. Certain key words are repeated, certain phrases recur so do certain images. Reception is a feature of everyday conversation, and so repetition very closely approximates the speech rhythm. Take the following lines, for example:

And indeed there will be time
For the yellow smoke that slides along the street
Rubbing its back upon the window panes;
There will be time, there will be time
To prepare a face to meet the faces that you meet;
There will be time to murder and create
And time for all the works and days of hand.
That lift and drop a question on your plate,
Time for you and time for me,
And time yet for a hundred indecision's,
Before the taking of a toast and tea.

But Eliot exploits the repetition of certain words for his own purpose; he repeats the key- words that suggest the central feeling or mood of the poem. Here 'time' is the key-word, as it is the key-word in the whole poem, and it is always the future time, and postponement of any action in the present time.

Thus, though these are repetitions and elements of long-windedness in the poem, each word and each phrase has a precise function to perform. As Hugh Kenner says 'Every phrase seems composed as though the destiny of the author's soul depended upon it. Yet it is unprofitable not to consider the phrases as arrangements of words before considering them as anything else. Like the thousand little gestures that constitute good manners, their meaning is contained in themselves alone. Eliot is the most verbal of the eminent poets: more verbal than Swinburne. If he has carried verbalism for beyond the extirpation of jarring consonants, it is because of his intimate understanding of what language can do……'

In Swinburne, language is an end in itself; in Eliot it is a means to an end. His verbalism evokes and contributes to the feeling, the mood; it is an instrument of evocation, suggestion and implication. It is a deliberately created verbalism in which each word has significance beyond itself, and each phrase a resonance beyond itself.

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Generally, metaphor and symbol replace direct statement in Eliot. In *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* you have what comes to be a familiar compound, observation, memory, and reflection in which observation becomes symbol. The doctrine of the objective correlative means not only that the subjective is projected into the objective, or by means of it, but that it is expressed in other means–metaphor; objects become symbols, and personal feeling is set apart from the poet.

Connection through imagery is characteristic of Eliot, who is likely to exploit a kind of imagery, not to use it at random. A particular kind of imagery becomes the expression of a particular kind of feeling, not only in the same poem but in different poems. Recurrent imagery may not only repeat a theme, but provide a base for variations, or development; its recurrence usually is accompanied by a deeper plumbing or a richer exploration of its significance.

Such a method of indirection is appropriate to a character that never really faces his inner conflict or his frustrated self, and hence is capable of a direct expression of it, to say nothing of a solution. Here the most revealing lines in the poem are: Is it perform from a dress

That makes me so digress?

But the observation 'downed with light brown hair' is no digression from the arms or from Prufrock's problem. This is why the epigraph, with its conditioned response, provides an important clue to the intention of the poem; and the title shifts its context significantly. The title suggests the question for this song of indirection, made such by repression. The mock-heroic tone is not merely in the author's treatment or in his character's conception of the problem, but finally even in Prufrock's evasion of himself.

This kind of imagery is more than usually dependent upon arrangement. But the order of parts will reveal an implicit method in an Eliot poem that is essential to its meaning. The going is developed and dramatized even by verb tenses, the time element. The 'drown' submerges again what has emerged in the 'going', which is never directly said and concludes the imagery of his submerged life. To this arrangement the author helps the reader in other ways. His punctuation, for example, is functional and not conventional. Verse, too, is a kind of punctuation, as Eliot has remarked, and he comes to rely upon it more and more as a poet. In the present poem, the phrasal separation in the short lines may be studied, and the effective chimes of the mock-heroic rhyme. All verse-even nonsense verse is not quite free-depends upon an order and organization capable of being followed and understood. It requires an implicit, if not an explicit, logic–connections, which can be discovered in the terms of the poem. If the words of a poem have syntax, they make sense and have logic. Otherwise the poet has no control over his material except that exerted by meter. Only an ordered context can control the range of meaning set off by the single word; and relevance to this context must be the guide for any reader in determining the range of meaning or the logic involved. William Empson's *Seven Types of Ambiguity* is a misleading book in the manner that it explores possible meanings without proper regard to their limitations by the context.

