



INSTITUTE  
OF DISTANCE  
EDUCATION **IDE**  
Rajiv Gandhi University

# BAENG101 INTRODUCING ENGLISH LITERATURE-I



**BA (ENGLISH  
ELECTIVE)  
1<sup>ST</sup> SEMESTER**

**Rajiv Gandhi University**

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# **Introducing English Literature I**

**(English Elective I)**  
**BAENG101**

**BA**  
**I Semester**



**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.

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# SYLLABI-BOOK MAPPING TABLE

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## Syllabi

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### UNIT I: Explanation from Texts

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### UNIT II: Poetry I

Robert Burns : *A Red Red Rose*

George Herbert: *The Pulley*

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### UNIT III: Poetry II

Alfred Lord Tennyson: *Break, Break, Break*

Thomas Hardy; *The Darkling Thrush*

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### UNIT IV: Short Stories

Guy de Maupassant: *The Necklace*

Anton Chekhov: *The Bet*

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### UNIT V: Literary Terms I

Simile, Metaphor, Alliteration, Assonance, Personification,  
Hyperbole, Epithet, Transferred Epithet, Epigram



## Structure

- 1.0 Introduction
- 1.1 Unit Objectives
- 1.2 Robert Burns: An Introduction
  - 1.2.1 *A Red, Red Rose*: Text and Explanation
- 1.3 George Herbert: An Introduction
  - 1.3.1 *The Pulley*: Text and Explanation
  - 1.3.2 Myth and Conceit in *The Pulley*
  - 1.3.3 George Herbert and Metaphysical Conceit
  - 1.3.4 The Notion of Sleep and *The Pulley*
- 1.4 Andrew Marvell
  - 1.4.1 Poet of Nature
  - 1.4.2 Poet of Love
  - 1.4.3 Elements of Wit in Marvell's Poetry
  - 1.4.4 *To His Coy Mistress*: Text and Explanation
- 1.5 Percy Bysshe Shelley: An Introduction
  - 1.5.1 *Prometheus Unbound*
- 1.6 Summary
- 1.7 Key Terms
- 1.8 Answers to 'Check Your Progress'
- 1.9 Questions and Exercises
- 1.10 Further Reading

## NOTES

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### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

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Robert Burns is widely regarded as the pioneer of Romantic movement and after his death became a cultural icon not only in Scotland but around the world. His works cover a wide range of topics, including love, social commentary and satirical attacks on the Church and establishment. *A Red, Red Rose* is a love song which reveals the poet's highs and lows in his emotional affairs. A deeper reading of the poem brings forth a number of other themes that run through the poem.

George Herbert is generally reckoned as one of the greatest metaphysical poets. He uses language in an open, unassertive way, while simultaneously achieving concentration of meaning in poetry. Herbert's writing inspired Vaughan and Crashaw in writing poetry. In *The Pulley*, Herbert creates a fable about God's creation of the world.

Andrew Marvell is a famous poet of the seventeenth century. He is famous for writing political satire and lyrical verse. *To His Coy Mistress* is his most celebrated poem which exhibits the distinct traits of metaphysical poetry.

P. B. Shelley was a foremost romantic and lyric poet of the nineteenth century. Shelley's four-act lyrical drama *Prometheus Unbound* was first published in 1820 which portrayed the suffering of the Greek mythological character Prometheus. It was Zeus who made him suffer due to the punishment to which he was sentenced to for eternity. In this unit, you will study the poems written by Robert Burns, George Herbert, Andrew Marvell and P. B. Shelley.



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## 1.1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

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### NOTES

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

- Assess the effect of the French Revolution on Burns' writings
- Describe *A Red, Red Rose* as a love song written by Robert Burns
- Discuss George Herbert and Andrew Marvell as metaphysical poets
- Describe analyse *Prometheus Unbound* as a lyrical drama written by P. B. Shelley

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## 1.2 ROBERT BURNS: AN INTRODUCTION

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Robert Burns (25 January 1759 – 21 July 1796) is widely regarded as the national poet of Scotland. He was a poet and lyricist best known for poems written in English and a light Scots dialect, accessible to an audience beyond Scotland. A lot of his poetry comprises original compositions, but he also collected folk songs from across Scotland, often revising or adapting them. Thus, his work is also a repository of the folk heritage of Scotland. *A Red, Red Rose* is a famous poem. His works reveal the emotional highs and lows he felt and have consequently led to the belief that he had bipolar disorder. In fact, the poet himself said that he suffered from 'blue devilism'.

His poetry is a political and civil commentary on the events of the times. In many ways, he is a pioneer of the Romantic movement since his concerns with oppression, freedom and the impact of changes on the rural landscape are reflected in the works of other poets. He is also seen as a source of inspiration to the founders of both liberalism and socialism. He is a proto Romantic poet who influenced Wordsworth, Coleridge and Shelley greatly. He also influenced Scottish poets like Allan Ramsay and Robert Fergusson. It is interesting to note that there was a conscious attempt by the Edinburgh literati to project Burns as a poet of the lower classes, as a 'heaven-taught ploughman'. In fact, a conscious attempt was made to dismiss his education and its impact on his work and style. It was only later that poets like Hugh MacDiarmid tried to dismantle this sentimental cult with respect to Burns, especially in Scottish literature. His style is direct and is marked by spontaneity and sincerity. The tone is tender, humorous as in *Tom O'Shanter* and sometimes even satirical, for example, in *The Holy Fair*. Some of his poems like *Love and Liberty* are in English as well as Scottish dialect. His poetry reflects his knowledge of classical literature as well as his knowledge of the Bible and English literary traditions. He is the creator of the first modern vernacular style in British poetry.

Burns lived during the period of the French Revolution and this influenced his poetry. The theme of republicanism in his work can be attributed to this influence. His poetry is also very radical and a poem like *Scots Wha Hae* is proof of this aspect. Other themes like Scottish patriotism, anticlericalism, class inequalities, gender roles, commentary on the Church of Scotland (Scottish Kirk) of his time, Scottish cultural identity, poverty, sexuality, and the beneficial aspects of popular socializing (carousing, Scotch whisky and folk songs) are also found in his poetry.

During the final years of his life he worked for James Johnson's *The Scots Musical Museum* (1787–1803) project to preserve traditional Scottish songs for the future. In

this endeavour he recorded nearly 300 songs, *Auld Lang Syne*, being the most famous. He also collaborated on a similar endeavour with George Thomson for his anthology *A Select Collection of Original Scottish Airs for the Voice*, but they often disagreed on the type of songs that ought to be included in the volumes. He wrote to a friend, ‘What to me appears to be the simple and the wild, to him, and I suspect to you likewise, will be looked on as the ludicrous and the absurd.’

The same seems to have been the case with *A Red, Red Rose*. In his book Pierro Urbani claims that Burns gave him the words for the poem. He was struck by the words when he heard a country girl sing it. He copied it down and wanted Urbani to set it to a Scottish tune.

Urbani published the song to an original tune that he wrote. He later included the poem in his book *Scots Song*. In fact, Burns also refers to the poem as ‘a simple old Scots song which I had picked up in the country.’ The song first appeared in Johnson’s *Museum* in 1797 to the tune of Niel Gow’s *Major Graham*. This was the tune that Burns himself had wanted his song to be sung to. The song appeared in Thomson’s *Scottish Airs* in 1799 where it was set to William Marshall’s Wishaw’s lyric *And fare thee weel awhile*. The song became extremely popular when it was paired with *Low Down in the Broom* by Robert Archibald Smith in his *Scottish Minstrel Book* in 1821. This form is the most popular arrangement even today.



Fig 1.1 Robert Burns

### 1.2.1 *A Red, Red Rose*: Text and Explanation

*O my Luve's like a red, red rose,  
That's newly sprung in June:  
O my Luve's like the melodie,  
That's sweetly play'd in tune.*

*As fair art thou, my bonie lass,  
So deep in luve am I;  
And I will luve thee still, my dear,  
Till a' the seas gang dry.*

## NOTES

### Check Your Progress

1. When and where was Robert Burns born?
2. Which revolution affected Burn's writings?

*Till a' the seas gang dry, my dear,  
 And the rocks melt wi' the sun;  
 And I will love thee still, my dear,  
 While the sands o' life shall run.  
 And fare-thee-weel, my only Luve!  
 And fare-thee-weel, a while!  
 And I will come again, my Luve,  
 Tho' 'twere ten thousand mile!*

## NOTES

### Explanation

Literary critic David describes Burns as ‘the greatest songwriter Britain has produced’ and calls the poem a ‘combination of tenderness and swagger’. According to him, Burns’ work facilitated in refurbishing and improving traditional Scots songs.

While the similes and metaphors on love are not unique it is their cumulative effect that makes this poem effective. As the song progresses, the metaphors to describe love and its depth become more detailed and reflect the growing love. The fact that this is done through the use of relatively simple images only serves to give freshness to the poem. The poem is indicative of true depth of feeling of love and the effect on the speaker. As this emotion grows it only draws the listener/reader into the emotional world of the song. In the poem, the speaker compares his love to a rose. In the beginning of the poem, the rose is newly sprung, tiny and fragile. However, as the poem progresses we see a change. This transformation reflects the various stages of love – in the beginning it is fresh and vulnerable. This is indicative of the beauty and excitement of the first stages of tender love blossoming. The tiny rose is reflective of the blossoming emotion of new love.

In other words, just as nature blossoms in June similarly, the beginning of the poem refers to the first spark when love begins in the heart. Just as a newly sprung rose is fragile similarly, the speaker’s emotions are fragile since he is not sure what the beloved feels or whether it will survive. However, the tone is optimistic, after all it is springtime and all is fresh and glowing. The word ‘newly’ suggests an intimacy of emotion. The feelings of love are fresh and perhaps the speaker has not had time to come to terms with them and recognize and accept them for what they are. The speaker then goes on to compare his love with melody. A melody is played on an instrument and so can be accessed again and again. In other words, there is a degree of permanence in the emotion the speaker feels and he cherishes it. The melody is also self-reflective and calls attention to the fact that the emotion is expressed in a song about love. This self-reflective mess of the poem further heightens the emotion the speaker feels and makes it truer and more immediate. Again a tune survives only if it is played and listened to, in other words, it requires a player and an audience. Similarly, love survives only if there is an object of affection and somebody to shower that affection. In this way, the beloved becomes a living presence in the song. And the emotion instead of being a fragile entity that needs to be protected becomes a flourishing emotion that is given and received willingly.

In the second stanza, the beloved makes an appearance in the song. ‘My bonnie lass’ is, in fact, the listener of the song. At this point of the poem, the speaker addresses

the vanity of the beloved by suggesting that his love is as pure as the beloved is fair. At this point in the poem even though the love is not as fragile as a tiny rose, the speaker is still not confident of the beloved's emotions and feels the need to flatter her. At the same time, the personal tone here is suggestive of the fact that this love has formed an intimate bond between the two of them. The tone of the next two lines is markedly different. Here, the speaker suggests that he loves the beloved not because she is beautiful but due to the facts that she is the centre of his existence. This idea is suggested by the fact that the tone becomes serious and he says that his love will transcend time and change. The speaker says that he will continue loving the beloved even when the seas are dry of water. In other words, his feelings for her are strong and will withstand the changes time will wreck on her visage. He will still love her when the bloom of youth ends and she is a dry old crone. This takes us back to the image of the rose and the fragility of the rose gains significance.

In the beginning, it suggested transience and hinted at an emotion about which the speaker is not sure. This is no longer the case and now the fragility of the rose is transformed into an emotion which is strong and eternal. This fragility becomes strength. In other words, love, while a fragile emotion, gives strength and paradoxically is strength. The fact that the nature of the love the speaker feels has changed is highlighted by the fact that the line 'Till a' the seas gang dry.' Here, the idea is that the love will survive till the seas go dry but also beyond a time when the rocks exposed by the drying sea melt in the heat of the relentless sun. In other words, this love will never die but will keep on growing. Again one must note the increasing strength of the love the speaker feels for the beloved. The last lines of the third verse are illustrative. Here, the speaker abandons the hyperbole of the earlier lines and the poem looks back at itself. The speaker suggests that his feelings will not change as long as he lives and no matter what life throws at him. This is a deeper expression of his emotions than the earlier similes because it acknowledges that the path of love is not always easy. Here, the speaker acknowledges that life throws challenges but even these will not deter or alter his emotions. And this is the truest expression of the poet.

The final verse is the tender farewell scene and puts the poem in perspective. This is not an ordinary love song sung to woo the beloved. Instead it is a song sung at the time of parting to convince both the speaker and the beloved of the truth of emotions that the speaker feels. The last few lines prior to these now acquire greater depth. The speaker is suggesting that even though he is leaving at this point of time, his feelings will remain unchanged.

### 1.3 GEORGE HERBERT: AN INTRODUCTION

George Herbert was born on 3 April 1593. He was the fifth son in a famous Welsh family. Herbert's mother, Magdalen Newport, is known to be a patron of the eminent literary writer John Donne. It is believed that Donne dedicated his *Holy Sonnets* to her.

George Herbert could not enjoy his father's company for long. His father died when George was only three-years old. As a result, Magdalen was entrusted with the responsibility to raise ten children, all on her own. She was confident that she will be able to educate and provide a healthy upbringing to her children. At the age of ten, Herbert

## NOTES

### Check Your Progress

3. Who described Burns as the greatest songwriter of Britain?
4. In the poem, *A Red, Red Rose*, how does the speaker refer to his beloved?

went to study at Westminster School. Later on, he won scholarships at Trinity College, Cambridge.

Herbert received his graduation degree in 1613 and completed his post-graduation in 1616. Later on, he was elected as a major fellow of Trinity. Almost immediately after graduating from college, Herbert was appointed as reader in Rhetoric at Cambridge. By 1620, he was elected a public orator. This was a post which gave Herbert the chance to represent Cambridge at public gatherings and platforms. For two successive years, 1624 and 1625, Herbert was elected as representative to the Parliament. In 1627, Herbert resigned from his role as an orator. In 1629, he tied the knot with Jane Danvers. By 1630, Herbert 'took holy orders in the Church of England'. Henceforth, until his death, Herbert spent his life discharging the role of rector in Bemerton near Salisbury. In Bemerton, apart from preaching, he spent a considerable time writing poetry and helping the community by rebuilding the church from his own funds. Herbert had composed a practical manual during his stay in Bemerton, known as *A Priest to the Temple*.

In 1633, Herbert died of consumption. He was only forty. *A Priest to the Temple* came out in print in 1633. Scholars have highlighted the popularity of book by pointing out that the book had been reprinted as many as twenty times since the year 1680.

George Herbert's poems will always be remembered for the deep religious devotion they reflect, for their linguistic accuracy and fluidity in rhyme. The great Romantic poet, Samuel Taylor Coleridge had written: 'Nothing can be more pure, manly, or unaffected,' in the context of Herbert's use of language in his poetry.



*Fig 1.2 George Herbert*

## Conceit and metaphysical conceit

The word 'conceit' means 'a concept or an image'. In simpler terms, it is a figure of speech that brings out interesting or striking comparison between two different things, or situations or ideas to create a new concept. The course of development that one comes across in English poetry, suggests that there are two kinds of conceit (a) the Petrarchan

conceit and (b) the metaphysical conceit. We will more or less focus on metaphysical conceit that was mainly employed by the metaphysical poets of the seventeenth century like John Donne, Andrew Marvell and George Herbert.

Metaphysical poetry was in vogue during the seventeenth century. It was popularized by John Donne. Later on, many of his literary successors like Henry Vaughan, Andrew Marvell, George Herbert, and Richard Crashaw carried on the tradition.

The metaphysical poets 'shared a philosophical point of view and strongly opposed the mode of the idealized human nature and of physical love which was a tradition in Elizabethan poetry'. Initially, the 'metaphysical' school of poetry was looked down upon by the earlier writers. For instance, Ben Jonson had remarked, 'Donne deserved hanging because he had run roughshod over the conventional rhythm and imagery and smoothness of the Elizabethan poetry.'

Distinct characteristics of metaphysical poetry include extreme use of puns, allegories and conceits which are incorporated into the ordinary speech. Metaphysical poetry is marked by 'its exaltation of wit' that indicated 'nimbleness of thought' during the seventeenth century. The phrases and terms incorporated by these poets in their writing were inspired from various fields of knowledge. The metaphysical poets were extremely well read. Their writing reflected their high education as well as the vastness of the knowledge. Their poems exposed their deep faith in matters of life and religion. Whereas, if we consider the love poems, then we see that the neo-platonic concept of ideal love is glorified and sensuousness, along with physical beauty, receives a backseat. They highlighted the tension arousing in matters of love by incorporating realism in their poetry.

Speaking about the metaphysical writers in his essay, T.S.Eliot opines that the metaphysical poets used the conceit as a prominent tool to challenge the existing imagery used in the contemporary writings 'in order to stimulate both emotions and intellects'. It is also believed that they tried to express their highly sensitive mind and thought process through their poems. They invariably tried to bring together the human body to understand the notion of completion in their poetry.

Scholars suggest that the metaphysical conceit is a process by which a logical argument is presented in a poetic manner. Critic Baldick suggests that metaphysical poetry '... is an unusual or elaborate metaphor or simile presenting a surprisingly apt parallel between two apparently dissimilar things or feelings'.

Metaphysical poetry flourished at an age that coincided with the development of age of reason. It is argued by many that metaphysical poetry was the end product of the various movements that were taking place as a consequence of social, political, economic, and religious conditions that were prevalent in that age.

## NOTES

## Major literary works

The well-known literary works of George Herbert are the following:

### NOTES

<i>A Dialogue-Anthem</i>		
<i>A True Hymn</i>		
<i>A Wreath</i>		
<i>Aaron</i>		
<i>Affliction (I)</i>	<i>Heaven</i>	<i>The British Church</i>
<i>Affliction (II)</i>	<i>Jordan (I)</i>	<i>The Call</i>
<i>Affliction (III)</i>	<i>Jordan (II)</i>	<i>The Church-floor</i>
<i>Affliction (IV)</i>	<i>Joseph's Coat</i>	<i>The Collar</i>
<i>Antiphon (I)</i>	<i>Life</i>	<i>The Dawning</i>
<i>Christmas</i>	<i>Love (I)</i>	<i>The Elixir</i>
<i>Church-music</i>	<i>Love (II)</i>	<i>The Foil</i>
<i>Colossians 3.3</i>	<i>Love (III)</i>	<i>The Glance</i>
<i>Death</i>	<i>Love-Joy</i>	<i>The Holdfast</i>
<i>Dialogue</i>	<i>Man</i>	<i>The Holy Scriptures I</i>
<i>Discipline</i>	<i>Mary Magdalen</i>	<i>The Holy Scriptures II</i>
<i>Dullness</i>	<i>Mortification</i>	<i>The Pearl</i>
<i>Easter</i>	<i>Peace</i>	<i>The Pilgrimage</i>
<i>Easter Wings</i>	<i>Prayer (I)</i>	<i>The Pulley</i>
<i>Even-song</i>	<i>Prayer (II)</i>	<i>The Quiddity</i>
<i>Faith</i>	<i>Redemption</i>	<i>The Quip</i>
<i>Grief</i>	<i>Sepulchre</i>	<i>The Search</i>
<i>H. Baptisme (I)</i>	<i>Sinne (I)</i>	<i>The Sinner</i>
<i>H. Baptisme (II)</i>	<i>Sinne (II)</i>	<i>The Son</i>
	<i>Vanity (I)</i>	<i>The Storm</i>
	<i>Virtue</i>	<i>The Temper (I)</i>
	<i>The Agony</i>	<i>The Temper (II)</i>
	<i>The Answer</i>	<i>The Windows</i>

### 1.3.1 *The Pulley*: Text and Explanation

The poem, *The Pulley*, centres on the theme of relationship between God and his best creation, that is, man. God, the ultimate father-figure to mankind, uses his special pulley to draw man back to him, once man's scheduled quota is over on this planet earth. He (God) does it for the good of mankind. *The Pulley* portrays the life of a man as he grows up experiencing certain aspects of life and in the process developing a relationship with God through this pulley.