Lastly, why is the poem called a 'Love Song'? In truth, the theme of love is so much subdued in it that it is difficult to say whether it is at all about love, and whether there is any evidence in it of the presence of Prufrock's beloved. The phrase 'you and I' has been variously interpreted. Eliot himself is reported to have stated that 'you' is

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'some friend or companion of the male sex,' if so, then how to justify the title of 'Love Song'? If it is suggested that love is not the theme of the poem, then why call it 'Love Song'? But 'Love' is certainly the underlying theme of it; although it is a fruitless, sterile yearning for love and not the vital positive passion for love. There is nothing in the poem to suggest either that relationship between 'you and I' is anything like homosexual, but it cannot be ruled out as absurd in the light of Eliot's own remarks and the suggestion of coldness, laziness and boredom in 'I's' attitude to 'you'. Yet, the suggestion does not seem to posses an acceptable soundness.

5.7 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt that:

- Tennyson was born on 6 August 1809 in Somersby, Lincolnshire in England. Since childhood, he suffered a keen sense of 'want of money' and lifelong fear of mental disease- epilepsy. In 1827, he took admission in Trinity College, Cambridge.
- The Victorian poets, like the romantic poets, were more adventurous in stanza forms then the eighteenth century. Tennyson liked to use fairly elaborate stanzas in which he could swing his lines with the mood.
- Ulysses, the legendary Greek hero was the king of Ithaca, who, after the siege of Troy, set sail for home. On his way home, he was subjected to many storms and obstacles because of the wrath of the sea god (Poseidon).
- Ulysses represents the human desire to strive beyond human limits to achieve something great and noble.
- Robert Browning was a renowned English poet and playwright of the nineteenth century, whose mastery of dramatic verse, especially dramatic monologues, made him one of the foremost Victorian poets.
- In 1881, Browning society was established. He died in 1889, the day when his last volume of verse, *Asolnado*, was published. Browning was buried in Westminster's Abbey.
- Browning's dramatic monologues project certain kind of personality, a certain temperament, a way of looking at life, even a moment of history.
- Matthew Arnold was born in 1822 at Laleham in England. He was educated in Winchester and Oxford. In 1841, he won an open scholarship to Balliol College, Oxford. His poem *Cromwell* won the Newdigate prize in 1843. In 1845, he started teaching at Rugby.
- He represented his age in a profound manner by being the true voice of sensitive Victorian intellectual brooding over inevitable loss of faith and the meaning of life.
- His first volume was *The Strayed Reveller and Other Poems*, which was published in 1849 anonymously but was immediately withdrawn from circulation. In 1852, Arnold published his second volume of poems, *Empedocles on Etna, and Other Poems*.
- In his poem *Dover Beach*, he reflects the Victorian problems. Loss of faith is given its most memorable utterance; public values have disappeared and all that is left are the private affections, little society of love and friendship.

Check Your Progress

12. When was *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* published?
13. State some of the works of T.S. Eliot.
14. Define epigraph in the context of *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock.*
15. How does T.S. Eliot's diagnosis of the contemporary human personality bear a resemblance to that of D.H. Lawrence?
16. List the names of the people who influenced T.S. Eliot.
17. Name the two eminent poets of Eliot's time.