*When God at first made man,  
Having a glass of blessings standing by,  
'Let us,' said he, 'pour on him all we can.  
Let the world's riches, which dispersèd lie,  
Contract into a span.'*

*So strength first made a way;  
Then beauty flowed, then wisdom, honour, pleasure.  
When almost all was out, God made a stay,  
Perceiving that, alone of all his treasure,  
Rest in the bottom lay.*

#### Check Your Progress

5. What are the salient features of George Herbert's poetry.
6. Name the major poems written by George Herbert.

*For if I should,' said he,  
 'Bestow this jewel also on my creature,  
 He would adore my gifts instead of me,  
 And rest in Nature, not the God of Nature;  
 So both should losers be.*

*Yet let him keep the rest,  
 But keep them with repining restlessness;  
 Let him be rich and weary, that at least,  
 If goodness lead him not, yet weariness  
 May toss him to my breast.'*

## Explanation

In this famous poem by George Herbert, an analogy is drawn between a pulley and Pandora's box. As the Pandora's box keeps all the evils of the world, anyone who opens it only takes the risk of spreading all the evil contained in the box and this process cannot be undone. Whereas in the poem *The Pulley*, Herbert suggests that God controls everyone through a metaphorical pulley so that God can keep man under control and pull on a man to come to his salvation; hence, denying him the temptation not to undo the Pandora's box. The very initial lines of the poem, state that:

*When God at first made man,  
 Having a glass of blessing standing by,  
 Let us (he said) pour all on him we can.*

These lines points to the reader that when God created man, he gave the best of everything he had in his possession to him. God almost poured his own image in man. He has blessed man with prosperity and has endowed him with all the riches because God realizes that man deserve these privileges. God has done this out of the goodness he stores in his heart for the mankind.

The reader must understand that after God blessed man by creating him, next he filled man with gifts such as, wisdom, honour and pleasure; rare yet incomprehensibly precious. After this, God gave man everything he could give to make man different of all the species:

*When almost all was out, God made a stay,  
 Perceiving that, alone of all His treasure,  
 Rest in the bottom lay.*

After blessing man with so much good, God decided to take rest. Thus, suggesting that God is beyond comparison in his ability to be so generous. He parted with whatever he had and decided not to keep anything for himself. The word 'rest' creates a pun because it means both physical rest and the notion of being left behind.

Moving on, Herbert says that God has showered all his gifts on man but man is foolish to worship the gifts while ignoring God. And since this happens, Herbert suggest, 'And rest in Nature, not the God of Nature: / So both should be losers.'

To elaborate further, if the man worships the gifts and not God, then both man and God are unsuccessful in their intentions. Man did not realize that God is the ultimate being and creator and he should not forget God while lingering after the gifts that God has given him. Moreover, God too failed because he did not give that wisdom to man to

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understand as to what he should worship. Thus, man chooses a different path and moves further away from God. Each of them are definitely unsuccessful because the man chooses to go after something not pious and not precious as God had originally intended. However, this is the choice which each and every human must decide upon, because, needless to say, Pandora's box is extremely tempting but it is up to man to realize that God is doing everything that he can do out of his love for humanity.

The last segment of the poem, states, 'Yet let him keep the rest, / But keep them with repining restlessness.' Here, Herbert insists that both God and man are failures.

God insists that the man must keep the gifts, but this leads to him being discontent in every aspect of his life due to the transitory choices he makes. Herbert goes on to suggest:

*Let him be rich and weary, that at least,  
If goodness lead him not, yet weariness  
May toss him to My breast.*

Thus, God finally decided that the man may remain rich but weary. Since God's goodness could not make man to worship him, then let these troubles and worries make people return to God. In this manner, we are back to discussing the pulley which was talked about in the early part of the poem. Human beings, in general, have a choice. The individual can either choose to remain weary and lead a miserable life. Nevertheless, he can also take recourse to good that God has made for him; thus, continuing to remain under his protection forever. God specifically wants the best for his prized creation. God desires that man will worship him of his own will. Yet, if this does not happen then let through despair, he will be drawn back to God and in the process have the good life that he possess.

To no one's surprise, God has intentionally withheld the gift of rest from man. As God is fully aware that his other treasures would finally result in bringing upon a spiritual restlessness and fatigue in man. Man will after all grow tired with his material gifts that he has provided. Soon humans will turn to God in exhaustion and desperation. Certainly, God is omniscient and prophetic. He is fully aware that the wicked might not come back to him, yet at the same time, he knows that his mortal creation will linger in lethargy. At this point of time, 'his lassitude, then, would be the leverage.'

Once the reader goes through this poem, he will realize that God is only seeking to make the best possible life for all humans. Herbert prays that people might get the right powers to choose the correct path and follow God because the latter has created them. For some reason, if man decided not to choose the right path, then he will be surrounded by the Pandora's box. This will continue as long as he does not decide to change his course of action and worship the almighty. Through this poem, Herbert is trying to make a very strong point. According to the poet, God has created man but human beings are prone to mistakes. Thus, God has made a metaphorical pulley which will constantly remind human beings that they are still connected, yet they need that extra pull at times to remind them of the God's existence.

### **1.3.2 Myth and Conceit in *The Pulley***

Many critics consider the poem, *The Pulley*, containing a myth of origins. Yet many others suggest that it is a moral and spiritual fable. However, both these genres overlap

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because of the way the poem is presented. According to Herbert, someone's devotional responsibility is perfectly consistent with the flow that decides his personality. The poem is short and yet simple, but Herbert manages to reaffirm several key facts. The approach to creation myth emphasizes the dignity of humankind. This dignity is bestowed by God, who is always considered to be thoughtful, generous apart from being kind. In the *Book of Genesis*, the story of creation that we come across says that a spiritual breath raised dusty clay to life and this living being was Adam. Nevertheless, in Herbert's poem, the creation appears to be even more wonderful because humanity as well as humankind is projected as the summation of all the riches that the world possesses. Moreover, God is a being that can easily and cordially communicate with all his creations—living and non-living.

Along with this emphasis on the dignity of humankind, there is, however, a carefully drawn difference; beauty, strength, wisdom, honour along with pleasure are all integral and vital aspects of humankind. Yet, these are not sufficient to guarantee the spiritual health of the people. Only for this purpose, human beings need rest and this is one quality that God has held back. Thus, the independence of human beings is definitely curtailed. *The Pulley* never suggests that humankind is miserably flawed or impotent, or life that we come across in the world of nature is insignificant or useless. Herbert opines that life can, definitely, be 'rich'. Nevertheless, the poem highlights the limitations of human beings and the liabilities that one comes across while undergoing this earthly existence.

*The Pulley* is one of those rare poems which are replete with meaning. God is presented as a being who knows everything and has clear knowledge about how eventually life will turn out to be.

This poem begins with the story of God creating man and goes on to say:

*'For if I should' said he,  
 'Bestow this jewel also on my creature,  
 He would adore my gifts instead of me,  
 and rest in Nature, not the God of Nature;  
 So both should losers be.*

Here, we see that God is tense that man might prefer to rest in nature, while ignoring him completely. God was definitely aware that his treasures would eventually tire man and exhaust him. He desired that man should find true rest only in him. God wanted all of us to rest in him, for he is the only one who is able to give the best while the rest appear desperately seeking comfort.

### 1.3.3 George Herbert and Metaphysical Conceit

George Herbert employs a single conceit throughout his compositions. In the poem, *Easter Wings*, the conceit that keeps recurring throughout the work is depicted through the print shape that is spread upon the page. While in *The Pulley*, the conceit is visible through the content that the poem presents. Herbert takes on an argumentative tone while trying to express the relationship that God has with his creation that of 'the whimsical man and the logical power'. The conceit that we come across here appears in the image of the pulley that continuously moves in a pleasing manner, trying to carry heavy loads that will signify the tensed and restless condition of man during his life:

*When God at first made man,  
 Having a glass of blessings standing by,*

'Let us,' said he, 'pour on him all we can:  
Let the world's riches, which dispersed lie,  
Contract into a span.'

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This specific poem, just like his other poetic output, underline that Herbert was a devotional preacher. He was definitely burdened by an inner conflict that was spiritual in nature, especially between his worldly desires and the commitment that he owed towards his religious duties that he graced in the capacity of a priest. His poems, in general, speak about the fact that he considered life as something 'worthless' and 'unprofitable'.

### 1.3.4 The Notion of Sleep and *The Pulley*

In the context of the mechanical operation that we come across in the poem through the imagery of a pulley, the same kind of leverage and force when 'applied makes the difference for the weight being lifted'. The same idea is applied to man in this composition by Herbert. One can definitely suggest that the denial of rest by God is actually the leverage that will make it possible to hoist or draw mankind towards the almighty. However, if we look at the first line of the last stanza, we realize that Herbert puns with the word 'rest', implying that it may be God's will, after all, allow man to 'keep the rest'. Yet, such a reading will appear to lessen the intensity behind the poem's conceit. Rest, which also implies sleep, is an idea that was definitely plaguing the minds of the Renaissance writers.

One can come across numerous Shakespearian plays which speak about sleep or denial of it as a result of some punishment or due to some heinous sins committed. For example, in *Macbeth*, king Macbeth is said to 'lack the season of all natures, sleep' while both he and Lady Macbeth are tortured due to lack of sleep. If we consider the case of Othello, we realize that even he is disconcerted by the fact that he is not being able to sleep peacefully. Especially, once Iago tries to poison him with a remote possibility that his wife might be infidel to him and preferring Cassio over him. Hence, considering the poem in this context, we realize Herbert's *The Pulley* does not provide us with any new concept. Rather, the ideas presented in the poem are extremely commonplace, especially, if we consider for seventeenth century religious poems that were composed by Herbert and his contemporaries. Though the most distinctive feature of this metaphysical poem is the religious tone it conveys through a secular as well scientific image that not just requires the reader's friendliness with the subject matter but also expects certain knowledge of some basic laws of physical sciences.

## 1.4 ANDREW MARVELL

The son of a priest, Andrew Marvell was born on 31 March 1621, in the church house of a vineyard near Hull of Yorkshire, England. He was the fourth child and the first son of his parents. The fifth and last child of the family, a boy, died at the age of one and Andrew, therefore, grew up as an only son with three sisters, Anne, Mary and Elizabeth.

Andrew Marvell's contribution to literature may be classified as follows:

- Poems which, for the most part, belong to the years 1650–1652
- Satires, which he wrote on public men and public affairs during the reign of Charles II

### Check Your Progress

7. What is the theme of the poem, *The Pulley*.
8. What are the gifts bestowed by God on man in *The Pulley*?

- Newsletters, which he regularly addressed to his constituents in Hull after his election as Member of Parliament for that borough in 1659 and which extend from 1660 to the time of his death in 1678
- His controversial Essays on ecclesiastical questions written at intervals between 1672 and 1677

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Fig 1.3 Andrew Marvell

### 1.4.1 Poet of Nature

One set of poem by Marvell shows him as an ardent nature lover. These poems include *Upon Appleton House*, *Upon the Hill*, *Grove at Bilbrough*, *The Garden*, *On a Drop of Dew*, *Bermudas*, *The Picture of Little T.C.*, and *The Nymh Complaining for the Death of Her Fawn*. Then there are the four ‘Mower’ poems which are more or less in the tradition of pastoral poetry; though the principal character in these poems is a mower, not a shepherd. All these poems show Marvell's detailed observation of nature. Nature, indeed, casts a spell upon him. He finds the appeal of nature to be simply irresistible and he surrenders to her charm with the utmost willingness and joy.

*Upon Appleton House* provides the finest examples of his precise description of nature. In this poem, we have detailed pictures of the flower garden in Lord Fairfax's estate, followed by equally graphic descriptions of the meadows, the river in flood and after the flood. These descriptions are followed by perfectly realistic and vivid pictures of the wood into which the poet withdraws in a contemplative mood. In this part of the poem, the realism and accuracy with which Marvell describes the activities of the nightingale, the doves, and the wood pecker have been admired by every critic and reader.

Here he identifies himself with the birds and growing things:

*‘Thus I, easy philosopher,  
Among the birds and trees confer.’*

Here he can, 'through the hazels thick, espy the hatching throstle's shining eye.' He has dialogues with the singing birds. The leaves trembling in the wind are to him Sibyl's (mystical or spiritual) leaves. To be covered with the leaves of trees is a delight to him:

'Under this antic cope I move,  
Like some great prelate of the grove.'

In more than forty stanzas of this poem Marvell shows that he is familiar with all aspects of the countryside, the trees and birds and that he has attentively listened to and compared the songs of birds. He feels so happy and peaceful in the midst of these scenes of nature that he calls upon the trees and the plants to cling to him and not to let him leave this place:

'Bind me, ye woodbines, in your twines,  
Curl me about ye, gadding vines.'

This is the exalted love for nature of a romantic poet. Joined with this love for nature and for birds, is Marvell's feeling for animals. His suffering when they suffer is voiced with infinite gracefulness in his semi-mythological poem, *The Nymph Complaining for the Death of Her Fawn*. Here, the girl utters a pathetic lament over the death of her pet animal and this lament is so touching that it cannot but have come from the heart of the poet himself.

In *An Horatian Ode* we have the picture of a falcon thrown casually into the poem in order to convey the idea of Cromwell's obedience to the commons in spite of his fierce nature. The behaviour of the falcon in returning from the sky and perching on the branch of a tree in response to the lure is depicted in just a few lines and shows the accuracy of Marvell's observation. In *Eyes and Tears* there is, in the last but one stanza, a series of brief pictures of nature: two clouds dissolving into two raindrops; two fountains trickling down, and two floods overflowing the banks of the two rivers.

The finest examples of Marvell's sensuous nature-imagery are to be found in *The Garden* and *Bermudas*. In *The Garden*, ripe apples drop on the poet's head, the luscious clusters of grapes squeeze their juice upon his mouth; the nectarine and the peach reach his hands of their own accord; he stumbles on melons; and he is ensnared with flowers. These lines make the reader's mouth begin to water. In *Bermudas*, we have an equally alluring description of fruits. Here we have bright oranges shining like golden lamps in a green night; the pomegranates containing jewels more rich than are found in Hormuz; the figs meet the mouths of the visitors without any effort on the part of the latter. The visitors find the melons thrown at their feet. The apples here are of such exquisite quality that no tree could ever bear them twice. The cedars here have been brought from Lebanon. The presence of ambergris on the sea shores is proclaimed by the roaring waves. This whole description makes an irresistible appeal to our senses of taste, smell and sight. It is a richly colourful and sumptuous description. (In the same poem, *Bermudas*, there is a two-line picture of whales which is extremely realistic and highly poetic. The huge sea monsters are imagined as lifting the sea upon their backs).

In certain poems, Marvell's way of looking at natural scenes and phenomena shows his spiritual approach to nature and arouses corresponding spiritual feelings in the reader. *The Garden* is one such poem. Here, after describing the rich fruits growing in the garden, the poet tells us that his mind withdraws from the sensuous pleasure of the fruits into its own happiness. The natural environment puts Marvell into a contemplative mood in which his mind can create worlds and seas transcending the actual worlds and

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seas and in this mood his mind annihilates everything 'to a green thought in a green shade'. At this time, while his body lies somewhere close to the fountains and the fruit trees, his soul glides into the branches and sits there like a bird singing and combing its silver wings in order to prepare itself for a longer flight. The spiritual tranquility and bliss which Marvell experiences here remind him of Adam's bliss in the garden of Eden before Adam's tranquility was broken by his being provided with a companion in the shape of Eve. In the poem, *On a Drop of Dew*, again, a natural phenomenon suggests a spiritual significance, or we might say a spiritual experience of the poet lends a new significance to a dew drop. The poet first gives us a picture of a dew drop, investing this tiny drop of water with a life and a soul, and then goes on to describe the human soul which, he says, comes from heaven and which is anxious to go back to that original abode. The soul of man, says the poet, remembers its previous exalted status and shuns the pleasures of this world. The soul is ever ready to go back to heaven: 'How girt and ready to ascend'! The pleasures of the earthly world are here referred to in terms of the beauty of nature: 'the sweet leaves and blossoms green'.

Marvell was the first to sing on the beauty and glory of gardens and orchards. In them he tastes his dearest delights. *The Garden* forestalls Keats' style by its sensuousness and Wordsworth's by its optimistic and serene meditative mood. Yet Marvell preferred nature in its wild rather than cultivated form. It is in the spirit of charming Perdita in Shakespeare's *The Winters Tale* that Marvell protests, in *The Mower Against Gardens*, against artificial gardening processes such as grafting, budding and selection.

The feeling for nature is sometimes introduced by Marvell into poems which are otherwise inspired by Christianity or by love. In *Bermudas*, Marvell imagines that he hears a Puritan refugee from the Stuart tyranny singing praises to God as he rows along the coast of an island in the Bermudas, safe from the storms and the rage of prelates; and then the singer mentions the sensuous delights provided by nature on this island. Sometimes, Marvell returns to the pastoral, but he gives it a new emphasis of truth, and of realism. The short idyll *Ametas and Thestylis* is very original and graceful and there is also the touching complaint of *Damon the Mower* who, working beneath a burning sun, laments his Juliana's hardness of heart. Nor can we ignore *The Mower to the Glow-Worms* in which Marvell gives us delightful pictures of the light shed by the glow-worms and concludes with a reference to the Mower's disappointment in his love for Juliana. The fanciful picture of the nightingale studying late in the night and composing her matchless songs is especially very pleasing. Then there is the poem called *The Fair Singer* in which the wind and sun image lends the required magnitude to the overpowering appeal of the eyes and the voice of the beloved. Likewise the image of the lovers placed as far apart as the two poles imparts the necessary magnitude to the situation in the poem *The Definition of Love*. The mention of the Indian Ganges and the English Humber in *To His Coy Mistress* enhances the humour of the opening passage.

### 1.4.2 Poet of Love

Marvell's love poems constitute an important division of his lyric poetry, the other two important divisions being poems dealing with the theme of religion and those dealing with the theme of nature. His love poems include *The Fair Singer*, *The Definition of Love*, *To His Coy Mistress*, *Young Love*, *The Unfortunate Lover*, *The Picture of Little T.C.*, *The Mower to the Glow-worms*, and *Damon the Mower*. Then there are poems in which the theme of love occurs as a subsidiary subject, poems like *Upon Appleton*

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*House* and *The Nymph Complaining for the Death of her Fawn*. According to one critic, the least satisfactory of the poems of Marvell are those whose theme is love. In the opinion of this critic, Marvell's love poetry has, with the exception of *To His Coy Mistress*, as little passion as Cowley's, while it is as full of conceits. *The Unfortunate Lover*, says this critic, is probably the worst love poem ever written by a man of genius, while *The Definition of Love* is merely a study in the manner of Donne's *Valediction Against Mourning*. Cleverer and more original and somewhat more successful, is *The Gallery*. The two opposite sides of one long picture gallery into which the chambers of the lover's heart have been thrown by breaking down partitions are supposed to be covered with portraits of his lady. On the one side she is drawn in such characters as Aurora and Venus and on the other as an enchanteress and a murderess.

The charge of a want of passion in the love poems of Marvell has been confirmed by some other critics also. The abundance of conceits in all the poems of Marvell, whether of love or religion or nature, is a fact which every reader knows. As for the adverse opinion about *The Unfortunate Lover*, most readers might agree. Nonetheless, to say that Marvell's poems of love are, on the whole, the least satisfactory may be too sweeping a statement. *To His Coy Mistress* is, as even this critic agrees, a masterpiece. About it, this critic says that here passion is allowed to take its most natural path, that as a love poem it is unique, and that for sheer power it ranks higher than anything Marvell ever wrote.

In certain respect, Marvell, in his love poems, adopt the established Petrarchan approach, while in other his treatment of love, like his technique or style of expression, is wholly unconventional. The Petrarchan mode, which became very popular with the Elizabethan poets, was to exalt the beloved and to shower glowing and eloquent praises on her beauty and charm. The Petrarchan lover was given to sighing and weeping over the indifference and callousness of his beloved and over the disappointment he felt as a consequence of her attitude. Now, we have these Petrarchan elements in at least three of Marvell's love poems, namely, *The Fair Singer*, *To His Coy Mistress*, and *The Unfortunate Lover*. In the first of these poems, the lover praises the beauty of his mistress's eyes and voice in extravagant terms, and speaks of her total and complete conquest over his mind and heart. In *To His Coy Mistress*, the lover speaks of the beauty of his mistress' limbs in exaggerated terms, asserting that he needs hundreds and thousands of years to be able to praise them adequately. In *The Unfortunate Lover*, the lover has learnt from the winds and the waves to sigh and to shed tears.

In these three poems, the passion of the lover is as intense as in any Elizabethan love poem. The statement that Marvell's love poems are cold is certainly not true of these three poems. In *The Fair Singer*, the lover says that both beauties of his mistress (the beauty of her eyes and the beauty of her voice) have joined themselves in fatal harmony to bring about his death, and that with her eyes she binds his heart, and with her voice she captivates his mind. He then goes on to speak of the 'curled trammels of her hair' in which his soul has got entangled, and the subtle art with which she can weave fetters for him of the very air he breathes. If a lover can thus speak about his feelings, we cannot say that he is a cold kind of lover. In the poem *To His Coy Mistress*, the passion is equally ardent. While the lover adopts a witty and somewhat sarcastic manner of speaking in the first two stanzas, he becomes truly ardent and spirited in his passion in the last stanza. In this final stanza, he becomes almost fierce in his passion when he suggests that he and she should roll all their strength and all their sweetness up into one ball and should tear their pleasures with rough strife through the iron gates of life. In *The*



*Unfortunate Lover* also the passion is intense, almost red-hot. The lover here is hit by 'all the winged artillery of cupid' and, like Ajax, finds himself between the 'flames and the waves'. The lover is then depicted as one 'dressed in his own blood'. It is true that the unfortunate man's plight in love is only briefly described because his other misfortunes too form an important part of his story, but his love is certainly not of the lukewarm kind. It is his disappointment in love which constitutes his real tragedy and which brings his life to a painful close.

In the other poems, the passion of love is certainly not very intense, and therefore, T.S. Eliot is right in speaking of 'a tough reasonableness beneath the slight lyric grace'. The intellectual element in some of the poems is so strong so as to push the passion of love into the background. These poems have an argumentative quality which has the effect of diminishing the passion. In such poems, the lover feels his love to be very strong. No doubt he gets so entangled in arguing his case that the passion is almost forgotten. *The Definition of Love* is an outstanding example of the argumentative love-lyric. The poem begins with a highly intellectual conceit. His love, says the poet, was begotten by 'despair upon impossibility'. 'Magnanimous despair' alone could show him so divine a thing as his love. He could have achieved the fruition of his love, but fate drove iron wedges and thrust itself between him and the fulfillment of his love. The poet then goes on to say that fate grows jealous of two perfect lovers and does not permit their union because the union of two lovers would mean the downfall of the power of fate. Fate, the poet goes on to say, has placed him as far away from his beloved as the two poles are from each other, that is, the North Pole and the South Pole. This love can be fulfilled only if the earth undergoes some new convulsion and if the world is cramped into a plan sphere. The poet next compares his own love and his mistress' love to parallel lines which can never meet even if stretched to infinity. Finally, the poet describes the love between him and his mistress as the 'conjunction of the mind' and the 'opposition of the stars'. The whole poem is a kind of logically developed argument in which the passion itself is almost forgotten and the speaker's chief concern is to establish the utter hopelessness of true love, the villain in the case being fate. The conceits in the poem are audaciously far-fetched. It is a learned poem in which every subject of the academic trivia is exploited in turn. Marvell, here, has made the fullest use of the logic which he had learnt at Cambridge. Geometry and astronomy are pressed into the service of logic here. It is a thoroughly unconventional kind of love poem and it occupies a unique position in the whole range of English love poetry.

The poem *Young Love* has an unusual theme wherein the poet's arguments are more pronounced than the theme of love. It is logic that dominates the poem.

The theme of the poem revolves around a grown up man's attraction towards a girl in her early teens (around thirteen or fourteen) and the girl's logic for not responding to his 'love'. The man tries to persuade the girl with his arguments that it is the right time for them to fall in love and be with each other as time will fly fast and this opportunity will never remain. The lover wants the immature girl to take a quick decision and not wait to attain further maturity. He does not want to wait for another one to two years for her to turn fifteen. He is not confident that fate will favour them, and hence is in haste.

The whole poem is one extended argument, and the originality of the poem lies in the manner in which the argument is developed. Although the response of the girl is not included in the poem, an element of disappointment is briefly introduced. Interestingly, the main subject of *The Nymph Complaining* is the death of a pet fawn. Despite this, the theme of love is dominant.

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The poem speaks of the girl's suffering at the hands of her 'lover' Sylvio at equal breath as her suffering at the loss of her pet fawn by the wanton troopers. The girl, the nymph, is not portrayed as cold-hearted but had intense feeling for Sylvio who deserted her.

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The poem speaks of the strong love of the first Fairfax for Miss Thwait whom he was able ultimately to win as his bride in spite of the opposition of the nuns and her own excessive modesty, as related in the poem, *Upon Appleton House*. In these two poems, however, the passion of love is not much dwelt upon; it is merely indicated and we have ourselves to imagine its intensity.

In the pastoral poems, too, the passion of love does not find any direct expression. For instance, in *The Mower to the Glow-Worms*, the speaker mentions his love only in the last stanza, as a kind of after thought. So it could be regarded as a cold poem.

### 1.4.3 Elements of Wit in Marvell's Poetry

The word 'wit' has several meanings. It means intelligence or understanding; it also means the capacity to amuse others by an unexpected combination of ideas or a contrast between ideas or expressions. These are the two most common meanings of the word 'wit'. In the second sense, wit is allied to humour. However, the word 'wit' has had certain other connotations as well, especially in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. For instance, Alexander Pope described 'wit' as being that which has been often thought but was never before so well-expressed. Dr Johnson described wit, in relation to the metaphysical poets, as a kind of *Discordia concurs* or a combination of dissimilar images. The metaphysical poets, according to Johnson, put together the most varied ideas by violence; and they ransacked both nature and art for illustrations, comparisons and illusions. This was Dr Johnson's way of explaining the kind of conceits which are found in abundance in the poetry of Donne and his followers. Then, in the twentieth century, T.S. Eliot has used the word 'wit' in relation to Marvell in his own way, meaning by it 'a tough reasonableness beneath the slight lyric grace'. Now, the poetry of Marvell contains all these kinds of wit and contains them in abundance.

Wit in the sense of the capacity to amuse or entertain by employing words in unexpected combinations or by means of unexpected comparisons and contrasts or by means of ingenious ideas is to be found to a most striking degree in Marvell's poem *To His Coy Mistress*. We are here amused, in the opening passage, by the very idea that, if the lovers had enough space and enough time, the mistress could easily search for rubies by the Indian Ganges, and the lover could complain by the banks of the river Humber in England. We are amused by the idea that the lover would love her from ten years before the Flood, and that she could refuse his love till the conversion of the Jews; and that the lover would be able to spend hundreds and thousands of years in praising the beauty of the mistress's limbs. Here 'wit' arises from what is known as hyperbole or an exaggerated manner of speaking. The notions stated by the lover here tickle our minds and we smile with amusement. In the second stanza, we have an example of wit in the lover's remark that, in the grave, worms would try the long-preserved virginity of the mistress. Here wit arises from the very unexpectedness of the possibility which the lover visualizes because ordinarily we never think of worms in the context of the seduction of a woman. Then the lover makes another witty observation when he says that the grave is a fine and private place but that nobody can enjoy the pleasure of embracing his beloved there. Here, we are amused by the lover's sarcastic remark.

The same kind of wit may be found in *A Dialogue between the Soul and Body*. Here we feel amused by the manner in which the soul and the body attack each other. The very idea of the two being regarded as separate entities is funny. Then the manner in which the complaints and grievances are given vent to is quite entertaining, in spite of the serious intention of the author in writing the poem. For instance, we feel greatly amused to read the soul describing itself as a prisoner who stands fettered in feet and handcuffed, with bolts of bones; here blinded with an eye, and there deaf with the drumming of an ear. The body amuses us equally by its retort when it complains that the soul, stretched upright inside the body, impales the body in such a way that the body goes about as 'its own precipice'. It may be pointed out that the speakers themselves are not to be regarded here as being consciously witty, but somehow their attacks and counter-attacks do produce the effect of wit. There is no such wit or amusing effect in *A Dialogue between the Resolved Soul and Created Pleasure*, the whole of this poem being characterized by an atmosphere of solemnity.

In *An Horatian Ode*, we have a couple of examples of wit arising from the use of irony. When the poet uses the phrase 'wiser art' in connection with the role of Cromwell in the flight of King Charles I from Hampton Court, he is employing irony. Apparently, Marvell here pays a compliment to Cromwell but actually he is hinting at Cromwell's cunning and crafty nature. Similarly, Marvell seems to be ironical when, at the end of this poem, he says that the same arts, through which Cromwell gained power, will be required to maintain or retain that power. Thus, a paradox may serve as a source of wit. The best example of this is to be found in the following two lines from *The Garden*:

*'Two paradises 'twere in one  
To live in Paradise alone.'*

Then we come to Marvell's use of wit in the sense of unexpected metaphors, the putting together of heterogeneous ideas and images and ingenious or far-fetched notions. Actually, the wit in the poem *To His Coy Mistress* proceeds from conceits of this kind, because Marvell makes use of certain fantastic assumptions such as the lovers having enough time and space at their disposal. Nevertheless, all metaphysical conceits are not witty in the sense of having the capacity to amuse or entertain. We have, for instance, a metaphysical conceit in the poem *On a Drop of Dew*, but the conceit here is of a kind that produces the effect of sublimity. The conceit in this poem lies in the connection which the poet establishes between a dew drop and the human soul, a connection which normally we would never think of. The poet here first describes a dew drop lying lightly on a rose petal, and then expresses the unexpected idea that the dew drop is gazing wistfully upon the sky, and is shining with a mournful light because it feels sad at having been separated from heaven. In this context, the dew drop is 'like its own tear'. Then the poet proceeds to describe the human soul which also, according to him, feels sad in this world because it recollects its original abode in heaven. Both the dew drop and the soul will ultimately dissolve, like Manna (mentioned in the Bible), and 'run into the glories of the Almighty Sun.' In this poem, the word 'wit', therefore, means a fantastic and far-fetched notion or idea or comparison.

In *The Coronet*, we also have an example of wit of this kind in the poet's idea that his garlands would at least crown the feet of Christ, though they could not crown his head. We also have the same kind of wit in the conceited notion that the poet's motives of fame and self-interest in offering his tribute to Christ represent 'the old serpent' which, says the poet, should be crushed by Christ's feet.

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Wit of the same variety is to be found in the metaphysical conceits of the poem *Eyes and Tears*. Here tears are compared to watery lines and plummets. Then we have the conceited notion that two tears have long been weighed within the scales of the poet's two eyes and then been paid out in equal poise. Another example of wit, in the sense of ingenuity and the unexpectedness of the image, is found in the idea that the sun first makes the water on the earth evaporate and then sends it back to the earth out of a feeling of pity. Next, two eyes swollen with weeping are compared to full sails hasting homewards, to the chaste lady's pregnant womb, and to 'Cynthia teeming' that is, the full moon. Also, the poem goes on like that, one witty image following another, not witty in the sense of amusing or entertaining, but in the sense of far-fetched, original, and clever.

#### 1.4.4 To His Coy Mistress: Text and Explanation

*To His Coy Mistress* a lover addresses his beloved who refuses to grant him sexual favours on account of her modesty and her sense of honour. The lover says that her coyness or sexual reluctance would have been justified if they had enough space and time at their disposal. If they had enough space at their disposal, she could have occupied herself by searching for rubies on the banks of the Indian river, the Ganga, while he would complain about his unfulfilled love on the banks of the river Humber in England. If they had enough time at their disposal, he would have started loving her ten years before the great flood (mentioned in the Bible) while she could refuse to satisfy his desire till the Judgment Day when the Jews might agree to be converted to Christianity. If they really had enough time, he would spend a hundred years in praising her eyes and gazing on her forehead; he would spend two hundred years in admiring each of her breasts; and he would spend thirty thousand years in praising the remaining parts of her body. She really deserves so much praise and adoration, says the lover.

However, all this is not possible; the lover goes on to say. Time is passing at a very fast pace, and eventually they have to face the 'deserts of vast eternity'. After some years, her beauty will no longer be found on this earth. She will lie in her marble tomb, and he would no longer be there to sing his love song. There, in the grave, worms will attack her long-preserved virginity. Her sense of honour will then turn to dust, and his desire to make love to her will then turn to ashes. The grave is a fine and private place, but nobody can enjoy the pleasure of love making there.

Therefore, it would be appropriate for both of them to enjoy the pleasures of love when there is still time, when her skin is still youthful and fresh, and when her responsive soul is still burning with a desire for lovemaking. They should, like amorous birds of prey, devour the pleasures of love, which now time still permits them to enjoy, rather than that they should suffer the pangs of unsatisfied love. They should roll all their strength and all their sweetness into one cannon-ball and shoot it through the iron gates of life. (In other words, they should enjoy the pleasure of love making with all their energy and vigour, and they should even become fierce in extracting the maximum pleasure from their love-making). If they cannot arrest the passage of time, they can at least quicken time's speed of passing.

*Had we but world enough and time,*

*This coyness, lady, were no crime.*

*We would sit down, and think which way*

*To walk, and pass our long love's day.*

#### Check Your Progress

9. Which aspects of nature does Marvell describe in *Upon Appleton House*?
10. Give examples of sensuous images of nature from *The Garden* by Marvell.
11. What Petrarchan elements do we see in Marvell's poems?

Thou by the Indian Ganges' side  
 Shouldst rubies find; I by the tide  
 Of Humber would complain. I would  
 Love you ten years before the flood,  
 And you should, if you please, refuse  
 Till the conversion of the Jews.  
 My vegetable love should grow  
 Vaster than empires and more slow;  
 An hundred years should go to praise  
 Thine eyes, and on thy forehead gaze;  
 Two hundred to adore each breast,  
 But thirty thousand to the rest;  
 An age at least to every part,  
 And the last age should show your heart.  
 For, lady, you deserve this state,  
 Nor would I love at lower rate.

But at my back I always hear  
 Time's wingèd chariot hurrying near;  
 And yonder all before us lie  
 Deserts of vast eternity.  
 Thy beauty shall no more be found;  
 Nor, in thy marble vault, shall sound  
 My echoing song; then worms shall try  
 That long-preserved virginity,  
 And your quaint honour turn to dust,  
 And into ashes all my lust;  
 The grave's a fine and private place,  
 But none, I think, do there embrace.

Now therefore, while the youthful hue  
 Sits on thy skin like morning dew,  
 And while thy willing soul transpires  
 At every pore with instant fires,  
 Now let us sport us while we may,  
 And now, like amorous birds of prey,  
 Rather at once our time devour  
 Than languish in his slow-chapped power.  
 Let us roll all our strength and all  
 Our sweetness up into one ball,  
 And tear our pleasures with rough strife  
 Through the iron gates of life:  
 Thus, though we cannot make our sun  
 Stand still, yet we will make him run.

## NOTES

## NOTES

## Explanation

*To His Coy Mistress* is probably the best-known poem of Andrew Marvell and his most popular one. It is a love poem in which the speaker offers a strong plea for the beloved to soften towards him and to relax her rigid attitude of Puritanical reluctance and to grant him sexual favours. The lover, who may be the poet himself, builds up a really strong case and supports it with arguments which no sensible woman can reject. The poem has, what is known as, a *carpe diem* theme. (*Carpe diem* is a Latin phrase meaning: 'seize the day.' The full Latin sentence is: 'Carpe diem, quam minimum credula postero' which means: 'Enjoy the present day, trusting the least possible to the future'.)

The poem is written in the form of what is known as a

syllogism. A syllogism means an argument developed in a strictly logical form and leading to a definite conclusion. In a syllogism there are three stages which may be indicated by three words initiating each stage in the argument. These three words are: 'if', 'but'; 'therefore'. This poem is divisible into three clearly marked sections. The first section begins with 'if': 'Had we but world enough, and time.' In this line, the word 'had' conveys the sense of 'if', and the line means: 'If we had only enough space and time at our disposal.' The second section of the poem begins with the word 'but': 'But at my back I always hear'. And the third section begins with 'therefore': 'Now, therefore, while the youthful hue'. Thus, the poem begins with the statement of a condition; then reasons are given why that condition cannot be fulfilled and finally a conclusion is drawn. The conclusion of the poem is that the lovers should lose no time in enjoying the pleasures of love. The conclusion justifies us in saying that the theme of the poem is that of *carpe diem*, which means that one should enjoy the present day.