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- *Dover Beach* is one of the most admired of Arnold's poems today. *Dover Beach* is the Victorian lyric of painful doubt and disorientation. First published in 1867, this poem has always been regarded as a representative poem of Arnold, typical of his outlook on life.
- Although Arnold completed the poem *Dover Beach* in 1851 or 1852, it only appeared in a collection entitled *New Poems*, published in London.
- According to literary critic J.D. Jump, *Dover Beach* 'is a short poem, but it embraces a great range and depth of significance'.
- William Butler Yeats (1865-1939) came at a time when the Victorian Era was at variance with Modernism. The currents of this are reflected in his poetry.
- His poetic style was considerably influenced by his increased involvement with nationalist politics. His diction became simpler, the syntax grew rigid and the verse structures became better developed at the same time preserving their traditional form.
- Yeats also dabbled in politics. He was elected to the Senate, the upper house of the new Free State, in 1922. On the personal front too his life underwent many changes.
- Yeats had made a name for himself as a poet par excellence. He was honoured with the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1923. He died in France in 1939 and as per his wish, was buried in Drumcliffe Church, Co. Sligo.
- The theme discussed in *Byzantium* is a follow up of the theme in *Sailing to Byzantium.* The reader in Byzantium is given exposure to the eternal city to get familiar with its reality for the first time.
- Thomas Stearns Eliot has been a popular name in English poetry since the early 1920s. He had ruled the age in which he lived with absolute authority. The twentieth century cannot be signalled by a single voice or authority.
- As a poet, Eliot drew from many different sources to gather his material. He was deeply influenced by some famous personalities of the past and of the modern scene. Shakespeare, Milton, Dryden, Ben Jonson, Arnold, etc., in general, and Donne and the metaphysical poets particularly added up in shaping Eliot's mind.
- Eliot was a versatile genius. He was a very talented man. His appeal was not just limited to the English or to the European tradition. Instead, he was a rather universal poet.
- T.S. Eliot was born in 1888 in St. Louis, Missouri, (USA). His family was of Devonshire origin, traditionally interested in trade and commerce and academics.
- Eliot was the London correspondent for *The Deal* during 1921–1922 and *La-Nouvelle Revue Trancaise* during 1922–1923.
- *Murder in the Cathedral* appeared in 1935. *The Family Reunion* in 1939 was a stage failure, but the dramatist remained unshaken. During the years 1940–1942 appeared *East Coker*, *The Dry Salvages* and *Little Gidding*.
- T.S. Eliot wrote *The Cocktail Party* in 1950, *The Confidential Clerk* in 1955 and *The Elder Statesman* in 1959. After *Four Quartets* poetry was almost untouched by him, though poetic element was indisputably retained in all his dramas.

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- The twentieth century is quite a complex and problematic age. It cannot be represented by a single voice or character. You cannot call it the Age of Science as it is not even humanistic, nor classical, nor scientific, nor romantic and nor one of the compromise.
- Hilda Doolittle and Ezra Pound offered their generous support to Hulme, and they jointly launched an attack on Georgian poetry and brought into being the literary movement, known as imagism.
- Two eminent poets of Eliot's time were Yeats and Ezra Pound. While Yeats was devoted whole-heartedly to 'the stuff of dreams' and to the Irish questions and Pound was devoted to his idiosyncrasies about art and politics, Eliot alone showed in poetry the 'complex intensities of concern about soul and body'.
- Eliot's best religious and philosophical work is *Four Quartets*. This book describes the poet's genius.
- Correlated to this traditionalism was Eliot's concept of art. His most remarkable contribution to modern literature is the impersonal theory of poetry. *Tradition and the Individual Talent* is a very good essay in which Eliot says that the poet and the poem are two separate things.
- Some critics have charged Eliot of being unclear and indirect in his poetry, particularly so in *The Waste Land* and *Four Quartets*.
- Most of the 'modernist' trends of poetry – the new psychology, anthropology, symbolism and metaphysics are described in the work of T.S. Eliot and it contributes most towards its surprising success.
- As a true 'universal' poet, Eliot included, at least, six foreign languages in his works such as in *The Waste Land*.
- As a poet, Eliot belongs to the Classical tradition. He has nothing to do with the Romantic excesses and 'purple patches'.
- Eliot has paid utmost attention to verbal precision, which demands a conscious choice of words and phrases and a thoughtful construction of sentences.
- Eliot makes use of the phrase 'objective correlative' in his famous essay, *Hamlet and His problems*. He clarifies how an emotion can be best expressed through poetry.
- Further, Eliot maintains that a synchronization of emotion and thought affects the poetic sensibility. In his well-known essay, *The Metaphysical Poets*, Eliot is clutched with this matter. One can easily understand it when one keeps in mind the vast number of allusions and references used by Eliot in *The Waste Land*.
- Eliot is a representative poet of the twentieth century and hence he has voiced forcefully the moral and spiritual degradation of modern man, the loss of human values and the prevalence of chaos, confusion and tension in the human world.
- In *Whispers of Immortality* Grishkin is seen in a drawing soon, distilling a rank 'feline smell'. *The Waste Land* (1922) employs the theme of 'the divitalization of human civilization' and 'the destabilization of human society'.
- Eliot is also a poet of nature, though his treatment of Nature is neither Wordsworthian nor Shelleyan. To him, nature is the bare phenomenon of the human world, as it was to Pope in the eighteenth century.