There are a number of concrete pictures in the poem and a whole series of metaphysical conceits. The very notion of the lover that, having enough space and time at their disposal, they would be able to wander as far apart as the Indian Ganges and the English Humber is fantastic. Then the lover's saying that he would love his mistress from a time ten years before the Flood and would spend hundreds and thousands of years in admiring and adoring various parts of her body constitutes another metaphysical conceit. The picture of Time's winged chariot hurrying and coming closer and closer to overtake the lovers vividly brings before our minds the rapid passing of time.

Here, an abstract idea has been made concrete by means of a metaphor, and this is a realistic picture in contrast to the metaphysical conceits noted above, though there is a conceit in the image of Time as having a winged chariot. The pictures of the woman lying in her grave and the worms attacking her long preserved virginity and her honour turning to dust are conceits because worms are regarded here as being capable of seducing a woman and a dead woman at that. Then we have metaphysical conceits in the concluding stanza, where the mistress's willing soul is depicted as giving out instant fires at every pore and the lovers are imagined as rolling their strength and their sweetness into one ball and tearing their pleasures with rough strife through the iron gates of life.

The witty manner in which the poet argues his case is note worthy. In fact, the whole poem is characterized by metaphysical wit, and a streak of irony runs through it. The lover is mocking at his mistress's coyness. If the lovers had enough time, the beloved would be in a position to refuse till the conversion of the Jews. This is a witty and ironical remark. Then the lover speaks of his 'vegetable love' growing vaster than empires. The manner in which the lover would have spent hundreds and thousands of years to admire her beauties is also described in a witty manner. Here, we have an example of a witty exaggeration.

The style of the poem is marked by compression and economy in the use of words. There is a concentration of meaning in the lines, and the poet shows a remarkable skill in compressing his ideas in the fewest possible words. The idea of time passing rapidly has admirably been compressed in four lines, and the idea of all the beauty and charm of the woman coming to nothing has also been stated in only a few words. Some of the lines have an epigrammatic quality, for example:

- i. *'Thy beauty shall no more be found;  
Nor, in thy marble vault, shall sound  
My echoing song.'*
- ii. *'The grave's a fine and private place,  
But none I think do there embrace.'*

Even the two opening lines of the poem have an epigrammatic quality.

### Important stanzas for explanation

- (i) *'I would love you ten years .....Jews.'*

These are very amusing lines, like those which follow. The lover says that he would have started loving his mistress from ten years before the Flood. This Flood is mentioned in the Bible and is believed to have occurred in the year 2354 BC. The conversion of the Jews is expected to take place only a little before Doomsday. This means that the lover would have started loving nearly 2500 years ago, and the mistress would be free to refuse his love till a little before Doomsday. According to the calculations of a critic, the period of the lover's love would extend over 30,600 years. The phrase 'the conversion of the Jews' implies impossibility.

- (ii) *Let us roll all our strength the iron ..... gates of life.*

Several interpretations of the word 'ball' have been suggested by critics. However, the most satisfactory interpretation is to regard the ball as a cannon-ball which crashes through the iron gates of a town. The whole idea in these lines, therefore, is that the lovers would invade life and time with the violence of their love making. Their love making is not to be of the ordinary, common kind which is generally characteristic of weak, anaemic people. The passion of the lovers in the poem is intense and ardent. They will tolerate no obstacle in their way, but would extract the maximum possible pleasure from love making; and their pleasure, like their passion, would be of a fierce kind.

## 1.5 PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY: AN INTRODUCTION

Percy Bysshe Shelley (4 August 1792 – 8 July 1822) was radical in his poetry as well as his political and social views. He is well-known for his poems such as *Ozymandias*, *Ode to the West Wind*, *To a Skylark*, *Music*, *The Cloud* and *The Masque of Anarchy*. His other major works include long visionary poems such as *Queen Mab*, *Alastor*, *The Revolt of Islam*, *Adonais* and the visionary verse dramas, such as *The Cenci* (1819) and *Prometheus Unbound* (1820).

Shelley studied at University College, Oxford. *Zastrozzi* (1810) 'a gothic novel' was his first published work. Shelley published his second gothic novel, *St. Irvyne; or, The Rosicrucian*, in 1811 and in the same year, a pamphlet called *The Necessity of Atheism* was also published. The revolutionary ideas in the pamphlet led to his expulsion

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#### Check Your Progress

12. What does the term *carpe diem* imply?
13. What is the lover trying to convey to his beloved in *To His Coy Mistress*?



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from Oxford on 25 March 1811. After a few months of being expelled from Oxford, on 28 August 1811, Shelley, then nineteen years old, eloped with a sixteen year-old girl Harriet Westbrook to Scotland. Though initially Shelley was exuberant about Harriet Westbrook, but as days passed he became increasingly unhappy in his marriage to Harriet. Subsequently, on 28 July 1814, Shelley abandoned her and ran away to Switzerland with Mary who was the daughter of William Godwin (Shelley's mentor, the revolutionary writer) and Mary Wollstonecraft (often considered as the first feminist writer). He lived the next part of his life with Mary and they lived close to London; and at this period Shelley wrote the following poems: *Alastor, or The Spirit of Solitude*, and so on. (Mary Shelley herself was a famous writer and the novel *Frankenstein* is her great achievement where she criticizes the revolutionary spirit of the Romantic poets.) P.B. Shelley's major writing in this period, when he was with Mary, was *Laon and Cythna; or, The Revolution of the Golden City* which was later edited and republished as *The Revolt of Islam* in 1818. In 1818, Shelley also began the long lyrical play *Prometheus Unbound*. It was completed when the poet was in Rome.



*Fig 1.4 Percy Bysshe Shelley*

### 1.5.1 *Prometheus Unbound*

Percy Bysshe Shelley's four-act lyrical drama *Prometheus Unbound* was first published in 1820 which portrayed the suffering of the Greek mythological character Prometheus. It was Zeus who made him suffer due to the punishment to which he was sentenced to for eternity. Shelley's play was inspired by the classical work, *Prometheia*, a trilogy of plays which is usually attributed to the classical Greek dramatist Aeschylus. What Shelley is doing is not a translation or transliteration of Aeschylus' plays; he is taking the basic plot of Prometheus from the Greek source to treat it according to the demands of the romantic era. When one compares Shelley's play with Aeschylus, we see that there are vast differences between the two of them. Shelley borrowed only that part of the play from the Greek source which was essential for him to convey the message of how Prometheus is a rebellious figure, who rebelled against the tyranny of Zeus. Shelley's play deals with Prometheus' release from captivity which is unlike Aeschylus' plays. In Shelley's work, there is no reconciliation between Prometheus and Jupiter (Zeus); instead, Jupiter is overthrown, which allows Prometheus to be released.

*Ah me!  
alas, pain,  
pain ever,  
forever!*

Shelley's lyrical play is not meant to be performed on stage; instead it can be termed as a closet drama, which is staged in the mind of the readers. In other words, we can say that the imagination of the readers will make them visualize the play in their minds while reading the same. *Prometheus Unbound* is a play which is meant to be read rather than staged. Though the format of the text is that of a play, it is usually considered to be one of the best lyrical poetry ever written.

'Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world' – this critical statement of Shelley himself points out what he thought to be the role of the poet in society. The poet, according to Shelley, is always striving for the ideal, trying to always provide a better model from the then society so that people have a better life due to wisdom that has been garnered over the ages. They are like the legislators who are always striving towards proving a better society; but the poet's contribution of new ideas of society often goes unacknowledged which makes Shelley term the poets as 'unacknowledged legislators.' Shelley's poems deal with the ideal (a better world, a utopian world) and therefore, make a critique of the existing society by exposing the pitfalls that ought to be addressed and rectified. The revolutionary characters, whether Satan or Prometheus, become heroic for Shelley as they question the tyranny of the existing order and try to come up with a better world. In choosing Prometheus as the hero for his lyrical drama, Shelley is choosing the theme of questioning the tyrannical authority which is in keeping with the rebellious spirit of the French Revolution (1789).

## **Text                      and**

### **Explanation**

#### **Act I**

Act I of *Prometheus Unbound* begins in the Indian mountain Caucasus. The chief character Prometheus is chained to a rock in the mountain Caucasus as he is surrounded by the Oceanides, Panthea and Ione. The suffering Prometheus, in the beginning of the play, makes us sympathetic towards him as the educated readers of Shelley already are acquainted with the character. As soon as the pitiable state of the protagonist is shown, immediately the readers' sympathies are drawn towards him. As the day breaks, the Greek Titan Prometheus cries out against the 'Monarch of Gods and Daemons', Jupiter, and his tyranny which is making him suffer in this manner. His vexation against God Jupiter, even while he is being trapped and bound by him, makes us look up to him and the cause for which he is suffering. Prometheus proclaims that even though he is being chained by Jupiter, he is greater and nobler than him. Prometheus narrates his tale of suffering to the earth, heaven, sun, sea, and shadow. He tells how nature has aided in his suffering as his flesh is constantly torn by 'Heaven's winged hound' that is, the hawks of Jupiter:

*'No change, no pause, no hope! Yet I endure.  
I ask the Earth, have not the mountains felt?  
I ask yon Heaven, the all-beholding Sun,  
Has it not seen? The Sea, in storm or calm,  
Heaven's ever-changing shadow, spread below,  
Have its deaf waves not heard my agony?*

## **NOTES**

As Prometheus carries on relating his tale of suffering, four voices, from the mountains, springs, air, and whirlwinds, respond to him by describing how they see the world and how:

*'We shrank back: for dreams of ruin  
To frozen caves our flight pursuing  
Made us keep silence'*

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Following this, the Earth proclaims how the whole world is aware of the woeful tale of Prometheus and his suffering and knows how unjust it is to suffer in this manner. They cry out 'Misery' as they perceive Prometheus suffering.

Prometheus reflects on the voices that he listens to and then again returns to his own tale of suffering (how Jupiter is making him suffer) and recalls his love for Asia. After sometime, Prometheus asks earth to repeat his curse against Jupiter (so the audience/readers comes to know), and the earth is made to tell Prometheus:

*'I dare not speak like life, lest Heaven's fell King  
Should hear, and link me to some wheel of pain  
More torturing than the one whereon I roll.'*

The earth also relates to Prometheus that he is 'more than God / being wise and kind'. Prometheus further asks who she is talking about. The earth says that she is the mother of all who suffered and is suffering under Jupiter's tyranny. Listening to this, Prometheus starts praising earth, but again stresses on the fact that she should recall the curse that he had laid upon Jupiter. The earth responds to Prometheus by describing Zoroaster. She says that there are two realities: one that one can perceive and the other is the shadow that exists 'Till death unite them and they part no more'. She then talks about Demogorgon whom she describes as 'the supreme tyrant' of the shadow realm, and further asks Prometheus to call upon

*'Thine own ghost, or the ghost of Jupiter,  
Hades, or Typhon or what mightier Gods  
From all-prolific Evil.'*

Taking earth's advice, Prometheus calls upon the Phantasm of Jupiter. Ione and Panthea narrate the Phantasm's appearance. The Phantasm first asks,

*'Why have the secret  
powers of this strange world  
Driven me, a frail and empty phantom, hither  
On direst storms?'*

Prometheus asks the Phantasm to repeat the curse he made against Jupiter, and the Phantasm obeys Prometheus and says:

*Fiend, I defy thee! with a calm, fixed mind,  
All that thou canst inflict I bid thee do;  
Foul Tyrant both of Gods and Human-kind,  
One only being shalt thou not subdue....  
Thou art omnipotent.  
O'er all things but thyself I gave thee power,  
And my own will....  
I curse thee! let a sufferer's curse*

*Clasp thee, his torturer, like remorse;  
 'Till thine Infinity shall be  
 A robe of envenomed agony;  
 And thine Omnipotence a crown of pain,  
 To cling like burning gold round thy dissolving brain.*

After hearing these words, Prometheus could not believe that these were his words. When the earth tells him that they were indeed his words, Prometheus repents saying these and says:

*'I wish no living thing to suffer pain.'*

The earth laments that Prometheus is defeated and Ione responds to it by saying that it is not true. When they are speaking thus, they are interrupted by the appearance of Mercury. With him appear furies who intend to torture Prometheus further. Mercury has come with message from Jupiter:

*'I come, by the great Father's will driven down,  
 To execute a doom of new revenge.'*

Seeing the state that Prometheus is in, Mercury pities him but cannot help but oppose him as Prometheus stands against Jupiter. Mercury requests Prometheus to tell the secret of Jupiter's fate which only Prometheus knows, but Prometheus refuses Jupiter's request.

Finding no way to make Prometheus submit to his will, Mercury tries to bargain with Prometheus. Mercury offers Prometheus that he will be made free from his suffering and pain and would be welcomed among the gods if he agrees to what Mercury demands. However, Prometheus would not budge and he refuses the offer. Jupiter is angered by Prometheus' refusal and he, in his rage, makes thunder ring out across the mountains. Mercury understands the omen and departs immediately. The impending furies, who have been stopped by Mercury till now, begin to haunt Prometheus. Panthea and Ione can do nothing but despair over Prometheus's tortured self. Prometheus describes his suffering as part of his martyrdom and tells the remaining fury:

*'Thy words are like a cloud of winged snakes;  
 And yet I pity those they torture not,'*

Fury departs immediately. Thereafter, Prometheus announces that peace comes with death, but that he would never want to be mortal. The earth reacts to Prometheus,

*'I felt thy torture, son, with such mixed joy  
 As pain and virtue give.'*

At that very moment, a Chorus of Spirits appears and celebrates Prometheus's secret knowledge, which then breaks into accounts of dying individuals and the ultimate triumph of good people over evil. The spirits together tell Prometheus,

*'Thou shalt quell this horseman grim,  
 Woundless though in heart or limb,'*

The spirits depart, leaving Ione and Panthea to discuss the spirits' message with Prometheus and Prometheus recalls the Oceanid Asia. The Act ends with Panthea telling Prometheus that Asia is waiting for him.

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**Act II**

Act II Scene I of the lyrical drama begins in the valley of Caucasus where the Oceanid Asia speaks to Panthea. She says:

*'This is the season, this the day, the hour;*

*At sunrise thou shouldst come, sweet sister mine'*

Panthea then describes to Asia how her and Ione's lives have changed consequent to the fall of Prometheus; and how she came to figure out Prometheus' love for her in a dream. Asia tells Panthea to lift her eyes so that she may read his soul written in her eyes. Panthea agrees to it and the dream of the Titan Prometheus is revealed to Asia. Asia then could see another dream in Panthea's eyes. Soon the words 'Follow! Follow!' are repeated in Panthea and Asia's minds. The words are then soon repeated by Echoes, which tells them to follow. Both of them are mesmerized but Asia questions the Echoes. The Echoes only summon them further:

*'In the world unknown sleeps a voice unspoken;*

*By thy step alone Can its rest be broken'*

Asia and Panthea begin to follow the voices of the Echo.

In Scene II, the spirits describe Asia's and Panthea's journey and how

*'There those enchanted eddies play*

*Of echoes, music-tongued, which draw,*

*By Demogorgon's mighty law,*

*With melting rapture, or sweet awe,*

*All spirits on that secret way.'*

Scene III takes place in mountains, to which Panthea announces that:

*'Hither the sound has borne us - to the realm*

*Of Demogorgon.'*

A Song of Spirits begins, calling Panthea and Asia 'To the deep, to the deep, / Down, down!' Asia and Panthea follows the spirits and descend.

Scene IV begins in the cave of the Demogorgon. Panthea illustrates Demogorgon upon his throne in the following words:

*'I see a mighty darkness*

*Filling the seat of power, and rays of gloom*

*Dart round, as light from the meridian sun,*

*Ungazed upon and shapeless; neither limb,*

*Nor form, nor outline; yet we feel it is*

*A living Spirit.'*

Asia asks Demogorgon who create the world, and Demogorgon replies that God created everything – all of the good and all of the bad. Asia asks Demogorgon to reveal the name of God:

*'Utter his name: a world pining in pain*

*Asks but his name: curses shall drag him down.*

When Demogorgon still does not say his name, Asia continues to question Demogorgon, and accounts the history of Saturn and Jupiter as rulers of the universe. She says:

*'Then Prometheus*

*Gave wisdom, which is strength, to Jupiter,*

**NOTES**

*And with this law alone, 'Let man be free,'  
Clothed him with the dominion of wide Heaven.  
To know nor faith, nor love, nor law; to be  
Omnipotent but friendless is to reign.'*

She then criticizes Jupiter for all the problems of the world — famine, disease, strife and death. Prometheus, she says, gave man everything that is good — fire, the knowledge of mining, speech, science and medicine. Demogorgon responds to this by saying that:

*'All spirits are enslaved which serve things evil:  
Thou knowest if Jupiter be such or no'*

As Asia carries on further to pestering Demogorgon for answers, Demogorgon merely says that 'All things are subject to eternal Love.' Asia then asks when Prometheus will be freed. Demogorgon asks Asia to watch the mountain opens and chariots moves out across the night sky, which are being driven by the Hours. One Hour stays to talk to Asia, and Asia questions him as to who he is. The Hour responds,

*'I am the shadow of a destiny  
More dread than is my aspect: ere yon planet  
Has set, the darkness which ascends with me  
Shall wrap in lasting night heaven's kingless throne.*

Asia could not fathom what the Hour meant, and Panthea describes how Demogorgon has risen from his throne to join the Hour to travel across the sky.

Scene V takes place upon a mountain top where the chariot in which Panthea and Asia are travelling stops. The Hour says that his horses are tired, but Asia asks him to go forward. Panthea asks the Hour, to 'Tell whence is the light/ Which fills the cloud? The sun is yet unrisen', and the Hour informs her 'Apollo/ Is held in heaven by wonder; and the light... Flows from thy mighty sister.' Panthea realizes that Asia is changed, and describes how her sister radiates with beauty. It is through Asia's love that she understands how people move through time and ends with a notion of the paradise.

If Act I of the play was about the repetition of the Prometheus' curse to him and the repentance of Prometheus and a tale of his suffering and torments, then Act II is about Hope, about love and ideals. The two dreams of Asia — of release of Prometheus and the renewal of the world, and the consequent journey to the realm of Demogorgon asserts that though there is suffering and injustice that Jupiter has perpetrated on Prometheus, yet there is hope that such suffering will be over soon. Demogorgon's speeches to Asia suggest that things are not all over yet. It is the hope that Shelley wanted to give his contemporary readers that though the French Revolution has failed, yet there are hopes of a change — a change for the ideal to manifest itself in terms of the overthrowing of the omnipotent tyrannical forces.