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- Eliot used fragmentation in his poems both to display the disorganized state of modern existence and to contrast literary texts against one another. According to Eliot, humanity's consciousness had been shattered by World War I and by the British Empire's collapse.
- Eliot's tremendous knowledge of myth, religious ritual, academic works and key books in the literary tradition informs every aspect of his poetry.
- In Eliot's poetry, water symbolizes both life and death. Eliot's characters wait for water to quench their thirst, watch rivers overflow their banks, cry for rain to quench the dry earth and pass by fetid pools of standing water.
- T.S. Eliot was quite interested in the divide between high and low culture, which he symbolized with the help of music.
- In his poem, *The Waste Land*, T.S. Eliot merged high culture with low culture by putting together lyrics from an opera by Richard Wagner with some popular songs from pubs, American ragtime and Australian troops.
- Eliot merges nursery rhymes with phrases from the Lord's Prayer in *The Hollow Men* and *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* is, as the title describes, a song, with different lines repeated as refrains.
- In context, the epigraph refers to a meeting between Dante and Guido da Montefeltro, who was condemned to the eighth circle of Hell for providing counsel to Pope Boniface VIII, who wished to use Guido's advice for a wicked undertaking.
- Prufrock is a variation on the dramatic monologue, a type of poem popular with Eliot's predecessors.
- The rhyme scheme of this poem is irregular but not random. While sections of the poem may resemble free verse, in reality, 'Prufrock' is a carefully structured mixture of poetic forms.
- 'Prufrock' displays two most important characteristics of Eliot's early poetry.
- Prufrock's consciousness forms the core of the poem. His consciousness impresses us as a representative consciousness of our time.
- *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* is a monologue, and as such it owes a good deal to Robert Browning.
- The poem consists of a number of sections put together in a manner which looks forward to *The Waste Land.*
- Though the themes of Eliot's poems are not immediately related to the First World War, the outbreak of war did lend urgency to the poem. Prufrock personified or symbolized a state of mind in which a war could break out.
- The poem is rich in literary allusions. Michelangelo, for instance, stirs up the rich image of the mediaeval passionate love of God and man, the image of an artist who turned his sufferings into material of great art.
- The drama of the poem is presented through soliloquy, the action being limited to the interplay of impressions, including memories, in Prufrock's mind.

NOTES

5.8 KEY TERMS

- **Achilles:** The greatest of Greek soldiers-killed during the siege of Troy.
- **Sculptor:** The art or practice of shaping figures or designs in the round or in relief, as by chiseling marble, modeling clay, or casting in metal.
- **Sublimate:** To modify the natural expression of (a primitive, instinctual impulse) in a socially acceptable manner.
- **Eternity:** Time without end, perpetuity, infinity.
- **Versatile:** Able to adapt or be adapted to many different functions or activities.
- **Spate:** A large number of similar things or events appearing or occurring in quick succession.
- **Exhort:** Strongly encourage or urge to do something.
- **Decadent:** Characterized by or reflecting a state of moral or cultural decline.
- **Transmute:** An act that changes the form or character or substance of something.
- **Innovator:** A person who introduces new methods, ideas or products.
- **Esotericism:** An approach to spiritual knowledge based on the study of secret teachings.