### Act III

Act III Scene I of *Prometheus Unbound* is set in heaven where Jupiter, the monarch, is sitting on his throne along with other gods. The scene is a natural consequence of what we have seen in the last scene. After Demogorgon and his speeches on creation and creator of the world to Asia, we are eagerly waiting to meet Jupiter basking in his own glory forgetting that things may take a turn which is least expected by him. Jupiter is in conversation with the other gods and is rejoicing over his omnipotent force. He

## NOTES

claims that he has conquered almost everything except the soul of mankind. Jupiter says that:

*'Even now have I begotten a strange wonder,  
That fatal child, the terror of the earth,  
Who waits but till the distant hour arrive,  
Bearing from Demogorgon's vacant throne  
The dreadful might of ever-living limbs  
Which clothed that awful spirit unbeheld,  
To redescend, and trample out the spark.*

Though Jupiter is celebrating, he seems to have forgotten that there is Demogorgon, his own offspring who has the potential in him to drag Jupiter to the abyss of chaos. As Jupiter is rejoicing over his omnipotence, Demogorgon appears and proclaims himself to be Jupiter's child. He, moreover, states that he is more powerful than Jupiter. Jupiter on the other hand claims that not even Prometheus would have him suffer. A fight between Jupiter and Demogorgon ensues, in which Jupiter tries his best to attack Demogorgon, but the elements refuse to help him and consequently Jupiter falls.

Scene II is set at a river on Atlantis, where Ocean discusses Jupiter's fall with Apollo in the hands of Demogorgon. Apollo says that he will not like to talk about the fall. Scene III moves back again to the Mount Caucasus where Hercules has unchained Prometheus. Hercules tells Prometheus:

*'Most glorious among spirits! thus doth strength  
To wisdom, courage, and long-suffering love,  
and thee, who art the form they animate,  
Minister like a slave.*

Prometheus is grateful to Hercules for freeing him. Prometheus then turns to Asia and tells her about a cave where they can go and live and which they could call home. Prometheus requests the Hour to take Ione, with the conch shell of Proteus, over the earth so she can 'breathe into the many-folded shell/loosing its mighty music; it shall be/as thunder mingled with clear echoes, then/return; and thou shalt dwell besides our cave.'

Prometheus also calls upon the Earth and she responds that she feels life and joy. Asia questions Earth as to why she talks about death, and the Earth responds that Asia will not be able to understand because she is immortal. She then talks about the nature of death, of war and faithless faith. She then calls forth a spirit, her torch bearer, who would guide Prometheus, Asia, and the others to a temple that was once dedicated to Prometheus and will become their cave to dwell in.

## Act IV

In Scene IV, we are shifted to a forest near the cave. Asia and the spirit which guarded the forest and the cave begin to talk to each other about nature and love. The Hour comes and tells of a change:

*'Soon as the sound had ceased whose thunder filled  
The abysses of the sky and the wide earth,  
There was a change: the impalpable thing air  
And the all-circling sunlight were transformed,*



*As if the sense of love dissolved in them  
Had folded itself round the sphered world.*

He then talks of a revolution within mankind when thrones were abandoned and men treated each other as equals and with love. This is Shelley's dream and answer to the French Revolution. French Revolution was meant to liberate the people of France from the tyrannical authority. nevertheless, what happens in France immediately after the French Revolution (1789) was Reign of Terror (1791) and advent of one of the greatest monarch on the throne of France, Napoleon. That was not the dream with which the French revolution started. It started with the notion of overthrowing monarchical form of governance and end of all kind of oppression and suppression leading to a just society where common people will enjoy their rights and live a prosperous life; but instead of achieving the objective the French Revolution substituted one monarch (Louis XIV) by another (Napoleonic).

Shelley in writing *Prometheus Unbound* is trying to talk about his notion of revolution and what would ensure a successful revolution. In this context of the play, we see that mankind is no longer fearful of Jupiter, the tyrant.

*'The painted veil, by those who were, called life,  
Which mimicked, as with colours idly spread.  
All men believed and hoped, is torn aside;  
The loathsome mask has fallen, the man remains  
Sceptreless, free, uncircumscribed, but man  
Equal, unclassed, tribeless, and nationless,  
Exempt from awe, worship, degree, the king  
Over himself; just, gentle, wise: but man  
Passionless; no, yet free from guilt or pain.'*

In the beginning of Act IV of the play a voice fills the forest near the cave where Prometheus is living. We find Ione and Panthea to be asleep. The voice narrates the dawn in front of a group of shadows, who claim to be the dead Hours and begins to sing of the King of the Hours' death. Ione wakes up and asks Panthea who they were and Panthea explains to her. Panthea describes spirits of the human mind approaching and these spirits soon join in with the others singing and rejoicing love. Eventually, they decide to break their song and go across the world to proclaim love. As we have said earlier, Shelley's answer to the French Revolution is love for intellectual beauty and that love is spread through the song of the spirits.

Ione and Panthea notice a new music, which Panthea describes as

*'the deep music of the rolling world  
Kindling within the strings of the waved air,  
Æolian modulations.'*

Panthea then describes how the two melodies are different, and Ione describes a beautiful chariot with a winged infant whose 'two eyes are heavens/of liquid darkness, which the deity/within seems pouring, as a storm is poured/from jagged clouds' and 'in its hand/ It sways a quivering moon-beam.' Panthea begins describing a sphere of music and light containing a sleeping child who is the Spirit of the Earth. The Earth interrupts and describes:

*'The joy, the triumph, the delight, the madness!  
The boundless, overflowing, bursting gladness,  
The vapourous exultation not to be confined!*

## NOTES

## **NOTES**

The Moon responds by describing a light which has come from the Earth and penetrates the Moon. The Earth explains how all of the world 'Laugh with a vast and inextinguishable laughter'. The Moon then describes how all of the moon is awakening and singing. The Earth sings of how man is restored and united:

*'Man, oh, not men! a chain of linked thought,  
Of love and might to be divided not,  
Compelling the elements with adamant stress.'*

The Earth continues by declaring that man now controls even lightning and that the Earth has no secrets left from man.

Panthea and Ione interrupt the Earth and the Moon by describing the passing of the music as a nymph rising from water. Panthea then claims:

*'A mighty Power, which is as darkness,  
Is rising out of Earth, and from the sky  
Is showered like night, and from within the air  
Bursts, like eclipse which has been gathered up  
Into the pores of sunlight'.*

Demogorgon appears next and speaks the final words of the lyrical play. His speech is considered by many scholars as the central theme of the play.

*This is the day, which down the void abyss  
At the Earth-born's spell yawns for Heaven's despotism,  
And Conquest is dragged captive through the deep:  
Love, from its awful throne of patient power  
In the wise heart, from the last giddy hour  
Of dead endurance, from the slippery, steep,  
And narrow verge of crag-like agony, springs  
And folds over the world its healing wings.  
Gentleness, Virtue, Wisdom, and Endurance,  
These are the seals of that most firm assurance  
Which bars the pit over Destruction's strength;  
And if, with infirm hand, Eternity,  
Mother of many acts and hours, should free  
The serpent that would clasp her with his length;  
These are the spells by which to re-assume  
An empire o'er the disentangled doom.  
To suffer woes which Hope thinks infinite;  
To forgive wrongs darker than death or night;  
To defy Power, which seems omnipotent;  
To love, and bear; to hope till Hope creates  
From its own wreck the thing it contemplates;  
Neither to change, nor falter, nor repent;  
This, like thy glory, Titan, is to be  
Good, great and joyous, beautiful and free;  
This is alone Life, Joy, Empire, and Victory.*

## NOTES

### Check Your Progress

14. Mention the major poems written by P. B. Shelley.
15. When did Shelley begin writing *Prometheus Unbound*?
16. Who is Demogorgon?
17. Who is Prometheus?

## 1.6 SUMMARY

- Robert Burns (25 January 1759 – 21 July 1796) is widely regarded as the national poet of Scotland. He was a poet and lyricist best known for poems written in his native Scottish language.
- Robert Burns's poetry is a political and civil commentary on the events of the times. In many ways he is a pioneer of the Romantic movement since his concerns with oppression, freedom and the impact of changes on the rural landscape are reflected in the works of the other poets.
- Burns lived during the period of the French Revolution and it influenced his poetry. The theme of republicanism in his work can be attributed to this influence.
- Literary critic David Daiches describes Burns as 'the greatest songwriter Britain has produced' and calls the poem as a 'combination of tenderness and swagger'.
- George Herbert was born on 3 April 1593.
- The course of development that one comes across in English poetry, suggests that there are two kinds of conceit (a) the Petrarchan conceit and (b) the metaphysical conceit.
- Metaphysical poetry was in vogue during the seventeenth century. It was popularized by John Donne. Later on many of his literary successors like Henry Vaughan, Andrew Marvell, George Herbert, and Richard Crashaw carried on the tradition.
- Distinct characteristics of metaphysical poetry include extreme use of puns, allegories and conceits which are incorporated into the ordinary speech.
- Speaking about the metaphysical writers in his essay, T. S. Eliot opines that the metaphysical poets used the conceit as a prominent tool to challenge the existing imagery used in the contemporary writings 'in order to stimulate both emotions and intellects'.
- The poem, *The Pulley*, by George Herbert, centres on the theme of the relationship between God and his best creation, that is, man.
- In *The Pulley*, George Herbert draws an analogy between a pulley and a Pandora's box.
- Many critics consider the poem, *The Pulley*, containing a myth of origins. Yet many others suggest that it is a moral and spiritual fable.
- Andrew Marvell, a poet of the seventeenth century England, expressed extraordinary terseness and sensuousness in his poems.
- The finest examples of Marvell's sensuous nature imagery are to be found in *The Garden* and *Bermudas*.
- Marvell's love poems constitute an important division of his lyric poetry, the other two important divisions being poems dealing with the theme of religion and those dealing with the theme of nature.
- In certain respects Marvell, in his love poems adopt the established Petrarchan approach, while in other respect his treatment of love, like his technique or style of expression, is wholly unconventional.

## NOTES

## NOTES

- The word ‘wit’ has several meanings. It means intelligence or understanding; it also means the capacity to amuse others by an unexpected combination of ideas or a contrast between ideas or expressions.
- P. B. Shelley’s lyrical four-act play *Prometheus Unbound* is based on the Greek character Prometheus who is usually thought to be an archetypal rebel.
- Though the character of Prometheus is based on Aeschylus *Prometheia*, there are significant differences from the original myth as Shelley shows no reconciliation between Prometheus and Jupiter, the tyrannical omnipotent figure.
- Shelley’s intention in dealing with the myth is to manifest his idea of revolutionary character in the character of Prometheus.
- Prometheus is similar to Satan in his rebellious spirit but different from him as he does not have the characteristics of envy, revenge, wickedness and other follies that characterized Satan in canonical English literature.
- Shelley’s intention in *Prometheus Unbound* is to create an ideal rebellious character who would be an answer to the French Revolution (1789) which championed the notions of liberty, equality and fraternity.

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## 1.7 KEY TERMS

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- **Prelate:** A high ranking member of the clergy, such as a cardinal, abbot, or bishop, who has authority over lesser clergy, is called a prelate.
- **Syllogism:** It is a kind of logical argument that applies deductive reasoning to arrive at a conclusion based on two or more propositions that are asserted or assumed to be true.
- **Transliteration:** It means writing or printing using the closest corresponding letters.
- **Utopia:** It is an imagined state of perfection.

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## 1.8 ANSWERS TO ‘CHECK YOUR PROGRESS’

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1. Robert Burns was born on 25 January 1759 in Scotland.
2. The French Revolution affected Burns’ writings.
3. Burns was described as the greatest songwriter of Britain by David Daiches.
4. In the poem, *A Red, Red Rose*, the speaker calls his beloved ‘a bony lass’.
5. The salient features of George Herbert’s poetry include its deep religious devotion, linguistic accuracy, fluidity in rhyme and most importantly, the use of metaphysical conceit.
6. The major poems written by George Herbert are as follows:
  - *Holy Sonnets*
  - *The Pulley*
  - *Affliction*
  - *The Collar*

7. The poem, *The Pulley* centres on the theme of the relationship between God and his best creation, that is, man.
8. In *The Pulley*, God bestows the gifts of wisdom, honour and pleasure on man.
9. In *Upon Appleton House*, Marvell gives us detailed pictures of the flower garden in Lord Fairfax's estate, followed by vivid descriptions of the meadows, the river in flood and after the flood. These descriptions are followed by perfectly realistic and life-like pictures of the wood into which the poet withdraws in a contemplative mood. In this part of the poem, Marvell also describes the activities of the nightingale, the doves and the woodpecker.
10. In *The Garden*, ripe apples drop on the poet's head, the luscious clusters of grapes squeeze their juice upon his mouth; the nectarine and the peach reach his hands of their own accord; he stumbles on melons; and he is ensnared with flowers. These lines make the reader's mouth begin to water. The images also appeal to the sense of smell, eyes and touch besides taste.
11. The Petrarchan mode, which became very popular with the Elizabethan poets, was to exalt the beloved and to shower glowing and eloquent praises on her beauty and charm. The Petrarchan lover was given to sighing and weeping over the indifference and callousness of his beloved and over the disappointment he felt as a consequence of her attitude. We see these characteristics reflected in three of Marvell's poems, *The Fair Singer*, *To His Coy Mistress*, and *The Unfortunate Lover*.
12. Carpe diem is a Latin phrase meaning 'seize the day.'
13. In *To His Coy Mistress*, the lover is trying to convince his beloved that they should waste no time and indulge in lovemaking and the pleasures of love.
14. The major poems written by P. B. Shelley are as follows:
  - *Ozymandias*
  - *Ode to the West Wind*
  - *To a Skylark*
  - *Music*
  - *The Cloud*
  - *The Masque of Anarchy*
15. In 1818, Shelley began writing *Prometheus Unbound*.
16. Demogorgon is the force that represents the masses of the French Revolution. It is formidable and indestructible.
17. Prometheus is a Titan who stole fire from the Heavens and gave it to man and for this 'transgression' he was bound to a rock by Zeus to be eternally tormented.

## NOTES

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## 1.9 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

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### Short-Answer Questions

1. How did Robert Burns become famous as a song writer?
2. Why are the final verses of the poem *A Red, Red Rose* important?
3. Provide a short biographical sketch of George Herbert.

## NOTES

4. What qualities of the metaphysical does Marvell display in his works?
5. Write short notes on the following:
  - (a) Marvell as a poet of nature
  - (b) Marvell as a poet of love
6. State the importance of the Introduction or the Preface to *Prometheus Unbound*.
7. How is Shelley's play *Prometheus Unbound* different from Aeschylus' trilogy on Prometheus?
8. Give a brief description of Prometheus' suffering in *Prometheus Unbound*.
9. According to Shelley, who were responsible for the collapse of the French Revolution?

### Long-Answer Questions

1. Discuss the effect of the French Revolution in the poetry of Burns.
2. Critically analyse the poem *The Pulley* by George Herbert.
3. Compare Marvell and Wordsworth's style or approach to nature.
4. 'The poetry of Marvell contains all these kinds of wit, and contains them in abundance.' Elaborate with examples.
5. Is Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound* different from the protagonist of Aeschylus' trilogy on Prometheus? Give reasons to support your answer.
6. Prometheus is a portrait of an archetypal rebellious intellectual. Do you agree? Give your views.
7. Shelley's intention in writing *Prometheus Unbound* was not to create a play but a poem dealing with a rebellious figure who has contemporary relevance. Do you agree? Give a reasoned answer.
8. Comment critically on the character of Prometheus with reference to Milton's Satan (*Paradise Lost*). Do you think Prometheus is similar to Satan? Give a reasoned answer.

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## 1.10 FURTHER READING

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- Bloom, Harold. 1959. *Shelley's Mythmaking*. Connecticut: New Haven.
- Bodkin, Maud. 1963. *Archetypal Patterns in Poetry*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Grabo, Carl Henry. 1968. *Prometheus Unbound: An Interpretation*. New York: Gordian Press.
- Knight, G. Wilson. 1941. *The Starlit Dome*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Locock, Charles D. 1911. *The Poems of Percy Bysshe Shelley*. London: Methuen and Company.

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# UNIT 2 POETRY-II

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## Structure

- 2.0 Introduction
- 2.1 Unit Objectives
- 2.2 Alfred Tennyson: An Introduction
  - 2.2.1 *Break, Break, Break*: Text and Explanation
- 2.3 Thomas Hardy: An Introduction
  - 2.3.1 Works of Thomas Hardy
  - 2.3.2 *The Darkling Thrush*
- 2.4 Louis MacNeice: An Introduction
  - 2.4.1 *Prayer Before Birth*
- 2.5 Mathew Arnold: An Introduction
  - 2.5.1 *Longing*
- 2.6 Summary
- 2.7 Key Terms
- 2.8 Answers to ‘Check Your Progress’
- 2.9 Questions and Exercises
- 2.10 Further Reading

## NOTES

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## 2.0 INTRODUCTION

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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. In this unit, you will study the poems written by Alfred Tennyson, Thomas Hardy, Louis MacNeice and Mathew Arnold.

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## 2.1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

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

- Identify the major works of Alfred Tennyson
- Analyse the poem, *Break, Break, Break* by Tennyson



- Describe Thomas Hardy as a prominent poet of the Victorian era
- Compare *The Darkling Thrush* by Hardy with Keats *Ode to a Nightingale*
- Prepare a brief biographical sketch of Louis MacNeice
- Identify the distinguishing features of *Prayer Before Birth*
- Summarize Mathew Arnold's contribution to Victorian poetry
- Explain the poem *Longing* by Mathew Arnold

## NOTES

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### 2.2 ALFRED TENNYSON: AN INTRODUCTION

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Alfred Tennyson was born on 6 August 1809 in an old Lincolnshire family. He was the first Baron Tennyson of Aldworth and Freshwater. He was an English poet who is generally considered as being the chief representative of Victorian age poetry.

His parents had twelve children and Alfred was fourth among them. In 1815, three brothers— Charles, Frederick and Alfred, were sent off to Louth grammar school. However, Alfred remained unhappy there and left the place in 1820. Even though difficult conditions existed in the household, his father managed to provide him a good and wide literary education. Alfred was an intelligent child and even before he turned thirteen, he had begun composing in the style of great literary figures like John Milton, Sir Walter Scott and Alexander Pope. Also, in the works of Alfred from his youth, one can clearly see a dominant influence of Lord Byron. *The Devil and the Lady* is a collection of unpublished poems from his youth which was published in 1930 as a collection, many years after his death.

The influence of Lincolnshire countryside is clearly visible in the writings and especially, poetry of Tennyson. Phrases such as ‘the waste enormous marsh,’ ‘the sea about his home’ and ‘the sand-built ridge of heaped hills that mound the sea’ abound in his works.

His father's health started declining in 1824 and he turned to drinking as a refuge. Despite unhappy conditions at home, Alfred did not stop writing. He wrote in collaboration with Charles and Frederick in *Poems by Two Brothers* (1826; dated 1827).

Frederick joined Charles and Alfred in 1827 at Trinity College, Cambridge. This is where Alfred established his lifelong friendship with Arthur Hallam. Arthur was the talented offspring of Henry Hallam, the famous historian. The two of them joined the Apostles which was an exclusive undergraduate club catering to earnest intellectual interests.