5.9 ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

1. Some of the famous poems of Tennyson *are: In Memoriam A.H.H.* (1849), *Ulysses* (1833), *Tithonus* (1842) and *The Passing of Arthur* (1859), among others.
2. Ulysses, the legendary Greek hero was the king of Ithaca, who, after the siege of Troy, set sail for home.
3. He bequeaths his kingdom and royal powers to his son Telemachus. He has great affection for his son and expects him to hold the same for his subjects. He wants him to make them know as what is good for them. He assigns him duties and responsibilities, and himself takes up the pursuit of knowledge.
4. Some of the works of Robert Browning are: *My Last Duchess*, *Fra Lippo Lippi, Andrea Del Sarto*, *The Bishop Orders His Tomb at Saint Praxed's Church* among others.
5. The title *The Last Ride Together* signifies that this is last ride of the lovers together. The lover discovers the sufficient glory of love in itself for him.
6. The speaker in the poem is compared with a statesman, soldier, sculptor and musician.
7. The best known poems of Matthew Arnold are *The Scholar Gipsy* (1853), which is about the poet himself and his generations, and *Thyrsis* (1866), which is an elegy to Arthur Hugh Clough who died in 1861.
8. The general decline of faith and melancholy constitute the theme of the poem *Dover Beach*.
9. The image of the sea is present throughout the poem.

NOTES

10. His poetic style was considerably influenced by his increased involvement with nationalist politics. Yeats was also influenced by Modernism. Ezra Pound, especially, was a great influence.
11. Some of the important works of W.B. Yeats are: *The Celtic Twilight, Lapis Lazuli, Leda And The Swan, No Second Troy, Sailing to Byzantium, The Arrow, The Wisdom Of The King* among others.
12. *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* was published in Chicago in June 1915.
13. Some of the works of T.S. Eliot are: *East Coker*, *The Dry Salvages* and *Little Gidding, The Cocktail Party, The Confidential Clerk, The Elder Statesman, The Waste Land* among others.
14. In context to *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*, the epigraph refers to a meeting between Dante and Guido da Montefeltro, who was condemned to the eighth circle of Hell for providing counsel to Pope Boniface VIII, who wished to use Guido's advice for a nefarious undertaking.
15. T.S. Eliot's diagnosis of the contemporary human personality bears a slender resemblance to that of D.H. Lawrence. Lawrence also believed that the real evil of a contemporary mechanized, commercialized society was the morbid outgrowth of intellect, which had sapped the vitality out of man–woman, and through it, man–world relationship.
16. T.S. Eliot was deeply influenced by certain glorious personalities of the past and of the contemporary scene. Some of them were as follows:
    - William Shakespeare
    - John Milton
    - John Dryden
    - Ben Jonson
    - Matthew Arnold
    - John Donne
17. Two eminent poets of Eliot's time were William Yeats and Ezra Pound.

5.10 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. What is Ulysses desire at the end of the poem?
2. What is the significance of music in The Last Ride Together?
3. How are the two poems- Byzantium and Sailing to Byzantium related?
4. Why is Eliot considered a universal poet?
5. What faults have Eliseo and Vincent Buckley found in Eliot's poetry?
6. Write a short note on the use of symbolism in Eliot's poetry.

Long-Answer Questions

1. Explain the use of dramatic monologue by Browning in *The Last Ride Together.*
2. 'In most of Arnold's poems, we have noticed a melancholy strain.' Elucidate.
3. Explain the usage of fragmentation in Eliot's poetry.