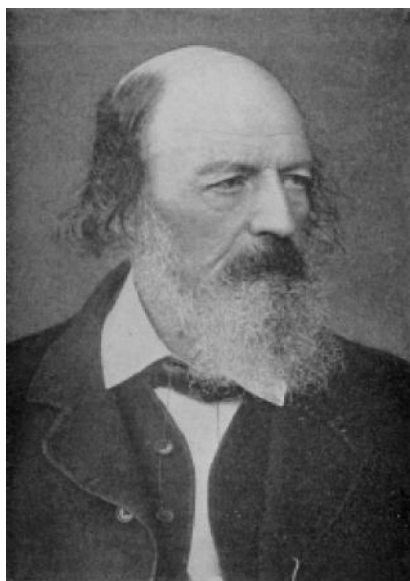
During this time in Cambridge, there was a rise in the reputation of Tennyson as a poet. In 1829, Alfred became the winner of the chancellor's gold medal for his poem *Timbuctoo*. *Poems, Chiefly Lyrical* was printed in 1830. In 1830 itself, Alfred Tennyson and Hallam visited Spain to aid the unsuccessful revolution against Ferdinand VII. In the meantime, Hallam had formed an attachment towards Emily, Tennyson's sister, but their correspondence was forbidden for a year.

Alfred's father passed away in 1831 leaving the family in debt. As result, Alfred left Cambridge without getting his degree. In 1831 itself, a eulogistic article on *Poems, Chiefly Lyrical* was published by Hallam in *Englishman's Magazine*. Then 1832, he arrived in Somersby as Emily's accepted suitor, the same year in which Tennyson

published another volume of his poems (dated 1833), including *The Lady of Shalott*, *The Palace of Art* and *The Lotos-Eaters*. Among these poems was a satirical epigram on the critic Christopher North (Scottish writer John Wilson), who in *Blackwood's Magazine* had made an attack on *Poems, Chiefly Lyrical*. He again attacked Tennyson's new works in *Quarterly Review*. Tennyson was deeply distressed by this, yet he carried on revising old and writing new poems.

Hallam, whose engagement his family recognized in 1833, met a sudden death in September while visiting Vienna. This even added to Tennyson's misery as he was going through a difficult phase in his life. His works were not being received well and his three brothers Septimus, Charles and Edward were mentally ill. It was at this time that Tennyson produced *The Two Voices* (1842) *Ulysses*, *St. Simeon Stylites*, and possibly also *Morte d'Arthur* (first draft). Several of the poems that he wrote at this time are present in *In Memoriam*.

In 1836 Alfred's brother Charles got married to Louisa Sellwood of Horncastle. It was at this wedding that Alfred fell in love with Louisa Sellwood's sister, Emily. The two of them corresponded with each other for years, despite the disapproval of Emily's father. Her father disapproved of Tennyson due to the latter being a bohemian, with an addiction for tobacco and port and liberal religious views. In the meantime, the Tennysons had moved near London and were leading a sort of wandering life. During this time, Tennyson befriended several men of fame, such as William Ewart Gladstone (politician), Thomas Carlyle (historian) and Walter Savage Landor (poet).



*Fig 1.2 Alfred Tennyson*

### Major literary works

In 1842 Tennyson published *Poems* in two volumes. While one volume comprised revised selected works from the volumes of 1830 and 1832, the other volume consisted of new poems. The new poems included *Morte d'Arthur*, *The Two Voices*, *Locksley Hall*, *The Vision of Sin*, *The May Queen*, *Lady Clara Vere de Vere* and *The Lord of Burleigh*. Over all, the volume of new poems was not successful. It was the £200 pension that he was getting from the Prime Minister, Sir Robert Peel that enabled Tennyson to deal with

## NOTES

his financial troubles. The first long poem by Tennyson named *The Princess* was published in 1847 and was a singular anti-feminist fantasia.

A major turning point in the life of Tennyson took place in 1850. He renewed his correspondence with Emily Sellwood, got engaged and married her. In the meantime, an offer was made by Edward Moxon to publish Tennyson's elegies on Hallam which he had been composing for years. These had already been published in *In Memoriam* (1850), anonymously and had attained huge success with the public as well as critics. This publication had helped him to acquire the friendship of Queen Victoria. Consequently, he was appointed as poet laureate in 1850.

Tennyson enjoyed a happy married life with Emile. He had two sons whom he named Hallam and Lionel. By 1853, Tennyson's life of wandering ended and finally he bought a house in the Isle of Wight, named Farringford. This was where he spent the rest of his life.

Tennyson's recognition as the national poet was confirmed with the publication of *Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington* (1852) and *Charge of the Light Brigade* (1855).

One of Tennyson's long considered project came out as the *Idylls of the King* (1859), which was a set of twelve poems, all related to each other and providing an outlook on the legendary life of King Arthur. *Idylls of the King* became an instant success. Tennyson, who had loathing for publicity, attained much public fame with this work.

Tennyson embarked on writing poetic drama in 1874, and in 1875 *Queen Mary* appeared. In 1876 its abridged version was produced at the Lyceum but was only moderately successful. Then came *Harold* (1876; dated 1877), *Becket* (unpublished in full until 1884), and the 'village tragedy' named *The Promise of May*, which failed in November 1882 at the Globe. His poem named *Despair*, which had been published in the November 1881 issue of *The Nineteenth Century*, had caused a certain amount of sensation. It also indicated his beliefs which became apparent in his later works such as *The Ancient Sage*, published in *Tiresias and Other Poems* (1885). In this work, he has mentioned his intimations of life before and life after death.

Alfred Tennyson accepted peerage in 1884. In 1886 he brought out a new volume containing *Locksley Hall Sixty Years After*, which mostly contained imprecations against modern decadence and liberalism and a retraction of the earlier poem's belief in inevitable human progress.

The poem *Crossing the Bar* was written by Tennyson in 1889 while passing through the Isle of Wight. In 1889, Tennyson also published *Demeter and Other Poems*, that also had *To Mary Boyle*, *The Progress of Spring*, and *Merlin and the Gleam*, the last being an allegorical that summed up Tennyson's poetic career. Tennyson's play, *The Foresters* was produced successfully in 1892 in New York City. In spite of his deteriorating health, he fixed the proofs of his works *The Death of Oenone*, *Akbar's Dream* and *Other Poems* (1892).

Tennyson is considered as a forerunner of the Victorian age in England. By the middle of the nineteenth century, he held the position much like that held by Alexander Pope in the eighteenth century. He is regarded as a consummate poetic artist, who refined and consolidated such traditions that were passed on to him from his predecessors

## NOTES

in the Romantic Movement, more specifically by Keats, Byron and Wordsworth. Tennyson's poetry is notable for verbal melodies, descriptive imagery and metrical variety. In addition, Tennyson was regarded as the spokesman of the educated middle class on religious and moral outlooks. Tennyson used his poetry to address such misgivings in the form of intimate personal problems of a sensitive and troubled individual who would become dismal. Even then Tennyson's poetry provides a clear feeling of serenity and reassurance. He can be considered as the first great English poet who completely knew the modern day picture of man's place in the universe revealed by modern science. Even though this precarious position of mankind caused forebodings in Tennyson's mind, at the same time, it provided him a wider range for his imagination which went to provide his art with greater resonance and depth.

Even during Tennyson's lifetime itself, people posed questions with respect to his ascendancy among Victorian poets. In the twentieth century criticism which was guided by a new school of poetry led by T.S. Eliot, put forth the proposal that Tennyson's works have been drastically devaluated. They are of the opinion that most of the works written by Tennyson and that were much admired by his contemporaries have lost their appeal. In the present times, there is a balanced view of Tennyson's works, with the recognition of the enduring greatness of *Ulysses*, the unique poignancy of Tennyson's best lyric poems, and, above all, the stature of *In Memoriam* as the great representative poem of the Victorian age. Today, it is even recognized that the comic and realistic aspects found in the works of Tennyson have greater importance than they were considered in the period when anti-Tennyson reaction was at its peak.

### 2.2.1 *Break, Break, Break*: Text and Explanation

As against the grim realities of life, Tennyson presented an ideal of life in his poems, reflected by their recourse to the historical past. Tennyson used a wide range of subject matter, ranging from medieval legends to classical myths and from domestic situations to observations of nature, as source material for his poetry. The influence of John Keats and other Romantic poets is evident from the richness of his imagery and descriptive writing. The insistent beat of *Break, Break, Break* emphasizes the relentless sadness of the subject matter.

*Break, break, break,  
On thy cold gray stones, O Sea!  
And I would that my tongue could utter  
The thoughts that arise in me.  
O, well for the fisherman's boy,  
That he shouts with his sister at play!  
O, well for the sailor lad,  
That he sings in his boat on the bay!  
And the stately ships go on  
To their haven under the hill;  
But O for the touch of a vanished hand,  
And the sound of a voice that is still!  
Break, break, break,  
At the foot of thy crags, O Sea!  
But the tender grace of a day that is dead  
Will never come back to me.*

## NOTES

### Check Your Progress

1. List the well-known works of Alfred Tennyson.
2. In which year did Tennyson become the poet Laureate?

## Explanation

The short poem *Break, Break, Break* composed by Alfred Tennyson is an expression of his personal grief. However, it is more than an individual cry of pain and despair. He has presented grief and suffering as a universal characteristic of our world. He has drawn a picture of permanent and lasting images in contrast with temporariness of human life. The narrator grieves the loss of his friend, Arthur Henry Hallam, a promising poet and essayist who had been engaged to Tennyson's sister, Emily. Hallam died of a stroke in 1833 when he was only twenty-two years old. The shock at the sudden death of his best friend, Arthur Hallam from a stroke at age twenty-two, teaches us the priceless value of youth and good health.

The whole world is indifferent to individual suffering. World has nothing to do with individual's grief. Tennyson also presents man's mechanical attitude towards a big individual loss. It clearly shows that man passes away so quickly but the scene of nature remains the same. The poem has similarity with W.H. Auden's *In Memory of W.B. Yeats* in which the death of a great poet does not affect anyone. In this poem also, the poet mourns the death of a dear friend who will never come back. In a sorrowful mood, the poet depicts the picture of sea and its waves constantly striking against cold gray stones. He also draws the image of fisherman's boy singing in his boat or at play with his sister and the grand ships coming to the harbour. He believes that these images are more enduring than the life of a man.

The poet thinks that these things remain unchanged. Nature is totally unaffected by any individual's loss. Even people keep doing their daily work. They hardly care for any individual loss. Thus, the world is too busy and man's life is so transitory. It is in a flux. It changes from childhood to youth, then to old age and finally embraces death. As man grows old, the sweet memories of his life become a part of the vanished past. Thus, between past and present, man suffers and complains.

The poet is missing his lost friend while standing on the sea bank. He expresses his sorrow that he will never feel the soft touch of that hand and will never hear that voice again. On the surface, the poem looks sad and depressing. Nevertheless, the grief is set against things which are permanent.

The poem describes the narrator's feeling that there is loss throughout the world, but also that there is some life within that loss. The sea is then used to represent that there is something greater beyond the cycle of life and death even though words can never truly describe what this is:

*Break, break, break,  
On thy cold gray stones, O Sea!  
And I would that my tongue could utter  
The thoughts that arise in me.*

The poem begins with an apostrophe: 'Break, break, break, On thy cold grey stones, O Sea!' The speaker tells the sea to crash on the shore to cool down and change form. It is probably the cry of the speaker in an attempt to break the silence of his heart which impedes him to 'utter / The thoughts that arise in' him.

The word 'break' has been repeated, probably underlining the speaker's intention to interrupt the unbearable silence. The terms 'cold' and 'grey' might be associated with death, morbidity and mourning. Crashing of waves on 'cold, grey' stones is an expression that narrates the speaker's feeling and attempt to come out of the slumber and paralytic state of mind.

## NOTES

From the second stanza onwards, the focus of the poem shifts and we experience the sound of an active and fruitful life. The speaker recognizes that the sea is an indispensable part of his life, and conveys what he sees — that the fisherman’s boy is playing with his sister, the sailor lad who sings rowing down the sea and the stately ships which sail with the purpose of trade. It is the ceaseless motion of life painted through the words of the speaker. It tells us that motion is continuous, heedless of personal anxiety and pain.

The speaker looks on, depicting motion as life. But he cannot become part of these activities as he is troubled by his memory. The person in his thought weighs down the speaker, but his identity has not been revealed. It can only be understood that he is close to the speaker. However, it is evident that the person is no more as the speaker can feel the touch of his ‘vanish’d hand’ and the ‘*sound of*’ his voice. It is often conjectured that *Break, Break, Break* is a requiem of Tennyson’s close friend and fellow poet, Arthur Henry Hallam.

The poem *Break, Break, Break* can have different interpretations. Firstly, the poem presents Tennyson’s true love for his friend. Secondly, the poem reflects the dying of religion and the theory of evolution being introduced to society. The religious faith is disappearing from the world and man has become so mechanical that he has lost that fellow feeling which he used to have in ancient times.

Tennyson uses lots of punctuation, especially commas, which makes the poem move extremely slow, which when added with the context of the poem, heightens the feeling of sadness and depression in the poem. Another technique which Tennyson uses in this poem to make it more slow and depressing is his use of the sound ‘O’:

*O Sea!* - [1st Stanza, 2nd line]

*O well for the fisherman’s boy,* [2nd Stanza, 1st line]

*O well for the sailor lad,* [2nd Stanza, 3rd Line ]

Tennyson displays a mastery of imagery in this lyrical poem of heartache and bereavement. The poet’s pain is real as he expresses the indifference of nature in a cruel and unfeeling world through personification in an address to the sea.

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## 2.3 THOMAS HARDY: AN INTRODUCTION

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Thomas Hardy (1840–1928) was a prominent writer of the Victorian era. His life can be easily compartmentalized into three phases. The first phase (1840–1870) was marked by his early life, including first marriage, early compositions and a first unpublished novel. The second phase (1871–1897) was marked by his establishment as a writer, along with a prosperous writing career in the form of fourteen published novels and numerous short stories. The third phase (1898–1928) was marked by his attainment of a celebrity stature, moving away from composing novels and returning to poetry.

Except for the period in London during young manhood, Thomas Hardy passed his life near Dorchester, close to the place where he was born in 1840 and died in 1928. He was surrounded by people and customs, the monuments and the institutions of Dorset and contiguous counties of south-western England, which he placed permanently on the literary map by the ancient name Wessex. As a writer, Hardy was a living paradox. A natural poet, much of his poetry is nevertheless in prose. He had the poet’s largeness, minuteness and intensity of vision—a threefold faculty displayed throughout his novel. The irony in Thomas Hardy’s novels is not directed at human egotism but at the very conditions of human existence. He saw his characters as elemental figures whose passions were doomed to run the course that human conditions had set for them.

## NOTES

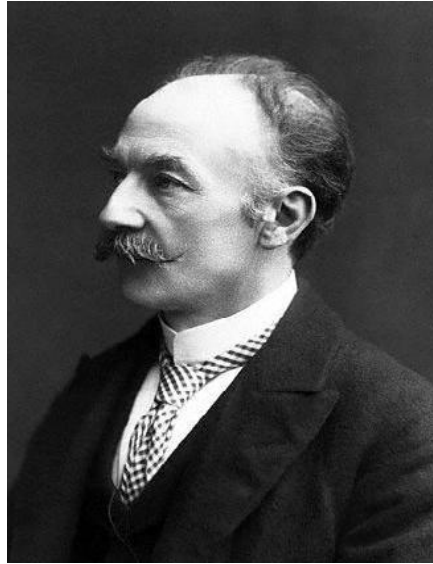
### Check Your Progress

3. What does insistent beat of the poem *Break, Break, Break* emphasize?
4. How does the poem *Break, Break, Break* teach us the priceless value of youth and good health?

*Self-Instructional*

*Material*

## NOTES



*Fig 2.2 Thomas Hardy*

Hardy was neither a philosophical novelist nor a subtle psychologist. His view of man is neither holy consistent nor any degree profound. His prose has air of being self-taught; it is often clumsy, sometimes pretentious generally rough-hewn and unequal. Hardy's vision of life was genuine and he wrestled it alone. The underlying rhythm of his novel is sound and what Henry James called the 'sense of felt life' is movingly present.

'Critics can never be made to understand that the failure may be greater than the success... To have the strength to roll a stone weighing a hundredweight to the top of a mountain is a success, and to have the strength to roll a stone of then hundredweight only halfway up that mount is a failure. But the latter is two or three times as strong a deed.' (Hardy in his diary, 1907)

Hardy was born to a master mason and building contractor in the village of Higher Bockhampton, on the edge of Puddletown Heath. His mother, who had literary tastes and read Latin poets and French romances, had a huge impact on him. Early training as an architect gave him intimate knowledge of local churches utilized to advantage in his writings. He married Emma Lavinia Gifford in 1874. At the age of 22, Hardy moved to London and started to write poems which idealized the rural life. Emma Lavinia Gifford encouraged him and he started to consider literature as his 'true vocation.'

Hardy's first novel *The Poor Man and the Lady* was rejected and he was advised by Alexander Macmillan to improve his work. *Under the Green Wood Tree* (1872) is an idyllic tale of rustic life. *Far From the Madding Crowd*, (1874) use a wider canvas and take a closer look at the nature and consequences of human emotions. Misfortune, coincidences and the intrusion into the pastoral life makes this love story tangled and violent. *The Return of the Native*, (1878) is a more ambitious work.

In the novel, the *Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886), nature, civilization and human character work on each other continually. The novel *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* outraged the religious conscience of 1891 and his novel *Jude the Obscure* is fatally injured by his ruthlessness.

In 1896, disturbed by the public uproar over the unconventional subjects of two of his greatest novels, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* and *Jude the Obscure*, Hardy announced that he would never write fiction again. In April, 1912, Hardy wrote:

‘Then somebody discovered that *Jude* was a moral work — austere in its treatment of a difficult subject — as if the writer had not all the time said in the preface that it was meant to be so. Thereupon many uncursed me, and the matter ended, the only effect of it on human conduct that I could discover being its effect on myself — the experience completely curing me of the further interest in novel-writing.’

He continued writing poems the rest of his life.

As for his marriage to Emma, it was an unhappy one, but they continued to stay with each other. They did not have any offspring. Hardy, however, had many affairs.

Emma died in 1912 and a couple of years later he married Florence Emily Dugdale, his secretary, who was a woman in her 30s and approximately thirty years younger to him.

Hardy breathed his last on 11 January 1928 in Dorchester, Dorset. Hardy was popular as a lyrical pastoralist. He was also a modern, even revolutionary writer. It may be a sign of the times that some of us take his books to bed, as if even his pessimistic vision was one that enabled us to sleep soundly.’

### 2.3.1 Works of Thomas Hardy

Thomas Hardy tries to create impressions by the skilful use of similes, metaphors, allusions and images. He invests in his characters, objects and elements an extraordinary power which is not inherently their own.

The popular works of Thomas Hardy include the following:

#### Novels and Short Stories

- *The Mayor of Casterbridge*
- *Jude the Obscure*
- *Under the Greenwood Tree*
- *Far from the Madding Crowd*
- *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*
- *The Fiddler of the Reels and Other Stories (1888-1900)*
- *The Hand of Ethelberta*
- *A Changed Man and Other Tales*
- *Desperate Remedies*
- *The Distracted Preacher*
- *A Laodicean*
- *Life's Little Ironies*
- *A Mere Interlude*
- *A Pair of Blue Eyes*
- *The Return of the Native*

## NOTES



- *The Romantic Adventures of a Milkmaid*
- *Selected Stories of Thomas Hardy*
- *Stories of Wessex*
- *The Trumpet-Major*
- *Two on a Tower*
- *The Well-Beloved*
- *Wessex Tales*
- *The Withered Arm and Other Stories*
- *The Woodlanders*

## NOTES

### Poems

Hardy wrote poems during the second Boer War of 1899–1902 and the Great War of 1914–1918. Naturally, his verses reflected the conflicts related to war. His war poems reflect a wide diversity in attitude. While *Channel Firing* has a deeply pessimistic tone, *The Breaking of Nations* is rather optimistic and focuses on the good things of daily life that are sure to survive even when wars are long forgotten. His popular poems include the following:

- *At an Inn*
- *Beeny Cliff*
- *The Darkling Thrush*
- *The Dead Man Walking*
- *Heiress and Architect*
- *Her Dilemma*
- *Her Immortality*
- *I Look into my Glass*
- *The Ivy-Wife*
- *The Man He Killed*
- *Neutral Tones*
- *The Ruined Maid*
- *She, At his Funeral*

### 2.3.2 THE DARKLING THRUSH

Thomas Hardy invariably wrote about gloomy and fatalistic perspective of life. Hence, when he uses a bleak winter landscape, in his poem, to symbolize the transitory nineteenth century, it does not surprise anyone. In the poem, *The Darkling Thrush*, he calls nineteenth century a ‘corpse’ which is lying in a ‘crypt’.

When Hardy composed *The Darkling Thrush* he was living on the threshold of the twentieth century. In addition, it was not just the age but he himself was also making a transition in his creative approach, from writing novels he was focusing on writing poems. The desire for this transition was the negative public reception of his two novels, *Tess of the d’Urbervilles* (1891) and *Jude the Obscure* (1895). Hardy had been too frank in his depiction of morally disagreeable subject matter. This had outraged the

readers of his time. Hardy's contemporary novelist, George Gissing (1857–1903), had famously called the novel *Jude the Obscure*. This was of course, one personal reason for which Hardy was gloomy in temperament.

Ironically, both *Tess* and *Jude the Obscure* are widely read and appreciated today along with his poetry which is considered to be of high quality.

*The Darkling Thrush* was composed at the far end of the nineteenth century. The poem was first printed as *By the Century's Deathbed* sometime during December 1900.

The poem appears in the form of an ode. It is a conventional lyric poem. It appears in the form of an address identifying a particular subject. It is written in a lofty and elevated fashion. The poem has a formal tone although we also know that odes can be written in the form of a personal note as well. On the very special occasion of the adieu hours of the old century, the poet puts down his reflections in the first person, 'I'. It appears as if he is leaning on a gate by the little wood. Such a pose is traditionally considered to be a 'thinking pose'.

Apart from the thinking pose, the gate symbolizes the arrival of the new year as well as the century.

Hardy portrays a frosty evening landscape in the poem. It is that time when everyone else has gone indoors. He has depicted realistic pictures of the winter landscape. It appears to him as if the season is a corpse, that resembles, the corpse of the almost dead nineteenth century. Along with the natural surroundings, the cloudy sky is considered as the crypt (burial place) for the corpse. Adding to it is the sound of the winter wind; for the poet it is a lament that is usually associated with a dead person (the nineteenth century). Each and every living organism appears to be as devoid of passion as Hardy. Both of them appear to be almost as dead as the century. At this moment of absolute despair a thrush's beautiful song suddenly is heard somewhere nearby. It breaks upon the grim cold scene or as the poet prefers to call, the 'growing gloom'. This makes Hardy wonder whether the bird is aware of any such cause/subject which might indicate hope. Perhaps Hardy is ignorant of such subject. The title of the poem, *The Darkling Thrush* is indicative that Hardy was intentionally incorporating words that have a long poetic history. 'Darkling' implies darkness, or emergence of darkness. Emergence because Hardy can still view the landscape, as well as figure out that the sun is 'weakening' but it is not completely set. It is believed that the title probably is a shorthand for 'the thrush that sang as night was approaching.'

*I leant upon a coppice gate  
When Frost was spectre-grey,  
And Winter's dregs made desolate  
The weakening eye of day.  
The tangled bine-stems scored the sky  
Like strings of broken lyres,  
And all mankind that haunted night  
Had sought their household fires.*

### Explanation

The poem begins with the speaker stating that finally it is the middle of winter. One can also call it a very cold and dreary autumn. There is no fun of springtime here. Everywhere,

## NOTES

### Check Your Progress

5. Mention the three phases of Thomas Hardy's life.
6. What is the name of Hardy's first novel?
7. List the major poems written by Thomas Hardy.

## NOTES

it is cold and ice, darkness and grey. The speaker is leaning against a gate. Even the exact identity of 'I,' is vague. However, 'I' could refer to a depressed soul.

What is important to mention here is that the word frost is mentioned in capital 'F'. It is almost as if frost has attained human-like characteristics. This is very typical to human beings whose names are capitalized while writing them. Certain elements of nature, like snow, ice and frost are definitely not proper names but the capitals suggest their human-like attributes.

As we move on, we come across further human-like qualities, the 'almost human' part of the description. The speaker probably thinks that frost is 'spectre-grey.' Here, the word 'spectre' means 'ghost'. That is why if frost is human-like then it is also ghost-like, thus, being human and non-human.

The speaker continues to suggest that this winter day is dreary. The word 'dregs' is related to coffee. It refers to those grainy, bitter things that cling to the bottom of the coffee cup. Dregs invariably imply anything which is not good to taste. Hence, when the speaker of the poem suggests that we are in the dregs of winter, he wishes to convey that this is not the beautiful snowfall that one comes across during Christmas time. In fact, it refers to those grey and gloomy elements which make the reader depressed.

The speaker goes on to mention that the day has got an eye. This seems to imply that 'Winter' is a person. In continuation with the dreary image, the whole world appears to be mostly dead. In fact, as our speaker observes, the day already appeared inferior and in a weak state long before winter's dregs made things all the more worse.

Despite the fact that Hardy is writing this poem at the end of the nineteenth century, it is surprising to note that he is not celebrating the arrival of the new century. Also, he is not looking ahead to see good times. He is rather carrying forward the gloom and despair of the previous century with him.

Further, the speaker is describing things which he sees while gazing the patch of tangled bushes. However, amidst those bushes all he can see is death and destruction. The vines in front of the speaker appear to resemble the broken bits of a lyre. Lyre is a harp-like instrument used in the classical times.

Hardy has incorporated classical allusions which makes the poem all the more beautiful. The lyre also appears in infinite poems of the antiquity. Hardy probably intends to suggest that with the new era setting in; the stock and trade of traditional poetry are also moving out of their way.

The first stanza reconfirms that the speaker is a loner. The speaker is outside observing the surroundings when other people are not out and around. It is definitely some late hour. Even the speaker mentions that everyone else he is acquainted with is curled up by the fire or may be enjoying dinner or probably relaxing over a nice cup of tea. The speaker is sure there is life out there somewhere but just that it does not happen to be anywhere in his proximity.

But then the question arises: Is there really life out there somewhere. After all, as the speaker makes it clear that the people who we assume are enjoying life were earlier 'haunting' the landscape. So are these people human at all?

It is believed that the writing of *The Darkling Thrush* by Hardy is a prequel to *Night of the Living Dead*. Some reasons for such thought could be that Hardy is writing this poem towards the end of the Industrial Revolution. With the arrival of the Industrial Revolution, Britain, an agrarian nation, became an industrial one. People migrated

to cities in search of better livelihood. Nevertheless, the industries turned cities into centres of smog and dust which in turn brought in many deadly diseases.

Hardy is trying to point out that the Industrial Revolution changed the way work was perceived and executed. Prior to the arrival of the Industrial Revolution, both men and women worked as peasants for rich landowners yet they were in touch with nature. However, as soon as people started working in factories, everything changed suddenly. The workers had to work for 12 or 14-hours a day. It was all about getting a job and working arduously. No worker got to see the sun due to long working hours. Most of them turned pale as a ghost. Several English novels like *Mary Barton* by Elizabeth Gaskell highlight this plight of workers during the Industrial Revolution.

We can assume that the folks, who are walking around like ghosts as the speaker perceives them, could be the industry workers and they have been turned into automations by the life being led by them. It is a scary and dreary scenario.

Hardy is probably drawing a parallel between the end of the century and Doomsday because some almost dead exist here. Nevertheless, it is more than evident that the speaker, just like Hardy himself, is not very appreciative of the modern age.

*The land's sharp features seemed to be  
The Century's corpse outleant,  
His crypt the cloudy canopy,  
The wind his death-lament.  
The ancient pulse of germ and birth  
Was shrunken hard and dry,  
And every spirit upon earth  
Seemed fervourless as I.*

## Explanation

In the second stanza, the speaker uses metaphor to describe the desolate landscape as the carcass of the nineteenth century.

The speaker wonders why is the century 'outleant'? Though technically, outleant is not a word per se, but Hardy's speaker probably considers himself out of this world and hence, has chosen to use the word. The word is so special that even the entire vocabulary of the English language could not match up to find one word to describe the speaker's experience. This is precisely where the word has been incorporated for literary effect. Till now, we realize Hardy has been discussing inanimate concepts like 'Winter' or 'the century'. Yet he has hardly made any reference to living beings. Hardy's speaker insists on focusing on the death of inanimate (or at times abstract) things, so much so that at times, we wonder if we are still alive or are we heading towards our grave.

Nature appears to conspire to lament over the transition of the century. In a way, the whole idea is very romantic (like Wordsworth or Coleridge would have expressed it). A Romantic poet might have understood something similar.

It is interesting to note here that even the speaker moves on with the idea of ending all things; the rhythm of the poem remains absolutely constant and conventional. One can definitely see an uncanny relationship being built between the rhyme scheme and the huge void that the speaker experiences around himself.

## NOTES

‘The ancient pulse of germ and birth/ Was shrunken hard and dry’ is filled with symbolism. Hardy incorporates metaphors of germination. Here in the poem, he refers to the unsuccessful and futile germination.

## NOTES

In the last two lines of this stanza, the speaker says that there is some kind of spirit that is present at the moment. It could also imply a lack of reason or perhaps the speaker is too engrossed in the gloom and sorrow around that he happens to see a spirit. It appears as if Hardy is trying to prove that there is no real living being in this poem.

Hardy insists on calling people as spirits only to highlight the physical rejection of any real living being. He insists on calling humans-as-ghosts or even at times, ghosts-as-humans making it difficult for us to discern the differences.

*At once a voice arose among  
The bleak twigs overhead  
In a full-hearted evensong  
Of joy illimited;  
An aged thrush, frail, gaunt, and small,  
In blast-beruffled plume,  
Had chosen thus to fling his soul  
Upon the growing gloom.*

### Explanation

You must have noticed by now that these lines indicate a significant shift in the poem. It seems that in the midst of the silence and death, the speaker suddenly hears something. This time what he hears is something beautiful. It is a love song. It is embalmed with happiness.

Finally, as the title suggests, the thrush makes an appearance. However, if one hears more closely, one realizes that this sound resembles the gloominess which permeated the initial parts of the poem.

One might compare Keats *Ode to a Nightingale* with this poem. Keats nightingale was more happy and melodious than the one suggested by Hardy in this poem. Keats nightingale was immortal while Hardy’s thrush is combating a nasty storm in the middle of nowhere land. Nonetheless, the only positive thing about this bird is that it manages to survive despite the rough weather.

The tiny and adversity ridden bird has successfully managed to survive the despair and dejected atmosphere which even the speaker is unable to do. The bird has forgotten about the adversities and is simply singing merrily. The song does not make the ‘growing gloom’ disappear but at least it lessens the impact of the gloomy atmosphere. The song alone drew the attention of the speaker towards the bird as a welcomed distraction.

*So little cause for carolings  
Of such ecstatic sound  
Was written on terrestrial things  
Afar or nigh around,  
That I could think there trembled through  
His happy good-night air*

## Explanation

Once again the first four lines of the stanza get merged into each other. This also builds up the momentum as the speaker continues to give special attention to the song of the thrush. The bird is singing a happy song whereas the speaker is discussing that the world is full of lifeless people. Perhaps the bird is happy from within. Hence, nature with elements of art (the bird song) becomes the epitome of real art for the poet.

It is wonderful to figure out that the bird is happy. It seems that the speaker is also comforted by the ideas which make the bird happy and cheerful.

Yet the speaker insists that he is not happy. He now insists that he is not sure whether the bird is singing a song of ecstasy. The speaker just imagines that the bird is probably singing for a cause and the speaker might in time just get to know about the cause.

Finally, the arrival of the twentieth century becomes apparent in this stanza. In the final couplet, he manages to capture the perspective of the major writers of the successive decades. Hardy brings in a sense of negotiation by bringing in hope (through the speaker) though in a subtle manner.

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## 2.4 LOUIS MACNEICE: AN INTRODUCTION

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Frederick Louis MacNeice was born in Belfast. His father, John Frederick MacNeice, was a minister and ultimately became a bishop of the Anglo-Irish Church of Ireland. His father favoured Home Rule and was vocal against the Protestant bigotry and violence in Northern Ireland. When MacNeice was six-years old, his mother, Elizabeth Margaret MacNeice, was sent to a nursing home in Dublin as she was suffering from severe depression. MacNeice did not see his mother again after this and she died in 1914 of tuberculosis. His father remarried when young MacNeice was ten. Since then, MacNeice studied in English schools. He was highly impressed with the free and positive atmosphere at Sherborne Preparatory School in Dorset and Marlborough College. He lost his Irish accent and gave up his baptismal first name of Frederick and his father's faith. Henceforth, he could never feel at home with his father or in Ireland. However, he always held this recognition of himself as an Irishman in England in his mind.

MacNeice was brought up among books and started writing poetry at the age of seven. Moreover, he read modern poets as Edith Sitwell and T. S. Eliot. MacNeice was good in studies. He took a first in Honour Moderations (Mods) in 1928. However, his further studies took a backseat due to his courtship of the stepdaughter of an Oxford scholar, Giovanna Marie Therese Babette Ezra, to whom he dedicated *Blind Fireworks*. He respected his colleague E. R. Dodds but had no desire of becoming a scholar like him. MacNeice, despite his reservations and hesitations, was able to establish himself as a poet in 1930s with the publication of his work *Poems* (1935). *Poems* facilitated in establishing MacNeice as one of the promising new poets of the 1930s.

## NOTES

### Check Your Progress

8. What kind of transition does the poem, *The Darkling Thrush* indicate?
9. How is the landscape portrayed by the speaker?

**NOTES**

1935 was a significant year both professionally and personally. In the same year, his wife suddenly left him (and their year-old son), running away with a young American graduate student who had been staying with them in Birmingham. The couple was formally divorced in 1936. This incident inspired him to write about the loss of his wife. MacNeice was able to overcome his grief with the passage of time. From 1941 until his death, Louis MacNeice dedicatedly worked for the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC). He died on 3 September 1963, just before the publication of his last book of poems, *The Burning Perch*.

Prominent works of MacNeice include the following:

**Poems**

- *Blind Fireworks*
- *Poems*
- *Letters from Iceland*
- *The Earth Compels*
- *Autumn Journal*
- *The Last Ditch*
- *Selected Poems*
- *Plant and Phantom*
- *Springboard*
- *Prayer Before Birth*
- *Holes in the Sky*
- *Collected Poems*
- *Ten Burnt Offerings*
- *Autumn Sequel*
- *Visitations*

**Plays**

- *The Agamemnon of Aeschylus*
- *Out of the Picture*
- *Christopher Columbus*
- *He Had a Date*
- *The Dark Tower and other radio scripts*
- *Goethe's Faust*
- *The Mad Islands*
- *Persons from Porlock*

**Books (fiction)**

- *Roundabout Way*
- *The Sixpence That Rolled Away*

**Books (non-fiction)**

- *I Crossed the Minch*
- *Modern Poetry: A Personal Essay*
- *Zoo*
- *The Poetry of W. B. Yeats*
- *The Strings Are False*
- *Meet the US Army*
- *Astrology*
- *Varieties of Parable*
- *Selected Prose of Louis MacNeice*



Fig 3.3 Louis MacNeice

**2.4.1 Prayer Before Birth**

The poem *Prayer Before Birth* was written in London in 1944. It was composed during the Second World War. The poem employs free verse but it appears more like a prayer. The rhythms, insistent alliterations and consecutive repetitions give the poem hymn-like appearance. Moreover, each stanza resembles a single long sentence.

*I am not yet born; O hear me.*

*Let not the bloodsucking bat or the rat or the stoat or the club-footed ghoul come near me.*

*I am not yet born, console me.*

*I fear that the human race may with tall walls wall me,  
with strong drugs dope me, with wise lies lure me,  
on black racks rack me, in blood-baths roll me.*

*I am not yet born; provide me*

*With water to dandle me, grass to grow for me, trees to talk*

**NOTES****Check Your Progress**

10. Where was Louis MacNeice born?
11. Why was the year 1930 significant for MacNeice?



*to me, sky to sing to me, birds and a white light  
in the back of my mind to guide me.*

## NOTES

*I am not yet born; forgive me*

*For the sins that in me the world shall commit, my words  
when they speak me, my thoughts when they think me,  
my treason engendered by traitors beyond me,  
my life when they murder by means of my  
hands, my death when they live me.*

*I am not yet born; rehearse me*

*In the parts I must play and the cues I must take when  
old men lecture me, bureaucrats hector me, mountains  
frown at me, lovers laugh at me, the white  
waves call me to folly and the desert calls  
me to doom and the beggar refuses  
my gift and my children curse me.*

*I am not yet born; O hear me,*

*Let not the man who is beast or who thinks he is God  
come near me.*

*I am not yet born; O fill me*

*With strength against those who would freeze my  
humanity, would dragoon me into a lethal automaton,  
would make me a cog in a machine, a thing with  
one face, a thing, and against all those  
who would dissipate my entirety, would  
blow me like thistledown hither and  
thither or hither and thither  
like water held in the  
hands would spill me.*

*Let them not make me a stone and let them not spill me.*

*Otherwise kill me.*

### **Explanation**

The speaker of the poem *Prayer Before Birth* is an unborn child. The child is addressing not just the divinity but also speaks to humanity in general. The child insists that it wants to be human or nothing else. The child dreams of being a free person once it is born and does not want to be trampled by whims of random people.

*Prayer Before Birth* is a dramatic monologue. It is written from the perspective of a child who is yet to be born. The unborn child through its monologue tries to express its desire for a free life that is devoid of manoeuvre and corrupt influence that pave the way for threat and terror in this world.

This poem was composed during the Second World War. The consequences of the war were everlasting and extremely depressing. A war only leads to devastation and destruction. A war is solely responsible for halting the progress of a country. The disillusionment is not unheard of. Human beings are mercilessly displaced and millions go astray. MacNeice in the poem highlights this fear (through the unborn child) of the threat that looms on mankind brought upon by the war. The poet voices his fear about how the anarchy of the world can have a detrimental impact on the innocence of a child.

The poem is divided into six stanzas and each stanza is slightly longer than the previous one indicating the growth of the baby which is inside the womb. The very first stanza talks about the apprehensions of the little child. The child asks the almighty to 'hear' him and keep him (the child) away from nocturnal beasts like the 'bat or the 'rat' or the 'stoat'. The 'bloodsucking bat' that the child mentions could refer to the parasites that exist within human beings. The child's plea suggests that the world appears to be infested with poison and the poet requests (through the child) to protect ourselves from those negative aspects of life.

In the next stanza, the child requires God to 'console' him because the child fears that the human beings who exists in this world may intoxicate him with dangerous drugs or manipulate him with their clever ways or probably, if it is really unlucky, 'rack' him in 'black racks' and 'roll' him in 'bloods-baths'. Needless to say, the child wants God to ensure him and surround him with nature; the only thing that has not been completely corrupted by man. The child also asks for some guiding light.

By the time we read the fourth stanza, we realize that the baby has matured a little. The child asks God for protection from the malice and corruption of the world. The poet mentions the words, 'treason engendered by traitors'. Probably, the child intends to suggest that the society, in due course of time, may compel him to take someone's life or the political traitors may force him to betray the cause of the motherland. The child asks for all forgiveness even before it is born.

The fifth stanza is about morals. The baby in the womb asks God to be its teacher and teach him how to act when he comes across adverse situations like bureaucracy or lecturing from senior citizens, his own child cursing him or the beggars' refusal to accept his gift.

The sixth stanza summarizes the entire poem. The initial lines of the sixth stanza probably hint at autocratic people like Hitler and Xerxes. The child asks God to keep him away from such men. Moreover, the child asks God to 'fill' him with confidence and willpower which will further help them to stand up against inhumanity and many such similar human beings who would go out of their way to destroy him in their desire to make the child an insignificant part of a machine. They might as well make the baby's face turn into 'one expressionless face' or like as if the child was a small stone which the winds plays with, 'hither and thither or hither and thither'.

### Poetic devices

Louis MacNiece has incorporated a number of poetical devices in this poem. He uses figures of speech like repetition, personification, alliteration, assonance and so forth to

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focus the truth that he was trying to project through the poem. The usage of comma several times, suggests that the child is in an extreme urgency to extend his request to the almighty. If you notice the line 'I am not yet born' is continuously repeated in every stanza. This signifies that even though the child is still in the womb, he is aware of the misery and inhumanity that prevails in the world of human beings. The usage of 'O hear me', 'O fill me' arms the child's prayer with more power and underlines the baby's emotions and brings forth his plea more explicitly.

The poet, Loius MacNiece, includes alliteration and assonance to a large extent. Most prominent alliterations include 'strong drugs dope me', 'with wise lies lure me', 'black racks rack me'. All these lines highlight horror that is coming in the mind of the unborn child. The creation of assonance through 'bat' and 'rat', 'tall wall', 'wise lies' gives a different yet enticing rhyme pattern to the poem along with its readers. The poem enlists themes and metaphors which are religion specific. The most obvious one is the use of the child which is used as the metaphor of Christ.

On a close reading of the third stanza, we realize that the poet has made use of personification. He has personified nature in the lines where he talks about 'trees to talk to me, skies to sing to me, water to dandle me'. The lines make it more than clear that the child desires the company of nature and is frightened to have the company of the cruel human world. Somehow nature is considered to be unaltered by the influence of man. Again, the poet uses the image 'mountains frown at me'. This image created in our mind paves way to create refuge that when everything is lost, nature is still there by our side.

The poem has many historical references as well. The poem was composed during the period of the Second World War. There are certain references which directly allude to it. The use of the phrase 'cog in a machine' suggests that the child has a feeling that the society will turn him into an insignificant existence, one that is absolutely worthless. This analogy has a direct reference to the First and the Second World Wars 'where soldiers were "dragooned" into being an "automaton"'.

The final line is a long breathless sentence. The reader comes across constant repetition of images that bring out the agitation of the speaker. Throughout the poem, we realize that the poet effectively portrays evil and devilish images that showcase the decadent state of the human existence and the world that surrounds it. It also conveys the presence of evil that moves on endlessly and strives to haunt humanity.

The poem interestingly ends with a surprising conclusion and the child in the end, pleads to be killed and not to be allowed to be born. The baby is disinterested in coming to such a cruel world if his prayers are not answered. By using the prayer of the child, Loius MacNiece makes his poem a mouthpiece for denouncing the deplorable condition to which humanity is heading towards with the passage of time.

As far as the tone of the poem is concerned, the poem can be described in various ways. The unborn baby obviously appears to be apprehensive of the future which lies ahead him. A sense of urgency is reflected in his voice. The poem is scattered with apocalyptic as well as gloomy visions.

**Check Your Progress**

12. Who is the speaker of the poem, *Prayer Before Birth*?
13. When was *Prayer Before Birth* written?

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## 2.5 MATHEW ARNOLD: AN INTRODUCTION

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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 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 UK. He remained loyal to France and French connection throughout his life. He died in 1888.

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 meditation in evocative surroundings— these elements give a distinctive character to his poetry. His first volume was *The Strayed Reveller and Other Poems*, which was published in 1849 anonymously was immediately withdrawn from circulation. In 1852, Arnold published his second volume of poems, *Empedocles on Etna, and Other Poems*. However, 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, the 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 problems afflicting the Victorian society. 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.



Fig 2.4 Mathew Arnold

### 2.5.1 Longing

*Longing* is one of Matthew Arnold’s most popular works. *Longing* is part of a collection called *Faded Leaves*. It will be interesting to point here that the five poems from *Faded Leaves* collection revolve around the theme of lost love. Each poem identifies the timeline from ‘the end of a love affair to the bitter-sweet memory and longing to be reunited in dreams’. In the very first poem, *The River*, we see the portrayal of the emotions of the

## NOTES

### Check Your Progress

14. Mention the prominent poems written by Mathew Arnold.
15. When was Arnold’s first volume of poems *The Strayed Reveller and Other Poems* published?

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rejected lover. In the second poem, *Too Late*, one comes across the reflection on the reality of 'at the wrong place, at the wrong time'. The very next poem or the locus of the collection *Separation* attains a pivotal point in the sequence of poems. It is, in this poem, when a raging heart soothes down, yet begs that no memory of this kind of love should be there with him. This memory was too painful to be treasured. The fourth poem, *On the Rhine* alludes to memory and the final poem *Longing* moves to pleading where he desires that his beloved must return to his dreams.

One comes across interesting similes and descriptions all through the *Faded Leaves*. Needless to say, Arnold appears to find solace in the constancy that nature has to offer which is in absolute contrast to the unbelievable ambivalence of the human world. While the first poem, *The River*, sets the mood of the surroundings that are described, it also presents a stark contrast to the inner feelings of the speaker. Nature again reappears in its most picturesque way in the fourth poem, *On the Rhine*. This poem attempts to calm down the anguish of the forlorn love that the speaker is experiencing at that point of time. In the very same poem, the snow-capped and moonlit Alpine mountains profess the speaker's own gradual demise. The peace of nature is described in the final stanza of the same poem as follows:

*'Ah, Quiet, all things feel thy balm!  
Those blue hill's too, this river's flow  
Were restless once, but long ago.  
Tamed is their turbulent youthful glow;  
Their joy is in their calm'.*

The sun of the dusk that appears in the fourth poem takes the readers to the much awaited dream land of *Longing*. In this poem, one realizes that day and night are juxtaposed with each other while the former is the source of the suffering of life and the latter is all about bringing death.

*Come to me in my dreams, and then  
By day I shall be well again!  
For so the night will more than pay  
The hopeless longing of the day.*

*Come, as thou cam'st a thousand times,  
A messenger from radiant climes,  
And smile on thy new world, and be  
As kind to others as to me!*

*Or, as thou never cam'st in sooth,  
Come now, and let me dream it truth,  
And part my hair, and kiss my brow,  
And say, My love why sufferest thou?*

*Come to me in my dreams, and then  
By day I shall be well again!  
For so the night will more than pay  
The hopeless longing of the day.*

## Explanation

The poem *Longing*, explanation written by Mathew Arnold, is an expression of the speaker's love for his beloved. In the first stanza, the speaker states that if he dreams of the beloved at night, it will transform the wait to see her the next day much less painful. The lines clearly indicate that the speaker is in pain due to the absence of his beloved. The line 'The hopeless longing of the day' furthermore, justifies that the poet is certainly eager to see his beloved. The rational that without the existence of his beloved, the speaker is left directionless and helpless, suggests that perhaps this lady holds extreme significance in the day-to-day being of the speaker.

The speaker extends an appeal to his beloved to come to him, as she has done so many times before. She is more like a messenger from the radiant world. This happens to be the (assumed) origin point of meteors, especially when a meteor shower takes place. One can easily read the lines as the speaker comparing his beloved with meteor showers. Needless to say, meteor showers are almost always beautiful and amazing. They are admired by people all across the globe.

The speaker wants that the beloved should be as kind and humble with the people around her as she is to him. The use of 'thy new world' may imply that his beloved exists in different parts of the world. There is an uneasy reference to the fact that she might be no more or may be travelling overseas. Perhaps this is the precise reason why the poet is missing her so much. Else, she is in a state where he cannot physically get in touch with her anymore. Yet, the speaker wishes that even though he cannot physically see her anymore, he longs that she will be able to spread her kindness towards people in general, the way she had done to him.

*Or, as thou never cam'st in sooth,  
Come now, and let me dream it truth,*

The above lines suggest that the meaning of the word truth moves across from honesty to faith and even to sincerity. There is no specific agreement with fact or reality specifically.

One entertains differing claims regarding a question like this: As to what constitutes the truth. Is it even possible to define as well as identify truth?

The poet is insisting his love to return to him. He desires that she should part his hair. He also wants her to kiss his brow while he is in his dream. The speaker desperately longs to be in her real company again but for some unexplained reason that remains impossible.

The speaker desires that when he meets his woman finally in his dreams, she should explain to him why he is suffering even though she is not there with him for so long. This implies that love continues even after death.

*Come to me in my dreams, and then  
By day I shall be well again!  
For so the night will more than pay  
The hopeless longing of the day.*

Arnold repeats this stanza probably in a quest to further highlight the longing and pain that he feels for her in her absence. He keeps praying and pleading to her to visit his dreams.

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It is difficult to argue as to which of two poems by Matthew Arnold — *Longing* and *To Marguerite* wins our heart. That is because both poems are very different from each other. Nevertheless, many might suggest *To Marguerite* as better because the use of meter in *Longing* is very predictable and has a monotonous quality to it. The iambic rhythm hardly changes and many a times the poem lapses into sheer dullness.

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### 2.6 SUMMARY

- 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.
- Among the early Victorians, the most prominent poets were Alfred Lord Tennyson, Robert Browning, Emily Bronte, Matthew Arnold, Christina Rossetti, George Eliot among others.
- Alfred Tennyson was born on 6 August 1809 in an old Lincolnshire family. He was the first Baron Tennyson of Aldworth and Freshwater.
- The influence of Lincolnshire countryside is clearly visible in the writings and especially, poetry of Tennyson.
- During this time in Cambridge, there was a rise in the reputation of Tennyson as a poet. In 1829 Alfred became the winner of the chancellor's gold medal for his poem *Timbuctoo*.
- In 1842 Tennyson published *Poems* in two volumes. While one volume comprised revised selected works from the volumes of 1830 and 1832, the other volume consisted of new poems.
- Tennyson embarked on writing poetic drama in 1874 and in 1875 *Queen Mary* appeared.
- The short poem, *Break, Break, Break* composed by Alfred Tennyson is an expression of his personal grief. But it is more than an individual cry of pain and despair. He has presented as a universal characteristic of our world.
- The narrator grieves the loss of his friend, Arthur Henry Hallam, a promising poet and essayist who had been engaged to Tennyson's sister, Emily. Hallam died of a stroke in 1833 when he was only twenty-two.
- The poem, *Break, Break, Break* has similarity with W.H. Auden's *In Memory of W.B. Yeats* in which the death of a great poet does not affect anyone. In this poem also, the poet mourns the death of a dear friend who will never come back.
- Tennyson uses lots of punctuation, especially commas, which makes the poem move extremely slow, which when added with the context of the poem, heightens the feeling of sadness and depression in the poem.
- Thomas Hardy (1840–1928) was a prominent writer of the Victorian era. He was born in a hamlet in Higher Bockhampton in the county town of Dorset. He spent his entire life, with the exception of a few years, in England.
- Thomas Hardy's works often met with a lot of pessimistic responses. His depiction of the seduction of the village belle in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and the sexual violence and innocent murders in *Jude the Obscure* met with unkind reception.

#### Check Your Progress

16. What is the theme of *Longing* written by Mathew Arnold?
17. What does the line 'The hopeless longing of the day' signify?

- Hardy's first novel *The Poor Man and the Lady* was rejected and he was advised by Alexander Macmillan to improve his work.
- On 27 November 1912, misfortune struck Hardy as his wife Emma passed away. Though the couple has long been estranged, the death had a severe effect on Hardy. He wrote many compositions honouring her memory.
- Between 1920 and 1927, Hardy spent quality time writing his autobiography. It was published in two parts (1928 and 1930) under the authorial credit of Florence Hardy.
- In the poem, *The Darkling Thrush*, he calls nineteenth century as a 'corpse' which is lying in a 'crypt'.
- *The Darkling Thrush* was composed at the far end of the nineteenth century. The poem was first printed as *By the Century's Deathbed* sometime during December 1900.
- One might compare Keats' *Ode to a Nightingale* with Hardy's *The Darkling Thrush*. Keats nightingale was more happy and melodious than the one suggested by Hardy in this poem. Keats nightingale was immortal while Hardy's thrush is combating a nasty storm in the middle of nowhere land.
- Frederick Louis MacNeice was born in Belfast.
- MacNeice, despite his reservations and hesitations, was able to establish himself as a poet in 1930s with the publication of his work *Poems* (1935). *Poems* (1935) facilitated in establishing MacNeice as one of the promising new poets of the 1930s.
- From 1941 until his death, Louis MacNeice dedicatedly worked for the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC). He died on 3 September 1963, just before the publication of his last book of poems, *The Burning Perch*.
- *Prayer Before Birth* by MacNeice is a dramatic monologue. It is written from the perspective of a child who is yet to be born. The unborn child through its monologue tries to express its desire for a free life that is devoid of manoeuvre and corrupt influence that pave the way for threat and terror in this world.
- 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.
- Arnold is as great an exponent of Victorian elegiac as Tennyson. According to him, the main duty of a writer is to present his criticism of life in whatever medium he can as richly, luminously and broadly as possible.
- *Longing* is one of Matthew Arnold's most popular works. *Longing* is part of a collection called *Faded Leaves*.
- The poem *Longing* written by Mathew Arnold is an expression of the speaker's love for his beloved.

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## 2.7 KEY TERMS

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- **Eulogism:** It means to praise highly in speech or writing.
- **Requiem:** It refers to a hymn, composition, or service for the dead.



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- **Apocalyptic:** It implies forecasting final disaster of the world.
- **Dramatic monologue:** It is a technique devised by Robert Browning in which there is only one speaker speaking but there is a silent listener.
- **Pessimistic:** It is the tendency to stress the negative or unfavourable or to take the gloomiest possible view.

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## 2.8 ANSWERS TO ‘CHECK YOUR PROGRESS’

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1. The well-known works of Alfred Tennyson are as follows:
  - *In Memoriam* (1850)
  - *Idylls of the King* (1859)
  - *Ulysses* (1842)
  - *The Lady of Shalott* (1832)
2. In 1850, Tennyson became the poet Laureate of England.
3. The insistent beat of the poem *Break, Break, Break* emphasizes the relentless sadness of the subject matter in the poem.
4. Arthur Henry Hallam, a promising poet and essayist who had been engaged to Tennyson’s sister, Emily, died of a stroke in 1833 when he was only twenty-two years old. The shock at the sudden death of his best friend, Arthur Hallam, therefore, teaches us the priceless value of youth and good health.
5. Thomas Hardy’s life can easily be divided into three phases. The first phase (1840–1870) was marked by his early life, including first marriage, early compositions and a first unpublished novel. The second phase (1871–1897) was marked by his establishment as a writer, along with a prosperous writing career in the form of fourteen published novels and numerous short stories. The third phase (1898–1928) was marked by his attainment of a celebrity stature, moving away from composing novels and returning to poetry.
6. The name of Hardy’s first novel is *The Poor Man and the Lady*, which was rejected and he was advised by Alexander Macmillan to improve his work.
7. The major poems written by Thomas Hardy include *At an Inn*, *The Darkling Thrush*, *I Look into my Glass*, *The Ruined Maid* and *The Dead Man Walking*.
8. *The Darkling Thrush* written by Thomas Hardy indicates the change from the nineteenth century to the twentieth century. Also, it indicates the change in Hardy’s creative approach, from writing novels he focused on writing poems.
9. The speaker portrays a bleak winter landscape in the poem *The Darkling Thrush*.
10. Louis MacNeice was born in Belfast.
11. 1930 was a significant year both professionally and personally for MacNeice. In 1930, MacNeice published his work *Poems* which established him as a poet. In the same year, his wife suddenly left him (and their year-old son), running away with a young American graduate student who had been staying with them in Birmingham.
12. The speaker of the poem, *Prayer Before Birth* is an unborn child.
13. *Prayer Before Birth* was written during the period of the Second World War.

14. The prominent poems written by Mathew Arnold are: *Dover Beach*, *The Scholar Gipsy*, *Longing* and *Thyrsis*.
15. Arnold's first volume of poems *The Strayed Reveller and Other Poems* was published in 1849.
16. The speaker's longing for his beloved is the theme of *Longing* written by Mathew Arnold.
17. The line 'The hopeless longing of the day' signifies that the poet is certainly eager to see his beloved.

## NOTES

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## 2.9 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

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### Short-Answer Questions

1. Prepare a brief biographical sketch of Alfred Tennyson.
2. Write a short note on the childhood and youth of Thomas Hardy.
3. Briefly discuss the poetic devices used by MacNeice in *Prayer Before Birth*.
4. Why is Mathew Arnold regarded a representative poet of the Victorian age?

### Long-Answer Questions

1. Critically analyse the poem, *Break, Break, Break*.
2. 'Hardy's female protagonists are based on the author's own notion of the feminine ideal.' Explain this statement with suitable examples from his works.
3. *The Darkling Thrush* reflects Hardy's pessimistic outlook of life.' Discuss.
4. *Prayer before Birth* is a poem belonging to the 'Auden Generation' poetry. Explain.
5. 'In most of Arnold's poems, we have noticed a melancholy strain.' Elucidate.

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